



Crisis Communication Checklist

2020

Introduction This is an easy to use checklist for crisis communication, which I'm happy to share. It will help you deal with any crisis. For more support, please contact Alfred Jansen.

- 1.**
Be prepared and informed.
Pre-organise your crisis communication now!
- List the types of crises that may affect your business (internally and externally).
 - Create basic scenarios and timelines for the above.
 - Create a list of people who are and should be involved.
 - Determine in advance who's in charge during a crisis (crisis manager) and who's responsible for the communication (spokesperson).
 - Make a list of trustworthy information sources on issues that may affect your business (trade and governmental organisations, media etc.).
 - Also, a list of contacts to be informed (all relevant stakeholders, obviously including relevant media).
 - Always act according to your company's corporate guidelines for communication, press, identity and values. Even during a crisis.
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- 2.**
Start internally.
You're facing a crisis.
First communicate internally.
- Always share relevant information concerning the situation (after verification) first to your colleagues. So, start your communication inside your own organisation. If available, you'll work together with your company's internal communications specialists and HR department.
 - Use e-mail and if possible/necessary SMS/WhatsApp for an internal release/statement.
 - Make sure that colleagues are informed how to handle external questions and provide contact details of your company's spokesperson.
 - Use social media wisely and update your intranet accordingly.
 - Provide regular updates, keep colleagues informed at all times.
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- 3.**
React responsibly
How, when and where to communicate?
- React as soon as you can to a crisis situation (don't forget to provide contact details of the spokesperson).
 - Create a list of possible FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and a release for the media, concerning the issue. Keep it update as the crisis evolves.
 - If you don't have all information concerning the issue yet, create a first response stating what you know and that as soon you know more, you'll provide more information. Provide timely regular updates.
 - Write a press/media release (e-mail) and post the release on your social media.
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- Use social media wisely and refer for updates to your website (which you'll need to keep updated as you go).
 - Avoid rumours, monitor social media responses.
 - Do not overcommunicate!
 - Don't tell more than you need, and certainly not more than you can.
 - If available, provide visuals to the issue (you want to be in control of what is published as much as possible).
 - In all communication, refer to the designated spokesperson (if that's not you), not to the crisis manager of management team. The spokesperson will coordinate interviews and update both the crisis manager and the management team.
 - Make sure the spokesperson is always fully informed, trained, experienced and with authority.
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4.

Be consistent and clear

Shape, target and time your communication well.

- Be clear, to the point, consistent, respectful and honest. Use professional writing and language skills, provide professional photography and visuals. You want to be taken seriously, right?
 - Be media savvy. Make sure your communication fits the needs of those you reach out to, be it internally or externally. Understand what journalists and bloggers need from you.
 - If you're not sure how to deal with content professionally, contact a PR or crisis communications specialist**.
 - Never say "No comment", but say "I'll come back to your question as soon as possible". And do it!
 - Also, don't try to cover up the issue. It will always backfire badly.
 - Be human and compassionate. Realise that, in most cases, people and their families are affected personally and are looking for your company's reassurance. If you do that well, you will improve your reputation. If not, you may suffer long-term damage.
 - Don't get personal and respect privacy guidelines (in Europe: GDPR).
 - Be visible, available and accessible. If you or your company is not available, the public, the media and other stakeholders will get the information elsewhere (social media). That is in no one's interest.
 - Do what you promise and adhere to deadlines. Remember, in times of crisis, your trustworthiness is even more at stake than it normally is.
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Use the best skills available

Above I've listed some of the vital points to consider before and during a crisis situation. In short: be prepared, be open and be professional. As for specific communications skills, I would advise you to get in touch with a specialist. They can help you develop a crisis communication plan, provide media training or provide practical support while facing any type of crisis.
