



Recovering from disaster or the unexpected: Are you and your organization ready?

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Crisis Communications

Values set foundation

- Decisions made quickly
- Credibility equals trust
- Ensures appropriate and immediate response

Demonstrate the highest level of responsibility possible

- Take accountability
- Put public interests first
- Lead in open and fact based communication
- Implement decisive action plan

Crisis preparedness

- **Crisis messages** – Concern, description, action
- **The plan** - Scenarios, team selection, roles and reporting, key messages and draft materials, external experts, updated lists, channels for communications (social, media, online, direct to customers, regulators)
- **Crisis Simulations** – Train and test the team
- **The Crisis Plan only takes you to Day 2 -- it is about the team, the decisions and the response**

Three distinct phases of crisis

Initial response	Intense scrutiny/interest	Rebuilding reputation & trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes and hours are important• Immediate response• Appropriate response – responsibility, social media, media relations, website, interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situation evolves over days and weeks• Media relations important• Working with regulators/authority• Stakeholder updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weeks/months• Demonstrate efforts to rectify and move on• Repentant advocate

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Roles & Responsibilities in a crisis Forming your crisis team

Andrew Morrison ABC
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Pre-crisis: ask the right questions

- Do a risk assessment: prioritise the type of risks you face:
 - Most likely? Most frequent?
 - Most damaging?
 - To People, Reputation, Operations, Environment, Financials
 - Most likely to escalate if not managed effectively?
- *How will you prioritise these risks and measure them?*

Pre-crisis: plan for the correct scenario

- What is your 'business' environment vs what is your 'crisis' environment?
- Examples:
 - Food & beverage industry → Human health
 - Energy industry → The Environment
 - Finance → Peoples' livelihoods

Therefore, your team needs specific skill sets and sensitivities to manage in the "outside" world

Principles of team creation

- Experience/understanding of issue
- Capability to gather and check facts
- Ability to communicate
- Sensitivity to manage emotion
- Authority to act to solve the issue

A core team that convenes quickly

- Communications
- Operations/Logistics, Risk management
- "Local" (site/location) management leader
- Functional expert (Product, Service, Issue)
- Senior team sponsor

Create a virtual team to engage as needed

- Key deputies for core team
- Outside consultant / "extra hands" (agency)
- Legal/Compliance
- HR, Security
- QM / Environment, Health & Safety
- Technical / Regulatory / Purchasing
- Customer care, Account management, Sales
- IT, Finance
- Admin support
- Strategy, Marketing
- Union / Employee council, Community affairs
- Industry association / trade body

Escalation

- Handle the crisis at the lowest feasible level
- Avoid complex levels of escalation
- But be clear on your escalation signals:
 - Seriousness
 - Size of the problem
 - Geography
 - Stakeholders impacted
 - Emotion

Inverting the pyramid

- ...In a crisis, internal hierarchies *can* be turned upside down:
 - Who should co-ordinate?
 - Who should communicate (separate but linked role to co-ordination)
 - Who do your affected stakeholders trust?
 - Who is on your front-line?
 - Who is empowered to act/speak?

Necessary sacrifices

- Democracy! *You cannot manage by committee*
- Balance. *You cannot address every minor issue*
- Hierarchy. *You have no time for standard approvals.*

...because you need speed, momentum and quick control

Do not forget!

- Who is affected?
- What is the issue?
- Where has it/is it happening?
- When did it occur/will it finish?
- Why did it happen?
- How will you fix it?

...in this order!

And finally...

...In a crisis
Ditch the crisis manual – you have no time to refer to it
Convene your core team and your action plan... fast!

