



fatal flaws that will cripple your crisis communications management

They're ratings gold. Fires, chemical spills, sexual harassment, botched social media campaigns and claims of corporate misdeeds. Newspapers, TV, radio and the social media love them.

What's plain to see is the difference between organisations which have prepared themselves to manage crises, and those which have not. And the difference gets pretty stark when it comes to communications with the outside world.

For example, there's the lack of any initial proactive communications from the organisation, a failure to at least acknowledge inconvenience to customers or the public, the spokesperson forced to bat down a barrage of aggressive questions at the expense of getting his or her message across whilst employees are speculating on the cause. Added to these are angry stakeholders and government ministers demanding to know what's going on.

Preparation is everything when it comes to crisis and incident management, and this without doubt includes the communications function. Hopefully, you have a plan in place and you know where that place is. If not, following are a few basics just in case.

1. Hit the ground running.

Good luck if you can remember all of the necessities. You've probably got around ten or fifteen minutes to respond to true and fake news. It's too late to work out what to do when all hell is breaking loose – you need a priority list from the get-go.

2. "We need it now!"

You don't have the time to draft from scratch, get approvals and arrange distribution for media statements, receptionist/switchboard scripts and employee communications, let alone a public position paper.

3. The media's in reception....

Would you mind telling the nightly news TV crews to stand by while we work out the key messages, prepare Qs and media train the CEO? Many thanks; it should only take a couple of hours.

4. What stakeholder contact list?

Why would the local MP, Minister for Environment, local government compliance officer, WorkSafe, local newspaper or childcare centre down the road be interested in all of that noxious black smoke pouring from the roof of our warehouse?

Chances are you are going to need all the friends you can get, so best to determine who's who in your external relations universe and have their contact details on hand.

5. Where's the Crisis Communications Plan?

Servers have been known to malfunction so at least make a hard copy of it and maybe save it to your mobile phone as a back-up. Note that this assumes that said plan exists.

Please give me a call if you'd like to know more about assembling a functional crisis communications plan.

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