The Phases of Crisis Communication

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Risk Management and Crisis Communication

As human beings we take risks daily; whether it is driving to work, taking a plane ride somewhere, swimming in a pool, or investing our money in the stock market. We accept the risks that come with those activities or decisions, even though we know that the probability of getting in harm's way may be low. We consider two issues when we assess a risk: the likelihood of harm that may be caused to us, and the cost of that harm. As humans, we also face personal and professional crises, and sometimes we are prepared to handle them; other times we are not. Organizations are similar in the sense that they, too, face risks and crises. How do they prepare?

This chapter discusses the phases of crisis management: prevention—preparing before a crisis occurs; managing—communicating during the crisis; and recovery—communicating postcrisis. However, it is imperative to introduce the concept of risk management as it impacts crisis management.

With the constant threat of all kinds of crises ranging from natural disasters, technological, workplace violence, industrial accidents, and others, every organization, no matter how large or small, needs both a risk assessment and crisis communication plans. Often, companies focus on one or the other; however, both plans are necessary for the successful management of an organization, because ineffective risk management and communication may result in a crisis. Ideally, they work in tandem.

Risk is variously defined as potential injury, liability, damage, threat, or loss caused by external or internal susceptibilities of a vulnerable organization, that may be defused through preventive measures. Risk is also defined as a measure of the probability and severity of adverse effects (Lowrance 1976), the likelihood of loss or injury and the extent of likelihood of such a loss (Kaplan and Garrick, 1981), and "the potential for an adverse outcome assessed as a function of threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences associated with an incident, event, or occurrence" (FEMA, 2010, p. 27).

Risk management is the deliberate "process of identifying, analyzing, assessing, and communicating risk and accepting, avoiding, transferring or controlling it to an acceptable level considering associated costs and benefits of any actions taken" (FEMA, 2010, p. 30).

Risk management begins with an assessment—a process whereby organizations assess areas of vulnerability and determine how they would use their resources to respond to or minimize those vulnerabilities. They also ascertain the consequences of not addressing or responding to the issues they identified. Effective risk assessment must be part of an organization's strategic plan and culture and must have the support of management and staff. A typical risk assessment process involves the following:

Risk Assessment

- identification of the hazards or risks;
- ascertaining potential victims and how they may be harmed;
- evaluating the risks and choosing preventive methods that have the maximum benefit/cost for reducing the risks;
- documenting findings and implementing them, and reviewing assessment for modification (HSE, 2010).

Risk potential is dependent on (1) location of organization, (2) type of organization, and (3) demographics of organization.

Risk communication, which has its origins in environmental health, but has since been adopted by other organizations, is defined severally as an interactive exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions, with the goal of assessing, minimizing, and regulating risks. Ropeik (2008) defines it as "actions, words, and other interactions that incorporate and respect the perceptions of the information recipients, intended to help people make more informed decisions about threats to their health and safety" (p. 59). In essence, it is the sharing of information with the public or institutions about the probability and consequences of harmful events. Risk communication enables the public to respond to crisis and reduces the possibility of misinformation.

Effective risk communication involves trust between the organization or people communicating the risk and the audience receiving the information. Miscommunication may potentially result in a crisis situation.

Crisis Communication

The previous chapter aptly captured the many definitions of crisis. At the core of these definitions is the agreement that crisis is a significant threat that can jeopardize an organization's image, reputation, and financial stability, and may result in injuries and death. Crisis is dynamic, often unexpected, and necessitates immediate and effective response to minimize harm. Crisis may be caused by natural disasters, technological breakdown, confrontation, malevolence, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence and rumors (Lerbinger, 1997).

Crisis management is an organizational process that enables an organization to prepare for and respond to crisis situations in order to minimize its effect on stakeholders. Crisis management often entails the execution of planned actions to contain the crisis, restore confidence in the organization and maintain business continuity. Crisis communication, an integral part of crisis management, is the process of active communication with stakeholders to minimize any damage to the organization's image or reputation.