Thank you

Appendix: typical team roles & responsibilities – adjust to fit your needs

Head of Communications or Sponsor

- Advises Board/CEO on key business and operational decisions that impact any aspect of corporate reputation or key relationships
- Leads core crisis team in the event of a reputational issue or incident escalating into a full-blown crisis
- Provides strategic direction for crisis process
- Strategic responsibility for all media and external relations (internal communications with HR head)

Communications director

- Ensures updated crisis communications plans and records exist for business locations
- Ensures coherence of team's actions, refers to senior management when needed
- Ensures situation room and equipment is operational and incident logs are maintained
- Checks and ensures that appropriate managers or spokespeople are media-trained
- Develops media strategy: drafts media/external statements based on factual input from team; drafts Q&As based on key facts provided by the other members of the crisis team
- Counsels, advises and trains local management to make media/external statements
- Manages and executes general internal communications on the crisis, when required
- Informs Head Office / International team if crisis escalates or might escalate to international/Corporate level

Communications manager

- First line of defence: supports communications director/head and uses own network and issues/crisis team to manage majority of reputational or communications issues on a Local/Country level before they become serious incidents or crises involving Head Office/International
- Maintains close contact with Local/Country management as appropriate
- Works with operations team to liaise with suppliers, customers and media when necessary and as per company policy
- Connects with IT to ensure communications support infrastructure in place (phones, lap-tops, access to Website, Intranet, Extranet, Social media updates)

Operations

- Provides advice on distribution system, product in the market and customer liaison
- Assists in tracing quantities and quality of product on the market; manages product recall with local suppliers/intermediaries if needed; finds alternatives to provide business continuity
- Liaises with emergency services, contractors

Technical / Quality manager

- Provides advice to issues/crisis team on technical aspects of product or service
- Provides advice on and co-ordinates testing of product or service
- Liaises with external technical advisors

Scientific & Regulatory Manager

- Provides advice on current scientific evidence and theories regarding product or service
- Provides advice on legislation and regulatory issues relating to product or service
- Liaises with external S&R consultants and external industry groups and regulators

Legal counsel

- Assesses company liabilities and provides advice on legal implications of proposed actions
- Ensures actions comply with local/international laws and regulations
- Approves all existing legal contracts and company statements/Q&A documents which may affect, or be affected by, the actions of the crisis team and advises accordingly

Finance

- Provides financial data and assesses impact on financial performance of an incident / crisis
- Advises on financial sources / budget available for incident/crisis resolution
- Liaises with insurance companies / reinsurers

Corporate Security

- Works to protect Company, people and other assets from harm and takes action to protect and resolve situations as mandated by core team/senior management
- Responsible for working with all teams to help them create business continuity plans, conduct security training, simulations and validations and ensures that all security information, processes and contingency plans are up-to-date and effective

Administrative support

- Prepares crisis / incident room under direction of Communications Director/Manager
- Collates all team contact details esp. "out of hours" and updates regularly
- Maintains records of activities, meeting minutes and agreed actions

Marketing & Strategy director

- Provides advice on existing and proposed marketing programs and promotions that may impact/be impacted by incident and co-ordinates necessary changes to marketing programmes
- Agrees changes to strategy with Board/CEO cc Communications Head/Sponsor

Responding to a crisis in real-time: use social media

Miha Rejc

When a crisis situation occurs it usually presents the possibility of devastating consequences for most of the stakeholders in your company. In most cases it's impossible to predict a crisis will happen - usually it comes more in a form of a hailstorm out of an otherwise blue sky. But, you can plan for it. And fast, responsive communication plays a vital role in limiting the damage.

We've all been in situations when a crisis occurred and we didn't have all the necessary information to put out a press release or a letter from the CEO, that explained all the aspects of the situation and what we, as the company or organization, are doing to solve this. Sending out partial messages, seemed to just worsen the situations as the stakeholders got the impression, that we have little or no clue what exactly went wrong, why it happened and who will be affected by this. But using social media enables us to seize the opportunity to communicate in real-time. First in line is the customer - the stakeholder group that is most likely to be the loudest about what has happened. And if we don't keep them informed, people start guessing and gossip starts spreading. The human mind is wired in a way that always predicts the worst scenario if we don't know what is really going on. A series of partial, albeit always updated information, presents itself as a contemporary solution; and in a world where social-media has enabled consumers to be ever more conscious and connected, it's one we must not overlook.

