

**CRISIS
COMMUNICATIONS**
ALEX BOLHOUS

WHAT IS CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS?

The effort taken by a company to communicate with the public and stockholders when an unexpected event occurs that could have a negative impact on the company's reputation.



WHAT IS CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS?

In other words, crisis communications is handling issues that could potentially have a negative impact on the company. There is a wide range of events that crisis communications departments cover.

According to Ann Moore, head of crisis communications for Coca-Cola, “they can range from managing what’s happened to our business and what’s happened to our employees during a natural disaster such as an earthquake or a hurricane...”



WHAT IS CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS?

Moore continues, “It can also be a problem with a quality issue with one of our products or it can be an issue like a diversity issue. We have had to do a lot of work on LGBT rights because it has been the focus of a lot of campaigns recently. We also are a sponsor of the Olympics, as well as, FIFA so if there is a controversy that is associated with them, we get called on to explain why we are sponsoring these organizations and what we are doing to address the issues.”



ANTICIPATE CRISES

- Crises are inevitable. The most important thing to do is be prepared by anticipating them. This anticipation can potentially allow for preventing some situations from even happening.
 - By thinking of best/worst case scenarios, you can plan for any possible outcome before you're under the pressure of an actual crisis.
 - Sometimes you know that a crisis is going to happen for sure because you are the one creating it, like a lay off. It is important to consider all outcomes and decide how to handle the situation prior to creating the crisis.
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IDENTIFY AND TRAIN SPOKESPEOPLE

- It is important that only authorized people speak on behalf of the company.
 - Different people are effective in different situations. Everyone is different and their talents and skills should be identified prior to a crisis
 - Spokespeople must hold the right position. For example, the CEO of the company might not be an effective communicator and thus would not be a good choice of spokesperson during a crisis.
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IDENTIFY AND TRAIN SPOKESPEOPLE

- There are differences between proactive PR and crisis communications that must be recognized by the spokesperson.
 - Proactive PR- promoting your organization
 - Crisis Communications- preserving your organization
 - Training teaches preparedness and the right way to respond to optimize the response of all stakeholders
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MONITORING AND NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

- It is important to establish a notification system to rapidly reach stakeholders, especially with the amount of technology a single person might have today.
- Monitoring is knowing what is being said about you in traditional media and social media and monitoring feedback during an actual crisis situation.



MONITORING AND NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

- According to Moore at Coca-Cola, “we do have services that help us with like clips monitoring so we can see what’s going on in our industry, and within our business, but we also have our own team at Coke that does that for us. So we don’t just rely on one service because you take a look on two different peoples idea on what the news clips that day should be, they will vary quite a bit. In fact, I get news clippings from all [the] different departments. [They] have their own with a focus on what they’re interested and concerned about and they feed into us so we can keep an eye on what’s developing.”
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STAKEHOLDERS AND HOLDING STATEMENTS

- It is key to know who your stakeholders are and how they will respond to different situations
 - “Holding statements” statements used by spokespeople when the story is developing
 - They can be developed prior to a crisis and should be on hand in case they are needed.
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POST CRISIS

- Assess the crisis situation- This is the first step you can't prepare for in advance, but if you have prepared for what you could, then the actual crisis is a matter of receiving information and determining the appropriate response. When you don't prepare in advance the messages from your company will be less effective.
- Finalize messages- What do your stakeholders need to know? Keep the message to the three main points.
- Post-Crisis Analysis- This process can help the company decide what they did well and what needs work, as well as, what they could have prepared for ahead of time.

SOURCES

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