Dan Keeney, president of Texas-based DPK Public Relations and a crisis communication expert, states that in spite of organizations' proactive efforts to identify and assess their vulnerabilities, and prepare for crisis, sometimes, the assessment process results in unexpected outcomes that may compel the organization to bridge the disconnect between its assumptions about its stakeholders or issues and reality (D. Keeney, personal communication, April 6, 2011). It is these kinds of assessments within organizations that reveal potential vulnerabilities that, if not managed, may lead to a crisis. Given that companies are becoming more aware of the need for risk and crisis management, the two entities are rightfully considered integral parts of effective organizations' policies.

Crisis communication has taken on a new dimension since 9/11 and the many subsequent crises that have affected organizations and governments worldwide. Social media, an important arsenal in crisis communication, have become a vital part of some organization's crisis management policy; yet, in a survey of companies with a social media crisis plan commissioned by German company Gartner Communications, and reported in *PR Week*, only 20.7 percent of companies polled worldwide admit that they have a social media crisis plan. Nonetheless, 84.8 percent of companies said that while they do not have a social media crisis plan, they have traditional crisis plans (Maul, 2010). This result further reinforces the worldwide importance of crisis communication.

Bad news travels faster than good news. In today's social media era, bad news circulates minutes after it happens. Organizations no longer have the luxury of waiting for a few hours or days before responding to a crisis. Speed and accuracy are of the essence. Effective preparedness is assumed. The first step to effective crisis management is to ascertain potential risks and issues in the organization. Before an organization encounters any crisis, it is imperative that it develops a proactive public relations program. Part of the program includes building strong and positive relationships with all of its stakeholders, whether it is through responsibility toward the community and environment in which it operates, or through its clients, regulatory agencies, and ensuring an excellent relationship with the media. It is also important that the organization develops fully multimedia platforms through which it can communicate with its key external and internal stakeholders. If stakeholders perceive an organization positively, a crisis situation may not spell its downfall, especially if the crisis is managed effectively and efficiently. To ensure that the organization survives a crisis, it must develop a detailed crisis communication plan or procedure.

Crisis communication occurs in three phases: *prevention*—preparing before a crisis occurs; *managing*—communicating during the crisis; and *recovery*—communicating postcrisis.

Phase 1: Prevention—Planning/Preparing before Crisis Occurs

In the first stage of crisis communication management, an organization's main goal is to anticipate, prepare for potential crises, and attempt to prevent them before they occur. The key function of the prevention stage is to research and prepare an issue or risk management plan and a response to the plan.

Mitroff and Pearson (1993) state that crisis preparation is the difference between secure and insecure organizations. They further stated that "crisis-prepared organizations constantly scrutinize their operations and management structures whereas crisis-prone organizations tend to miss or ignore signals indicating potential weakness in operations and structure" (p. 22). They also propose that to prepare for a potential crisis, every organization should conduct a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat) assessment. This strategy enables an organization to identify areas where it is prepared and where it is vulnerable so it could plan accordingly.

Part of the planning stage is the establishment of a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) that would help to execute the crisis plan. Ideally, this team will consist of managers from all key departments and the organization's legal counsel.

A crisis plan must have a goal, objectives and tactics. It must be packaged on multiple platforms for easy accessibility to the crisis team. That means that it should be in hard copy, on the company's website, and downloadable on hand-held electronic devices.

Goal

A crisis communication plan is a document that delineates the policies and guidelines for coordinating effective communication among members of the crisis team in an organization, between the organization and the media and between the organization and other stakeholders.

The crisis communication plan should be written in conjunction with a crisis plan. It should address a variety of crises that the organization may face and provide guidelines on how to rapidly manage the crisis and communicate the organization's response before, during, and after the crisis.

The crisis communication plan should also be executed by the designated crisis team and in conjunction with the organization's crisis plan. A good plan has three characteristics: (a) it is detailed, but must be adaptable to changes in the crisis; (b) it triggers a response to how the crisis team is notified and how the team in turn notifies the organization's stakeholders and others; (c) it has the buy-in of the organization's management if it is to be effective. It is important to remember that the plan is a resource and not a panacea to crisis management.

Objective

The objectives of a typical crisis communication plan are as follows:

- to analyze the crisis situation and ascertain what, and if any, action should be taken;
- to assemble a CCT that will propose appropriate and unified response to the crisis;
- to execute the proposals recommended in the plan: communicate with stakeholders, stem negative effects of crisis, restore stakeholders' confidence, and maintain business continuity; and
- to review the effectiveness of the plan after the crisis.