A few vital elements of effective crisis communication using social-media:

- get the first message out as soon as possible. Even if it's only saying "We are sorry to report a situation has occurred, we are working on it, stay tuned for more details",
- use a firm and sincere tone of communication; don't be over-concerned and over-apologetic
- let people know that you are available for any questions they might have,
- monitor the responses and comments for any signs of panic and downplay them with facts; reply to as many as possible
- whenever 'flaming' responses come up (and they will) reply in good humor or ignore them if they are simple mockery or just insulting. Ignoring these is a viable and sometimes the only right way to handle them.
- the head communicator on the case has to have constant and direct updates from people that are solving the crisis and provide vital details,
- push out new information with updates whenever they are available,
- when the crisis-team has come to the bottom of what went wrong, put out a final update or tweet with it and don't forget to follow up with a press release and letter from the CEO.
- plan ahead! it's vital to have social-media communication channels open and populated before the crisis, otherwise people will see through you (we all know what happened to BP and the hoax @BPglobalPR account).

Communications in times of crisis, key-learning areas in Colombia
Maria Avilan,
KLR Comunicaciones
Bogotá, Colombia
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Understand the challenges and opportunities of working in a developing country

For companies, to do Business in Colombia is not the same as doing it in Canada, United States, Brazil, France or Japan.

Colombia, as well as other developing countries, presents unique challenges and opportunities for the companies that decide to embark in the road of doing business in the unknown. One of them is understanding the context from the region, the country and the local communities; who integrates them, their expectations, perceptions, needs, reactions, if there are indigenous groups, if the zone is considered risky in terms of biodiversity or natural reserves, the level of institutionalism, the history of the industry in the region and the impact of their operations. This is also the first step of our vision on managing crisis. Companies should try to reduce the gap between the unexpected and the possible and be prepared and maintain strong relations with their key audiences.

Usually thinking outside of the box and being flexible, instead of being too "corporate" and rigid, is one of the best options the company has. But this is never enough if they don't know the implications of doing business in that country, as well as the risks and implications of their decisions. These will have direct impact on the people and their culture. Which is why the company should not lose sight of their goals and of the creation strong networks with their key audiences.

Monitor the environment

In order for companies to "hope for the best but prepare for the worst", they should constantly monitor the environment in which they operate because, once again, not all environments are the same. For the audiences, perception equals reality, reason why organizations should try to have those realities become the same one as they want to portray. This will determine the way in which they will be perceived. This monitoring should not just stay in a simple picture or image of the environment, it is necessary to permanently observe it, analyze it and understand it.

Assertive communication: be honest

In this constantly changing world, companies should always be prepared for the unexpected. Before any crisis strikes they should have defined the organization, how they want to be perceived and valued by the audiences. Based on these, they should create their action plans and construct powerful, honest and verifiable key messages in which all members of the organization should be aligned. Spokespersons should be trained in order to communicate assertively, and stay truthful to the organization's values.

According to Rafael Echeverría, humans are linguistic beings, there are no places outside of the language, and it forms judgments, declarations, affirmations and promises. Also, beyond language, humans also communicate by their emotionality and corporality. So, every company and spokesperson should be aware not only about what they say, but also about what they don't say, and the more you practice the better you deliver the messages.

Understand the power of the media

Knowing the media, how they operate, who's behind them, what are their motivations is essential for the company's practice, especially in the event of a crisis. Media and journalists are double-edged swords: if you don't work with them, they can work against you; if you don't give the first step, they will give it for you. Try to guide them so that they tell the story you want them to tell, not what's in their own agenda.

Organizations should embrace the power of new information technologies and understand the proper role and use of all media available. In the Presidential elections of the United States the power of social media was demonstrated, nevertheless, in the first round of the Presidential elections in Colombia they weren't as powerful because of a generational gap. But this will certainly decrease with time and organizations should be alert, observe, listen and communicate appropriately.

Face the crisis

In the event of a crisis, organizations should be prepared because key audiences want to see them acting, they want a face that answers to their questions and that claims responsibility for what happened. They should have a crisis committee and communicate timely and effectively their key messages. If something is not known, the company should state it, not speculate about it. Being honest is not negotiable. But one of the most important things to understand is that a crisis should not be seen as something negative, it's and opportunity for the company to build trust and strengthen its reputation.