

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CRISES AND A PLAN

Brainstorm Potential Crises in Advance: The Crisis Communications Team should identify every potential threat based on your known vulnerabilities. It may become clear that some crisis situations may be preventable by shifting existing conditions or operational methods. You should consider possible responses, and best- and worst-case scenarios. Often organizations are aware of an upcoming event like layoffs, a merger, or a move, so you can begin to plan well in advance of the actual event.

ADVANCE CRISIS PLANNING	
POTENTIAL SCENARIOS Security Breach, Product/Technology Failure, Natural Disaster, Financial Crisis, Workplace Violence, Environmental Crisis	
UPCOMING EVENTS Mergers, Acquisitions, Moves, Layoffs	

Crisis Communication Response Plan: Your brainstorming and assessment process should lead to the creation of a Crisis Response Plan tailored to your organization.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESPONSE PLAN TEMPLATE	
EVENT NAME	
COMMUNICATION GOAL	
TARGET AUDIENCES	
ISSUE ANALYSIS AND VERIFICATION	
WHAT HAPPENED?	
WHICH CREDIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES CONFIRMED?	
WHAT ADDITIONAL FACTS ARE NEEDED TO PUT THE EVENT INTO PERSPECTIVE?	
WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?	
WHO IS INVOLVED?	
HOW DID IT HAPPEN?	
WHAT IS CURRENTLY BEING DONE?	

IDENTIFY SYSTEMS

Establish Notification Systems: Set up notification systems to rapidly reach your stakeholders. Employing more than one type of communications platform (email plus text for example) the chances are much greater that the message will go through. Using your stakeholder database, you can purchase or rent an [emergency notification system](#) to automatically contact pre-established database.

NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS DESCRIPTION

Establish Monitoring Systems: Monitoring what's being said about you on traditional and social media can alert you to negative messages that could foment a crisis. Monitoring all stakeholder feedback during a crisis supports logical changes to strategy and tactics. Free services include Google Alerts and Hootsuite, but you can also use paid monitoring services to report results in various formats. Train personnel, such as Customer Service reps, who have front-line contact with stakeholders to immediately report to the Crisis Communications Team.

MONITORING SYSTEMS DESCRIPTION

Establish Crisis Verification System – What, When, Who, How and Why: The first step is to determine what has happened and immediately identify and document as many facts as possible based on essential questions: What happened and has the situation been confirmed by credible information sources? What additional facts are needed to put the event into perspective? When did it happen? Who is involved? How did it happen? What is currently being done?

CRISIS VERIFICATION SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

IDENTIFY MESSAGING

Develop and Use “Holding Statements:” You’ll need to develop full messages based on the facts and that may take some time. Using pre-determined “holding statements,” immediately after a crisis gives you breathing space and communicates that you’re aware and working on the matter. For example: “Expect a statement from our CEO within two hours” or “Check Twitter or our website for updates.” Holding statements should be reviewed regularly.

HOLDING STATEMENT PLANNER	
Acknowledge the crisis Give yourself some time Show commitment	
STATEMENT SAMPLES	DELIVERY MODALITY/MODALITIES

Key Messages: The Crisis Communications Team should aim to develop three crisis-specific messages based on verified information for all stakeholders and, if needed, some targeted messaging for specific stakeholder groups based on identified scenarios. These can be modified based on the actual crisis. Messaging will also need to be adapted to different forms of media. For example, Twitter may require links because of character limits.

KEY MESSAGE PLANNER		
AUDIENCE	TOP THREE KEY MESSAGES	DELIVERY CHANNELS & SPOKES PERSON
ALL STAKEHOLDERS		
AUDIENCE 1		
AUDIENCE 2		
AUDIENCE 3		

IDENTIFY KEY LEARNINGS

Post-Crisis Review: Once the crisis has passed, a best practice is to conduct a formal analysis in team meeting by the full Crisis Communications Team. Review what worked, what failed, and what could be improved prior to the next event, and use the results to update the Crisis Communication Response Plan.

CRISIS REVIEW FORM			
STRATEGY / TACTIC	DESCRIPTION	RESULT	IMPROVEMENT POSSIBILITIES
SUCCESSFUL			
SUCCESSFUL			
PROBLEMATIC			
PROBLEMATIC			

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