Being Ready for Anything
Fundamentals of Crisis Communications
Planning and Preparation
“If you lose money for the firm, I will be forgiving. If you lose reputation, I will be ruthless.”

– Warren Buffett
“Twenty years to build a reputation. Five minutes to ruin it.”

— Warren Buffett
WHAT IS REPUTATION?
Emotional judgment of an organization’s **credibility and performance on issues of importance.**

Emotional judgment on an organization based on how it **lives up to the expectations** that the person has for it.
If we know: Reputation is a measure of how well an organization lives up to the expectations of its stakeholders.

Then we can understand: It’s created and driven by equal parts character & competence.

**Character:** How well the organization acts and behaves with integrity and transparency.

**Competence:** How well the organization performs and its capabilities to do so.

An organization earns reputation by inspiring stakeholder loyalty because of both its character and competence.
What is a crisis?

An issue or event that has the potential to erode brand equity, damage reputation or negatively impact the organization’s bottom line.

**Never** underestimate the crisis potential of an issue. **Always** assume that an issue or incident could become a crisis.
2020 represented a historic break

People now **empowered to bypass** public authorities

Increasingly engaged in **private networks**

Banding together around **shared beliefs**

Socially constructing **their own reality**

Using a new collective voice to **make sense for each other**
2022: A tough time to manage reputation

PANDEMIC TRAUMA & UNCERTAINTY

SOCIAL INEQUALITY & INEQUITY

FRACTURED GEOPOLITICS & POLARIZATION

SPREAD OF MIS/DISINFORMATION
Today’s reality:
Virtually no reality

STABILITY IS SCARCE,
AND THERE IS A REAL
LACK OF TRUST

Articulating a position
must be done speedily,
thoughtfully, and in one
hundred places at once.
## How issues & crisis management works today

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Components of preparedness

**ESTABLISH A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL**

- Response team (members, roles and responsibilities)
- Risk level evaluation and escalation guidance
- Response process
- Media monitoring and social media listening and triage
Components of preparedness

**DEVELOP**

**SCENARIO PLANS**

- Scenario-specific triggers and considerations
- Mapped to risk profiles
- Detailed response protocol
- Ready-to-adapt template materials
Components of preparedness

**EMBED, EQUIP AND TRAIN**

- Crisis Communications Protocol training workshop
- Crisis media training
- Crisis simulation drill
- Social media crisis training
Recognizing stakeholder expectations

SYMPATHY  CONCERN  CONVICTION  FACTS

SOLUTIONS  REASSURANCE  OPTIMISM
Priorities during a crisis

- **Solve** the problem
- **Prevent** the loss of stakeholders trust
- **Minimize impact** on employees and customers
- **Limit** negative media coverage and social media conversation
- **Control** rumors and speculation
- **Decrease** chance of litigation or financial impact
Strategic Best Practices
Immediately communicate **what you know to be true** and continue to offer **updates** as more information becomes available. Listen constantly.
Take ownership of the situation, avoid playing the victim and express empathy – put people first.
Consider the perspectives of affected people and **offer solutions**.
Demonstrate transparency, take credit for what you are doing and show that you are getting the word out.
Tactical Best Practices
 Quickly employ **multiple communications techniques** to distribute information, but speak with one voice.
Be prepared with a holding statement for quick initial response. Ensure all materials are translated into local language, tailored to preserve consistent meaning across languages.
Choose a **disclosure timeline** with intent so that internal audiences are prepared.
Actively **correct and dismiss** inaccuracies and rumors before they become substitutes for facts.
Choose a spokesperson with **authority**, who can remain calm and on-message. A spokesperson with understanding of local culture and language is recommended. Also utilize **credible and trusted third-party sources** as advocates when appropriate.
The C-A-P rule for developing key messages

**CONCERN**
- Express your concern and empathy.
- Demonstrate how seriously you take the matter.
- Make it explicit – don’t assume people know you are concerned.
- Demonstrate concern with what you say and how you say it.

**ACTION**
- Describe what action you are taking to address the matter.
- Provide timelines and parameters where able, but do not speculate if that information is not yet confirmed.

**PERSPECTIVE**
- Draw out any positives and provide context (only if appropriate).
- Learnings taken from the situation should be expressed in a way that demonstrates the organization will do everything in its power to ensure the situation does not occur again.
Final thoughts

ANXIETY, POPULISM, UNCERTAINTY AND ACTIVISM will continue

ORGANIZATIONS MUST EXAMINE AND BE CLEAR about who they are and what they stand for

A CLEAR, PURPOSE-DRIVEN CULTURE AND NARRATIVE are essential to managing reputational risk
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