

COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS: WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

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THE 7 DEADLY SINS OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Unpreparedness: “It Can’t Happen” Syndrome

Absence: Not Being on Site Immediately

Ignorance: Not knowing the Audience

Silence: Not Communicating

Distance: Boardroom Bunker Mentality

Fabrication: Anything But the Truth

Naiveté: Thinking only short-term

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The company's mindset for anticipating and preparing for crises

The ability to respond immediately to information requests

The use of two-way communication with key stakeholders

The strength of pre-crisis relationships with stakeholder groups (shadow stakeholders)

PREPARE FOR THE UNANSWERABLE

What went wrong?

How did it happen?

How could it happen?

Who did it happen to?

When did you know?

Why didn't you tell us sooner?

Why should we believe you?

Do you feel guilty?

TAKE CONTROL!

“In the absence of information, misinformation becomes news.”

“Misperceptions created by non-sources during the initial stages of a crisis remain with important publics and are difficult, if not impossible to change.”

WHO'S THE SPOKEPERSON?

A decision-maker skilled in communications who:

Understands the value of communications

Knows and understands the organization

Can effectively articulate difficult and sensitive issues

Can express empathy and concern

"IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY-- IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT!"

The 3 "I" Approach

Image

- It's not who you are.
- It's who people perceive you to be!

Impression

- You're never given a second chance to create a first impression

Integrity

- Actions speak louder than words!

WITH A CRISIS COMES THE MEDIA

Provide a connection to your stakeholders

Can deliver critical information to affected stakeholders – communities, families

Will demand access and instant information

Won't wait for you to fill the information void – instant experts to provide comment

JOURNALISTIC CONSTRAINTS

Limited space or air time

Limited sources of information

Competing news priorities

Lack of scientific or technical education

Competitive editorial environment

Deadlines, deadlines, deadlines

YOUR ROLE?

Be honest

Help them do their job

Avoid errors

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

- **A + P² = C³**
- Understand the issue
- Anticipate the key questions
- Be prepared
- Develop and use your key messages
- Use bridging to focus on key messages

UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE

Find out what the crisis is, when and where it happened. You won't know why or how – don't try to answer until you do / don't speculate.

Say what you know – actions that you are taking.

Know the lay of the land – what are the key risk management issues.

What's your primary objective?

BE PREPARED!

Know what you want to say

Know what you don't want to say

Expect the best - anticipate the worst question

Learn your key messages

Learn about your interviewer

Consider the logistics of the interview

GET READY!

Prepare for the following:

What questions would you like them to ask?

What questions do you not want them to ask?

What questions haven't you thought about?

DEVELOPING YOUR MESSAGES

Use “sound bites” (7 to 12 words)

Make positive statements, without restating the negative

Address underlying concern

ADDING CREDIBILITY TO YOUR KEY MESSAGES

Involves telling a story or relating a personal reflection

Includes a third-party reference

CRISIS/MEDIA TIPS TO REMEMBER!

1. Planning is critical. It will make or break you.
2. Crises escalate because of confused, mismanaged or missed communications.
3. Public perceptions are created by what is communicated.
4. Be prepared for accelerating information.
5. Cross reporting occurs – creating a frenzied atmosphere.
6. You'll get many questions that don't yet have answers.
7. An integrated risk management approach is critical.
8. No accident is unforgivable -- only the response is.

Thank You

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