Tactics

In a generic crisis communication plan, the tactics are the specific actions taken when a crisis strikes.

- The first act is to gather facts or incident reports.
- If the first respondent believes that the crisis warrants action, depending on the organization, the person will notify the appropriate authority that would make the decision to convene the CCT. In some organizations, the first responder may be the crisis communication manager or leader.
- The CCT then executes the crisis communication plan.

Outcome

The aftermath of the crisis depends on a number of issues, including how effectively the crisis communication plan was executed, lessons learned, and the process of healing.

Writing the Crisis Communication Plan

1. Establish a Crisis Communication Team

A Crisis Communication Team (CCT) is a group of key individuals in and outside an organization, specially created to identify a crisis, develop a plan on how to manage the crisis, and execute the crisis communication plan.

- A crisis communication team of key decision makers such as president or CEO, vice presidents, and managers of key departments such as information technology, human resources and facilities, public relations or communication managers, social media experts, legal counsel subject matter experts, chief security and risk managers, administrative assistants, and others who may be appointed on an ad-hoc basis. An effective team also seeks help from crisis experts from other organizations who may bring in fresh insights or views.

- The crisis team must designate a chief spokesperson, who would:
  - be the chief liaison with the media and must be well versed in working with all forms of media;
  - be knowledgeable about the organization and the crisis;
  - be able to convey the organization's message in a calm, confident and deliberate manner. In the event of a major crisis, the CEO will be the spokesperson; an assistant spokesperson substitutes in the event the spokesperson is not available; and
  - be able to coordinate with subject matter experts who can answer technical questions about the crisis.
- A crisis team must have a manager and assistant manager to ensure effective and efficient coordination and execution of the plan by team members. The crisis manager is also responsible for:
  - coordinating communication to key stakeholders via emergency notification system put in place before the crisis. This notification could take the form of phone and e-mail blasts and SMS text messages;
  - ensuring that team members perform their roles effectively; and
  - creating sub-teams within the crisis team to handle specific tasks. For instance, public relations or communication members of the team should be assigned as the crisis/media team—responsible for preparing materials for the media kit that can be posted online or distributed to the media. Such information would include current organizational fact sheets, product or organization's backgrounders, speeches, biographies of key personnel, press releases, and media alerts.
- Team members roles should be clearly defined or described to ensure that all parties understand their roles, train for their roles, and are able to perform their designated functions at optimum level during the crisis.
- Media coverage monitor—works closely with the media team to monitor and document all media coverage, including social media, to correct errors and to use information in postcrisis assessment.
- Safety team—supervised by the safety officer—to ensure that all functions are conducted in a safe and efficient manner.

- Scenario coordinator—works with team to develop scenarios that would help the organization ferret out potential gaps in its crisis plan.
- Community groups and brand ambassadors—provide support and promote the organization in a positive way to key audiences.
- Phone bank workers—specially trained to work in crisis situations where key stakeholders want a human voice to answer their questions.
- Administrative assistant—assigned to document all correspondence.

The Crisis Communication Plan includes the following:

- CCT member roles and contact information: The crisis team members' roles should be listed with their names and all contact information about the individuals. The designation and contact information should be used to create a master list, which is made available to all team members on multiple communication platforms.
- Contact information for emergency services such as police, fire, and hospitals must be in the plan. Also include information about other non-emergency community services that may be needed.
- Contact information for multimedia platforms, including social media communicators such as influential bloggers and tweeters that could be used to communicate to audiences during a crisis.
- Organization's media kit: Include fact sheet, media release, media advisory, brief biographies (with high resolution pictures) of key executives of the organization, backgrounders, and key messages and frequently asked questions (FAQs). The media kit should also be available on the company's website, with links to social media efforts, including blogs, Twitter feeds, and YouTube. The media kit becomes part of the crisis kit once a crisis is underway.
- Include sample incident reporting forms (for potentially useful information) and phone logs to document phone calls from the media and other inquiries.
- Educate employees about crisis, so they can direct all media inquiries to the crisis team.

2. *Identify an Emergency Operations Center or Command Center*
Often in a crisis, the organization may have to move its emergency operations away from the location of the crisis to another place. This Emergency Operations Center or EOC is a physical location that functions as a central command or headquarters where the crisis could be monitored by the team. It is also where all decisions about the crisis, such as media briefings and crisis updates are made.

