

10 Tips *for* Crisis Communication

1 **Have a communications team.**

This should be in place before a crisis happens. It should be made up of the company leaders, a legal expert, and someone well versed in the media.

3 **Get the story straight.**

Write one paragraph that explains what has occurred. Having a succinct and accurate story is at the foundation of a successful communications plan. If you can't all agree on what happened, how are you supposed to explain it to the public?

5 **Be honest.**

Cover-ups are always worse than reality. Explain what happened, or what may have happened. Avoidance is prolonging the inevitable while ensuring that a cloud of suspicion will hover over your company's reputation for a long time to come.

7 **Pick your core message.**

Be sure to say it, even if not asked. Act like a politician, who is more apt to use a question as an opportunity to state his or her own agenda than actually provide the requested information.

9 **Have a clear corporate communications policy in advance.**

Instruct all employees on the dos and don'ts. What is okay to share with your neighbor when approached while in the market checkout line? What is appropriate to share on social media? These issues must be addressed in advance, as word of mouth is the original way for messages to go viral.

2 **Appoint one spokesperson.**

While there may be different audiences (shareholders, the media, employees, etc.) who seek information, there should be one voice of authority for each audience (or for all of the audiences, if appropriate) so that messaging is consistent.

4 **Start with the end in mind.**

How do you want the situation to end up? Plan accordingly, backwards.

6 **Take action.**

After explaining the issue, immediately provide the actions the company is taking to achieve greater understanding (investigate), right the wrong (punitive action, correction, support), or declare innocence.

8 **Know what to avoid.**

Come up with alternative answers in advance. While this may sound contradictory to the push for honesty above, it isn't. There are always better ways of saying things. Knowing the right (most advantageous) way to communicate often comes after getting clear on what is least desired.

10 **Know that all situations (good and bad) are temporary.**

A wise company will use all situations, both pleasurable and adverse, as learning experiences from which to grow. What may seem like a crisis may instead be an opportunity for a company to present its grace and brilliance to the world. An institution that has integrity at its core will turn lemons into lemonade when tested.

In many aspects of life, fear is a sign to act. If a company is afraid of what people will think or say, that's a clue to investigate the company's values and actions. If they are aligned, communicate them proactively and prolifically.

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