**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 good business sense. Here are steps you can take in advance to take control:

IDENTIFY PEOPLE

**Identify the Crisis Communication Team**

Ideally, the organization’s CEO 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 executives, usually the heads of major divisions, to serve as your organization’s crisis communications team.

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| **CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM** | | |
| **NAME & TITLE** | **ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY** | **CONTACT INFORMATION** |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

IDENTIFY PEOPLE continued

**Identify Spokespersons**

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. Consider all the different channels of communication, both internal and external, that you may need to cover.

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| **CRISIS SPOKESPERSONS** | | |
| **NAME & TITLE** | **EXPERTISE** | **CONTACT INFORMATION** |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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.

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| **STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION PLAN** | | | | | |
| **STAKEHOLDER** | **POWER / INTEREST** | **KEY INTEREST & ISSUES** | **COMMUNICATION VEHICLE** | **FREQUENCY** | **COMMENTS** |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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.

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| **ADVANCE CRISIS PLANNING** | |
| **POTENTIAL SCENARIOS**  Security Breach, Product/Technology Failure, Natural Disaster, Financial Crisis, Workplace Violence, Environmental Crisis | |
| SCENARIO 1 |  | |
| SCENARIO 2 |  | |
| SCENARIO 3 |  | |
| **UPCOMING EVENTS**  Mergers, Acquisitions, Moves, Layoffs | |
| SCENARIO 1 |  | |
| SCENARIO 2 |  | |
| SCENARIO 3 |  | |

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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.

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| **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?** |  |

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency_notification_system) to automatically contact a pre-established database.

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| **NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS DESCRIPTION** |
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**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.

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| **MONITORING SYSTEMS DESCRIPTION** |
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**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?

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| **CRISIS VERIFICATION SYSTEM DESCRIPTION** |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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 CEO within two hours,” or “Check Twitter or our website for updates.” You should review holding statements regularly.

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| **HOLDING STATEMENT PLANNER**  • Acknowledge the crisis. • Give yourself some time. • Show commitment. | |
| **STATEMENT SAMPLES** | **DELIVERY MODALITY/MODALITIES** |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

IDENTIFY MESSAGING continued

**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.

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| **KEY MESSAGE PLANNER** | | |
| **AUDIENCE** | **TOP THREE KEY MESSAGES** | **DELIVERY CHANNELS & SPOKESPERSON** |
| **ALL STAKEHOLDERS** |  |  |
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| **AUDIENCE 1** |  |  |
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| **AUDIENCE 2** |  |  |
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| **AUDIENCE 3** |  |  |
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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN**

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.

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| **CRISIS REVIEW FORM** | | | |
| **STRATEGY / TACTIC** | **DESCRIPTION** | **RESULT** | **POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS** | |
| **SUCCESSFUL** |  |  |  | |
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| **SUCCESSFUL** |  |  |  | |
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| **PROBLEMATIC** |  |  |  | |
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