The EOC should be centrally located to accommodate the influx of media personnel, volunteers, and crisis team members. Equally important is the inclusion of a virtual EOC that allows crisis team members to communicate from remote locations through wireless networks and hand-held electronic devices. A virtual EOC not only connects crisis team members electronically, it makes room for flexibility in the event of changes to the crisis.

The EOC must be equipped with, among others, the following:

- kitchenette
- food and beverage
- laptop computers with Internet connection, iPads
- copier, scanner
- pens, pencils, markers
- notepads, phone lines
- clipboards
- staples, paperclips
- rubber bands
- cell phones, walkie-talkies
- generator, flash lights, lighters
- maps, Global Positioning System (GPS)
- phone directories
- media kits
- first aid kit
- chairs and tables
- chalkboard, chalks
- lectern with company logo
- radio, television sets
- fully functional "Crisis Kit."

The Crisis Kit includes the following items:

- notepads
- company letterheads
- preprinted "incident report forms"
- initial media statement forms
- pens, pencils, markers
- masking tapes
- first aid kit
- list of emergency personnel, including contact information
- list of community resource personnel, including contact information
- list of local, regional and national media personnel and contact information
- crisis communication team list including contact information
- organization's building plans, including maps of floor plans, security alarm

- locations, images of interior and exterior of the building
- local, city and state maps.

The crisis kit, like any emergency kit, should be readily accessible to members of the team at the onset of a crisis.

3. Maintain current contact information
In addition to maintaining current contact information of all CCT members and organization's top management in both hard and downloadable electronic copies, the plan should also include all contact information for the following:

- external crisis professionals
- local media
- public emergency services at local state and national levels
- local police, hospital and fire departments
- local non-emergency community services.

If possible, the contact list should also be designed in a wallet-sized and electronic format, accessible via hand-held devices and distributed to the crisis communication team. The contact list should be updated regularly to ensure that it remains current.

4. Identify crisis scenarios
Working with the crisis team, think through and identify a variety of crisis scenarios that an organization may encounter. These scenarios may vary depending on the type of organization. Nonetheless, consider including in the scenario at least one type of crisis from each of the categories of crisis: natural disaster, technological, workplace violence, fire, fraud, and many others.

Write out the crisis and be as detailed as possible. Use subject matter experts to make sure the crisis is as authentic as possible.

5. Develop/evaluate response to your crisis scenarios
The response or simulation of the crisis scenario is one way to ensure that in an actual crisis, the crisis team will respond efficiently and effectively. To ensure success, the response should fully address the crisis scenario identified in step 4. That means:

- individuals assigned would gather information about the crisis, identify what happened, who was involved, where it happened, when it happened, how it happened, and why it happened (if the person has information about the reason for the crisis). This incident report would be reported to the appropriate personnel;

- the Crisis Communication Team will be activated and members assigned to their various functions;
- the team will establish a fully operational EOC, as well as a virtual EOC;
- the team will anticipate the media's tough questions and prepare the spokesperson for them;
- the team will prepare a variety of media statements, talking points and FAQs for the spokesperson;
- the team will activate the crisis page (dark site) on the organization's website;
- the team will identify and activate all communication channels to the organization's stakeholders on multiple media platforms;
- the team will use third party endorsers and brand ambassadors to tell the organization's story to different stakeholders;
- the team will reconvene to evaluate its response to the simulated crisis;
- the team will identify lessons learned from the simulation and what could have been done differently.

With this simulation, the team is ready to tackle a real crisis.

Phase 2: Managing—Communicating During the Crisis

Once a crisis occurs, it is important to ascertain what happened, assess the impact of the crisis, and move quickly to contain the crisis, minimize its impact, and bring it to a successful conclusion. Some organizations fail to understand the importance of a quick response to a crisis and suffer the consequences. Toyota's recalls provide an apt example of reputational damage as a result of delayed response to a crisis.

Millar and Heath (2004) note that communicating during a crisis can include fairly and correctly assigned blame. It could also entail apology depending on the crisis and the organization's goals. However, in communicating these messages, the organization must consider how the issue could be handled without shocking its audiences unnecessarily (p. 7). Some crisis experts state that an apology is effective if it is considered sincere, offers a solution and comes from the organization's CEO. The Toyota crisis also serves as an example of the use of this approach.

