CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN TEMPLATE

Crisis is inevitable for just about any type of organization, so identifying the people, systems, messaging and other standards in advance makes sense. Here are steps you can take in advance to take control:

IDENTIFY PEOPLE

Identify the Crisis Communication Team

Identify who will head up the team, with the top public relations executive (or outside agency or consultant) and legal counsel as chief advisers. You should identify senior staff, usually the heads of major divisions, to serve as your organization's crisis communications team.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM

NAME & TITLE	ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY	CONTACT INFORMATION

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

IDENTIFY PEOPLE continued

Identify Spokespersons

Chain of command. All information should flow through a single person/entity to ensure accurate and consistent messaging. No unauthorized personnel are allowed to speak about the issue in public or post, and social media posts should be limited, (refer to your own department social media policy.) You should identify and train in advance the pool of potential spokespersons/subject matter experts, even though you will pick your ultimate spokesperson only once the crisis breaks. You want to choose a spokesperson that is best suited to be the trusted messenger for situationally dependent circumstances. Consider all the different channels of communication, both internal and external, that you may need to cover.

CRISIS SPOKESPEOPLE

NAME & TITLE	EXPERTISE	CONTACT INFORMATION

IDENTIFY PEOPLE continued

Identify and Know Your Stakeholders

Create a complete database of internal and external stakeholders to guarantee that they obtain the exact messages you want them to hear and potentially repeat to other individuals or media outlets. Use the Smartsheet Stakeholder Communication Plan Template and update it frequently.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION PLAN

STAKEHOLDER	POWER / INTEREST	KEY INTEREST & ISSUES	COMMUNICATION VEHICLE	FREQUENCY	COMMENTS

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CRISES AND A PLAN

Brainstorm Potential Crises in Advance

The crisis communication team should identify every potential threat based on your known vulnerabilities. It may become clear that you can prevent some crisis situations 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. In those cases, you can begin to plan well in advance of an actual event.

ADVANCE CRISIS PLANNING

POTENTIAL SCENARIOS Workplace violence, Traffic accident involving truck vs. citizen, Firefighter arrests/crimes, Firefighter scandals/bad behavior, Harassment, Social media posts, Racism/Sexism	
SCENARIO 1	
SCENARIO 2	
SCENARIO 3	
UPCOMING EVENTS **Budget Negotiations, Pay/Pension negotiations…**	
SCENARIO 1	
SCENARIO 2	
SCENARIO 3	

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL CRISES AND A PLAN continued

Crisis Communication Response Plan

Your brainstorming and assessment process should lead to the creation of a crisis response plan that is 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 ARE 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 communication platform (email and text, for example) greatly increases your chance of disseminating a message successfully. Using your stakeholder database, you can purchase or rent an emergency notification system to automatically contact a 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 might amplify a crisis. Monitoring all stakeholder feedback during a crisis allows you to make 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 communication 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 occurs achieves two goals: It gives you breathing space; and it communicates that you're aware of and working on the matter. For example: "Expect a statement from our Chief within two hours," or "Check Twitter or our website for updates." You should review holding statements regularly.

HOLDING STATEMENT PLANNER

• Recognize/acknowledge the crisis   • Rapidly response   • Take responsibility/show regret (when appropriate)
•Demonstrate compassion/empathy • Demonstrate confidence and commitment by discussing remedies and solutions

STATEMENT SAMPLES	DELIVERY MODALITY/MODALITIES

Key Messages

The crisis communication team should aim to develop three crisis-specific messages based on verified information regarding all stakeholders. Also, if necessary, the team should develop some targeted messaging concerning specific stakeholder groups. You should base this targeted messaging on various scenarios that you've identified. You can, of course, modify your messaging in accordance with the specific nature of an actual crisis. You will also need to adapt your messaging to different forms of media. For example, Twitter may require links because of its character limit.

KEY MESSAGE PLANNER

AUDIENCE	TOP THREE KEY MESSAGES	DELIVERY CHANNELS & SPOKESPERSON
ALL STAKEHOLDERS		
AUDIENCE 1		
AUDIENCE 2		
AUDIENCE 3		

IDENTIFY KEY LEARNINGS

Post-Crisis Review

Once the crisis has passed, implement the following best practice: The full crisis communication team should meet to conduct a formal analysis of its work. The team should review what worked, what failed, and what could be improved prior to the next event. Then, the team should use these results to update the crisis communication response plan.

CRISIS REVIEW FORM

STRATEGY / TACTIC	DESCRIPTION	RESULT	POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS
SUCCESSFUL			
SUCCESSFUL			
PROBLEMATIC			
PROBLEMATIC			