



# **Crisis Communication**

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# What is a Crisis?



- **Crisis**

- A major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome

- *Examples*

- Natural disasters, technology malfunctions, confrontations, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence and scandals, rumors, terrorist attacks, and man- made disasters/errors.

# What is Crisis Communications?



- “The effort taken to communicate with the public and stockholder when an unexpected event occurs that could have a negative impact on a reputation.”
  - [BusinessDictionary.com](http://BusinessDictionary.com)

# When, Not If



- Anticipate Crises
  - Every industry will have different types of crises, but at some point one will occur
  - Must have a prepared crisis communication team and plan
  - Look at other companies to notice any warning signs

# Results of a Crisis



1. Company cannot recover and fails
  - ValuJet plan crash
  - Killed all passengers
  - Had to sell out and rename
2. Company survives, but struggles to regain trust and build reputation
  - SeaWorld and the Blackfish documentary
  - Overall loss in tourism and stocks
3. The company thrives and does even better
  - Tylenol (Johnson and Johnson)

# Five Stages of a Crisis



## 1. Detection

1. Look for signs of a crisis occurring or about to occur

## 2. Prevention

- Strengthen internal communications and community ties

## 3. Containment

- Keep the crisis from spiraling

## 4. Recovery

- Begin to fix the issues and keep audiences informed

## 5. Learning

- Use this crisis as a lesson and figure out how to prevent it from happening again

# Do



- Have a crisis communication team
- Have a spokesperson
- Be consistent in messages
- Use notification systems
  - Keep stakeholders and audiences in the know

# Do



- Keep employees informed
- Respond quickly and efficiently
- Be honest and transparent
  - Say what you know; the truth will eventually come out
- Apologize and take responsibility
- Monitor feedback
  - Use social media and listen to the community

# Crisis Communication Team



- A team specially picked and put in place to handle a crisis
- Typically consists of the top executives, public relations team members, and legal counsel
- Have this team create a crisis management plan beforehand to plan for possible crises

# Spokesperson



- Designate and train a primary spokesperson
- They should have strong communication skills
  - In front of a crowd and camera
- Strongly advised to train the CEO of company on public speaking

# Lululemon Spokesperson



- CEO, Chip Wilson, made unexpected comments in a Bloomberg interview
- Reversed the PR team's efforts to fix initial crisis
- Created new crisis
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4jIBITIkSk>

# Do Not



- Don't say '***NO COMMENT***'
  - Always respond to questions
- Don't ignore the crisis
  - It will not 'go away'
- Don't ignore the media
  - You need them to be on your side
- Don't give exclusive access to certain media
  - No favorites

# Do Not



- Don't blame others
  - Take responsibility
- Don't assume a defensive stance
  - Pointing fingers will not work
- Don't ignore the impact of the crisis
  - Understand how stakeholders and the community are affected

# Messages



- Understand stakeholders and what they may be thinking or feeling
  - Establish key messages
  - See things from their perspective
- Let the public know you are taking action
- Must be consistent

# Social Media



- Vital tool in communication
- Fast and efficient
- Use multiple platforms
- Allows for an open flow of communication
- Respond quickly

# Crisis Communication Success



- Whole Foods - 2015
  - Whole Foods was accused of overcharging customers in New York
  - Coined the term “Whole Paycheck”
  - At first they denied it, but then issued apologies
  - CEO’s made a video apology where they were honest and straight up with their audience
  - Outline future changes to ensure it never happens again

# Crisis Communication Success



- American Red Cross: Rogue Tweet



Ryan found two more 4 bottle packs of Dogfish Head's Midas Touch beer.... when we drink we do it right [#gettnngslizzerd](#)

HootSuite • 2/15/11 11:24 PM

# Crisis Communication Success



- American Red Cross Response



We've deleted the rogue tweet but rest assured the Red Cross is sober and we've confiscated the keys.

15 Feb via [ÜberTwitter](#) [★ Unfavorite](#) [↻ Retweet](#) [↩ Reply](#)

Retweeted by [LPARCATL](#) and 100 others



# Takeaways



- Act quickly
- Be prepared
- Be consistent and clear
- Be honest and transparent
- Have a designated spokesperson
- Never say ‘No comment.’

# Sources



- Sisk's Crisis Communication Class
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