Organizations decide on who becomes the chief spokesperson based on the severity of the crisis. In the Toyota case, CEO Akio Toyoda, had to appear as the face of the company, because the crisis was the severest the company had faced in its recent history. Jet Blue's CEO, David Neeleman, took the same approach during the company's crisis involving stranded passengers on New York City airport tarmac in 2007.

Another issue that organizations face during a crisis is prioritizing of communication. Who should be notified first? Given that social media channels have made information available instantly to all, some crisis experts favor notification of employees before other stakeholders. However, Lukaszewski (1997) proposed an order of response to stakeholders during a crisis—he suggested that the order of response should be first: "Those most directly affected (victims, intended and unintended), second: employees, third: those indirectly affected—neighbors, friends, families, relatives, customers, suppliers, government, regulators, and third parties) and fourth: the news media and other channels of external communication" (p. 8).

Many experts agree that effective communication during a routine crisis generally follows these steps:

1. Gather the facts: accurate information is crucial to enable the crisis team to respond properly. Call the emergency services, if necessary.
2. Ensure that employees are safe.
3. Notify the CEO of the organization or the crisis team manager.
4. Convene the CCT: members will decide how to proceed in response to the crisis, depending on the level of the crisis. Crises levels can range from minimally intense which may attract little attention to highly intense which attract wide media and social media coverage. For instance, a highly intense crisis is one where the media appear on the premises seeking answers and the victims or their supporters express outrage, and also take to social media to criticize the organization. In that case, the CEO may have to make the initial statement and express empathy for the victims.
5. Prepare an initial statement and background information about the crisis. Such information should consists of the four Ws and H: Who, What, Where, When and How? The "Why" may be determined by the appropriate personnel if that information is not immediately known. Do not volunteer information unless it is confirmed to be accurate (see appendix for sample statement). If possible, develop a statement on how the organization will respond to resolve the crisis.
6. Identify key stakeholders: Determine how and in what order the stakeholders will be notified of the crisis.
7. Notify key stakeholders using the appropriate channel of communication.
8. Communicate first with internal audiences: Employees must be in the loop. They must be told the facts of the crisis via all communication channels (e-mail blasts, SMS text messages, and phone blasts). Employees should be directed to forward all inquiries about the crisis to the CCT leader.
9. Communicate with direct stakeholders: These may be shareholders, clients, or partners. Use all communication channels that you have used before the crisis to communicate with stakeholders.

10. Activate your EOC and virtual EOC for team members in remote areas.
11. Communicate with external audiences: Arrange a press conference or issue a media statement depending on the nature and gravity of the crisis. If a press conference is scheduled, provide necessary items, such as company logo, lectern and images.
12. Activate the "dark site" on the company's website. The "dark site" is a website that is prepared prior to a crisis, but not visible to anyone. The site is made accessible once a crisis erupts. Post initial statement on this now-activated crisis site and provide updates about the crisis on that site. Information on the "dark site" should include: Fact sheets about the crisis, company profile, top management biographies, maps, photos, of organization's infrastructure, section for newsroom and message updates, and useful Web links.
13. Use social media: blogs, vblogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr to post texts and images and updates on the crisis.
14. Designate a trained spokesperson for the crisis. In the event of a catastrophic crisis, the CEO should be the spokesperson. The crisis team should keep the spokesperson informed of new developments in the crisis and a subject expert should also be available to provide specific information on the crisis.
15. Develop key messages: Use message mapping or scripted messages during the first critical hours of the crisis. Keep messages clear, concise (about three key points) and consistent (see appendix for sample).
16. Post messages on organization's website, Facebook, blog, and YouTube and tweets by the designated individual.
17. Maintain a log of all media inquiries and calls and return their calls, e-mails or, text messages. This record enables the team to assess media coverage of the crisis and also to correct inaccuracies (see appendix for sample log form).
18. Use third party endorsers or brand ambassadors to bolster your crisis communication tactics and to dispel rumors.
19. Ensure business continuity by keeping organization as operational as possible.
20. Remain calm.

