

Crisis Communications

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PRINCIPAL, TEMPLE SCOTT ASSOCIATES INC.

MAY 25, 2018

Agenda

- What is Crisis Communications;
- Social Media has Changed Communications;
- The #MeToo Movement Transformed Society;
- Examples of Crisis Communications;
- What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis; and
- Conclusion.

What is Crisis Communications?



What is Crisis Communications?

- A story that grabs the public's attention.
- A story that is relatable and generates strong emotion – often empathy, sympathy or outrage.
 - These stories typically have heroes and villains. Which is your organization?
- Quick test: As an organization, do you want media interest in this story?

Social Media has Changed Communications

Urban Outfitters' response wasn't good enough to douse a fast-spreading fire on Twitter

Amber Karnes tweeted a blog post that accused Urban Outfitters of stealing designs from artists without credit, and the brand handled it terribly.

Its only immediate response was a single tweet, which said:

"Hey guys, we see your tweets regarding the I Heart Destination necklace. Please know that our accessories buying team is looking into this." It wasn't anywhere near enough to address the issue, and things ramped up.

Three hours after the initial tweet, the brand had lost 17,000 followers and both #urbanoutfitters and #thieves were trending. Oops.



Twitter

McDonald's Twitter campaign blew up in its face when its #McDStories hashtag got hijacked

McDonald's learned first hand that you can't control hashtags. If the masses choose to, they can hijack a hashtag any time they want.

That's what happened with the brand's #McDStories hashtag.

Put out there along with its #MeetTheFarmers hashtag, McDonald's meant to promote the quality of its suppliers.

Well, that didn't work at all. People used the hashtag to tell the entirely wrong types of stories that McDonald's wanted.



Twitter

The #MeToo Movement Transformed Society



Examples of Crisis Communications

United Airlines passenger dragged off flight



Examples of Crisis Communications

A year after a passenger was dragged off a United flight, everyday indignities remain

By **Lauren Zumbach** · Contact Reporter
Chicago Tribune

Chicago Tribune

APRIL 9, 2018, 8:15 AM

It started with a passenger refusing to give up his seat aboard a Sunday evening United Express flight from Chicago's O'Hare International Airport to Louisville, Ky., last April to make room for airline employees.

Within 24 hours, cellphone video of the bloodied 69-year-old man being dragged down the aisle had gone viral, sparking outrage worldwide and embroiling United Airlines in one of the worst public relations crises in its history.

Examples of Crisis Communications

Facebook/Cambridge Analytica Scandal



Examples of Crisis Communications

NDP Party Leader Jagmeet Singh's response to caucus sexual misconduct allegations:

After six months of Singh, doubts surface that he's just not ready, *Global*, March 29, 2018



iPolitics @ipoliticsca · May 9

"I don't know what was known, who knew it or what they did or didn't do with it," said **Jagmeet Singh**, rejecting Glen Kirkland's claim that "everyone knew about" the rumours of NDP MP Christine **Moore**'s alleged improper behaviour.
[@atRachelGilmore](#) reports



always vote @always_vote · May 1

In the New Democratic Party of Canada's independent **investigation** into harassment complaints against one of its MPs, Erin Weir, Party Leader **Jagmeet Singh** nor Party officials know who the complainants are. Kudos 👍.
[#PnPCBC](#) [#MeToo](#) [#TimesUp](#) [#cdnpoli](#)

Robyn Urback liked



John Geddes @Geddes28 · May 4

Mulling over my interview with Erin Weir yesterday, I'm wondering why **Jagmeet Singh** didn't spell out what was required of Weir in a document at the end of the harassment **investigation**:

Examples of Crisis Communications

Developing Story - USA Swimming:

Olympian Ariana Kukors Smith Sues U.S.A. Swimming, Claiming It Ignored Sex Abuse, *New York Times*, May 21, 2018



Examples of Crisis Communications

Canadian precursor to #metoo - CBC response to Jian Ghomeshi allegations:

- CBC inquiry concludes management mishandled Jian Ghomeshi, *CBC*, April 16, 2015
- CBC apologizes to Kathryn Borel over handling of Jian Ghomeshi complaint, *CBC*, May 11, 2016



What Isn't Crisis Communications



SPORTS

February 21, 2018 12:29 pm

Updated: February 21, 2018 12:54 pm

Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir inspiring Canadians to try ice dancing, say coaches

By Michelle McQuigge The Canadian Press

Skate Canada Saskatchewan Honours Jenna Toms, Tianna Delalleau

Lynne Bell / Carlyle Observer

MAY 18, 2018 02:18 AM



What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis

Six steps to success

1. Identify Proper Spokespeople:

- Who should be speaking to the issue at hand?
 - Is it about Skate Canada or a Skate Canada member?
 - Is it actually about something other than skating (i.e. a facility issue)?
 - Is it about a local club?

Division and contradictory messaging feeds a story and reduces confidence in the organization

What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis

2. Prepare Proper Spokespeople:

- .Spokespeople need to be trained and briefed.
 - I don't know is not a good answer!

What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis

3. Develop a system for triaging media requests. Recommended practices include:

- Communicate only by email;
- Establish a central clearing house for all requests;
- Know who the reporter is and their outlet;
- What are the questions?;
- What is the nature of the story?; and
- What is the deadline for comment?

What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis

4. Develop Main Messages and Standby Statements:

- Given tight deadlines, good crisis communications strategies develop main messages and standby statements to address possible crisis communications scenarios. This limits the potential for scrambling and freelancing under tight deadlines.
- Occasionally, additional facts may be involved that require a tweak in messaging or the type of media coverage may require a change to the media protocols.

What to do When Facing a Communications Crisis

5. Be prepared to adjust your messaging and standby statements to suit specific details of the case at hand.
6. Consider getting professional advice.

Conclusion

When a crisis hits an organization its reputation and the reputation of its leaders is at stake.

One wrong move can take years to recover from.

How an organizations communicates its response can be just as important as the response itself.

Best to plan in advance and be prepared to adjust based on circumstances.