Tips for communicating with the media during crisis (what the designated spokesperson and organization should do):

- Have a clear and consistent message. In essence, tell the truth.
- Apologize if organization is at fault. Show empathy with the affected stakeholders.
- Be able to convey key messages of the organization in an effective and efficient manner. The key messages should be limited to three. The messages should be repeated at every media opportunity.

- Be able to respond to "difficult" or "hostile" questions from the media. This confidence is achieved through previous media training provided to the spokesperson.
- Be able to work with subject matter experts on the crisis to ensure accurate response to the media.
- Be able to avoid saying "no comment." That leads to media speculation and definition of the crisis situation instead of the organization doing so.
- Be able to avoid making unrelated off-the-cuff or off-the-record comments to reporters. Assume that every comment would be recorded.
- Be able to recognize questions designed to mislead. Such questions include:
  - accusatory questions
  - false questions containing inaccurate details
  - labeling questions
  - leading/loaded questions
  - multiple-part questions
  - presumptuous questions
  - speculative questions.
- Spokesperson statement should be uploaded and posted on the organization's website, Facebook, blog, vblog, and other social media channels to reiterate the organization's position on the crisis.
- Organization should take advantage of Twitter to post updates on crisis situation. Updates should follow social media format—140 characters for Twitter.
- Communication with media must be timely and consistent.
- Monitoring of media coverage must be ongoing.

Phase 3: Recovery—Communicating Postcrisis

The postcrisis or postmortem stage begins immediately after the crisis has been brought to a conclusion. This stage may last only a few months or years, depending on the type and severity of the crisis.

For Coombs (2007), postcrisis communication is what the organization says and does after a crisis. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) argue that "post-crisis is also a period when the media and the public become more critical and questioning regarding the cause of the crisis, the appropriateness of responses, and who would take the blame and responsibility" (p. 50).

Millar and Heath (2004) define postcrisis response as communication that "demonstrates how, why and when the organization has put things right as well as what it plans to do to prevent the recurrence of a similar crisis" (p. 8). Seeger et al. (2003) take the definition one step further by stating that organizations undergo three effective postcrisis communication stages: salvaging legitimacy, learning, and healing.

Salvaging legitimacy: Organizations should restate a larger social purpose or value and highlight their benefits to stakeholders (p. 142). Organizations should use issues management to reclaim their social legitimacy and "image restoration, which entails denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness of the event, corrective action, and mortification" (p. 143) to salvage their tarnished image.

Learning: This stage includes what the authors call retrospective sensemaking, structural reconsideration, and vicarious learning. They state that retrospective sensemaking occurs when the organization recognizes issues that it ignored and assumptions that it did not question, which may have led to the crisis. Structural reconsideration occurs when an organization implements changes in "leadership, mission, and general practices" to regain its legitimacy (p. 147). Vicarious learning occurs when organizations learn from best practices of other firms.

Healing: This process involves explanation, forgetting, remembering, and renewal. Explanation answers the question of what happened and how the crisis came about. Forgetting is the ability to replace negative feelings about the crisis with positive ones (p. 149). Remembering is an organization's effort to recollect aspects of the crisis that illustrate unity and resilience (p. 150) and renewal focuses on the future by determining how to overcome previous weaknesses and take advantage of new opportunities (p. 150).

Organizations generally use this stage to:

1. declare the crisis officially over through the same media platforms used to communicate during the crisis;
2. evaluate their performance before, during, and after the crisis and lessons learned;
3. review specific response(s) to all stakeholders;
4. evaluate media coverage of crisis and respond to media critics;
5. update media, emergency personnel and community resources lists;
6. update website and social media;
7. reinforce their value to their stakeholders and their community;
8. reaffirm their commitment to their stakeholders and attract new stakeholders by reinforcing business continuity;
9. identify and publicly recognize heroes and heroines whose efforts made a difference during the crisis (the recognition format is determined by the organization); and
10. debrief crisis team, review and make appropriate revisions to crisis plans and prepare for the next crisis.

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Appendix

Crisis Communication Team Directory

This directory should be updated and made available to all crisis team members in both electronic form and print. A wallet-sized version of the directory could be produced for team members.

Last name	*First name*	*Title*	*Office*	*Home*	*Cell*	*E-mail*

Subject Matter/Content Experts

Area of expertise	*Name/Title*	*Organization*	*Contact information*
Legal			
Human resources			
Corporate reputation			
Environmental			
Crisis and risk communication			
Security			

Important Community Resources

Local Emergency

Contact	*Name*	*Phone numbers/E-mail addresses*
Local police	List names of key personnel	
Local fire department	List names of key personnel	
Local hospitals	List key departments, including ER	
Ambulance/Emergency Medical Service (EMS)	List name of nearest ambulance service	
Local Red Cross	List name of key personnel	
Local shelter/ community kitchen	List name of key personnel	

Local Media Directory

Contact	*Name*	*Phone numbers/E-mail addresses*
Local television stations	Names of news director/news editor/ beat reporter	
Local radio stations	Names of news director/news editor/ beat reporter	
Community cable stations	Names of news director/news editor/ beat reporter	
Local newspapers	Names of news editor/beat reporter	
Local webmedia	Name of contents editor/bloggers	

Sample Media Log

Last name	*First name*	*Phone numbers/ E-mail addresses*	*Date*	*Question(s) asked*	*Media organization*	*Responder's name*	*Additional follow-up needs*	*Notes*

Sample Messaging Steps

Sample Initial Media Statement on Crisis

"*(Identification of speaker)*: A *(what happened)* at *(where it happened)* involving *(who was involved)* occurred today at *(location and time)*. The incident is under investigation and we will provide you with additional information as soon as we get them."

Key Messages

- *Message to staff*
  - On (date), (incident) occurred (tell what happened) at (where it happened) involving (who was involved).
  - The incident is under investigation and more information will be provided as we receive them.
  - (Show empathy) ABC Company is committed to the safety of its employees.
  - Please direct all media inquiries to the (Crisis team leader) or public relations department.

- *Message to customers*
  - On (date), (incident) occurred (tell what happened) at (where it happened) involving (who was involved).
  - The incident is under investigation and more information will be provided as we receive them.
  - (Show empathy) ABC Company is committed to the safety of its customers.
  - Please call this number (123–456–7890) if you have questions.
  - Also visit our website and Facebook page for updates.
  - Follow us on Twitter @ABC Company.

- *Message to media*
  - On (date), (incident) occurred (tell what happened) at (where it happened) involving (who was involved).
  - We will notify you as we get additional information about the situation.
  - ABC Company is committed to the safety of its employees and customers.
  - We will have updates on our website www.abccompany.com/newsroom.
  - You can also find us on blogpost at ABCcoyblogpost.com, Facebook at ABC Company, and on Twitter @ABC Company.

Sample Media Release

COMPANY LOGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE/RELEASE DATE

Contact (Name/Title)
Phone number/E-mail/Skype
Facebook/LinkedIn/Blog

Media Release Headline

- [Location] [date]: The [name of organization] has evacuated customers from the ABC remote location in [name of place] as a result of a gas leak in [specify area of gas leak].
- Briefly describe when leak occurred, how it was detected, and action taken by the company.
- Indicate time of day company notified local authorities and what other arrangements have been made.
- Quote company source as to what action the company has taken or is taking to minimize the effect of the gas leak or to plug the leak [cite company official's name and title].
- Direct media to website and social media links for additional information.
- Indicate if there would be a press conference or a public comment about the crisis at a later time and place.

Sample Social Media Release Format

Contact information	*Organization:* *Phone #/Skype* *E-mail/Facebook* *Website*	*Spokesperson:* *Phone #/Skype* *E-mail/Facebook/LinkedIn* *IM/Website/Blog/Twitter*
Include release date	MEDIA RELEASE HEADLINE: (subhead)	
	KEY FACTS or MESSAGE Use bullets or number	Tag your release with key words and phrases to make for easier Internet search.
	LINK to RSS FEED (to ensure regular update on web content)	Link to previous releases in organization's "newsroom."
Link to relevant PHOTO/GRAPHIC	Link to PODCAST	Link to relevant VIDEO/YOUTUBE
Link to all organization's social Media: Website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogs, Twitter, Flickr	Link to approved KEY QUOTES by company executives, experts on the crisis.	Link to relevant sites for third party endorsement of crisis efforts or brand ambassadors comments
Insert LOGO for social media links identified earlier: RSS, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn	Boilerplate Information	Insert LOGO for social media links Identified earlier: RSS, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

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