


YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

A Model Management Presentation Outline

Revised 1.3.2017

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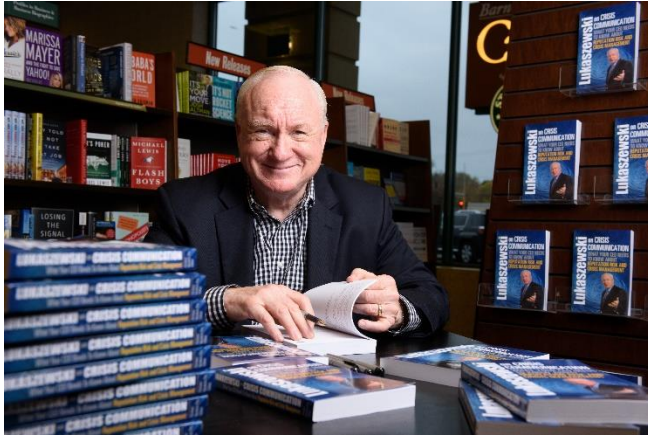
America's Crisis Guru®
Crisis Management, Leadership
and Organizational Recovery

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A Personal Profile

This is Jim Lukaszewski:



*James E. Lukaszewski,
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**Powerful Speaker,
Important Author,
Inspiring Teacher,
Trusted Advisor**

Purpose: Through helping resolve the significant troubles of others, find and do what will be the most important things I will ever do in my career and life.

Vision/Aspiration: To be an authentic trusted Communicator, Coach, Counselor and Strategic Thinker; to be the first call when leaders and managers face their toughest, touchiest, most sensitive and devastating situations.

Mission: To be the table, truly strategic; promptly finding those exceptionally achievable, ethical, honorable, powerful, and sensible ingredients for solutions to the most challenging leadership, management and organizational problems.

Disciplines: Gettable, doable approaches; Intuition-Pattern Sensitivity; lifelong learning; Management Perspective/sensitivity; Teach, Coach, Counsel to inspire and expand Management and leadership influence and success; Thoughtful, Incremental Achievable Advice; Tomorrow Focused; Trustability; Verbal Clarity.

Values: Compassion; Constructive approaches; Curiosity; Honesty; Inconsistency; Positivity; Pragmatism; Promptness; Truthfulness.

Principles: Candor; Communicate Promptly-Intentionally; Destiny Management; Empathy/Compassion/Apology; Engagement; Openness; Responsiveness; Transparency; Truthfulness.



YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS: A MODEL MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION OUTLINE ©

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INTRODUCTION

Effective crisis response plans tend to fulfill five powerful objectives. They: produce decisions that reflect fundamentally sound thinking and behavior; manage the first few minutes, few hours of a crisis; reduce media coverage and public interest is reduced from the start; involve management meaningfully in the process of crisis planning, management, response and recovery; and work against the known patterns of mistakes and problems management tends to cause themselves when crises occur.

Effective planning answers many crucial questions. These are among the most important:

- Has the boss approved/participated?
- Has the entire process been tested?
- How do we know we've won or lost?
- How do you assess collateral damage?
- What are the messages going to be?
- What do we do first?
- What if the boss refuses to participate?
- What will the victims do?
- What will the victims say?
- What's the plan?
- When do we put the boss out front?
- When does it stop being a crisis?
- Who says it's a crisis?
- Who's in charge?
- Who's on the back-up team?

Crisis communication management planning (now much more commonly referred to as readiness planning) is a process with identifiable steps, elements, parts, and phases. To increase

management buy-in, organizational acceptance, and a fundamental understanding of what needs to be accomplished as you design a crisis communication management response process, it's helpful to touch on a predictable but reasonably complete checklist of bases. Begin with your definition of crisis. Following that, using this checklist, develop language of your own to explain each of these relatively obvious action steps or decision points.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Crisis Defined

What's needed first is an appropriate and understandable working definition of crisis. Here is mine:

Crises are show-stopping, people-stopping, product-stopping, reputation-defining situations that create victims and/or explosive visibility. Anything less falls more into the category of a problem or issue that, while disruptive, has far less potential to create explosive, unplanned visibility.

Readiness

Use the term "readiness" because it more accurately reflects what crisis preparation is all about. It's a more management-oriented term, and has really become a key response concept since the attack on the United States in September 2001. Using this approach begins to raise a better question, "How ready are we to deal with the most serious problems we expect to face?"

The heart and soul of a successful crisis response is a process that can be activated immediately and continues building until the situation either reaches some level of control or the momentum of the crisis has abated. Then, established corporate functions can be imposed and resumption, as well as business activity recovery, can take place. Practically speaking, crisis planning takes months, while execution of the crisis response must take place in only a few minutes to a few hours.

The faster you can capably respond in meaningful ways, the sooner both the crisis and victim generation subside. The organization can then begin to return to some semblance of normalcy.

The Readiness Equation

Accurate contact information	75%
Pre-authorization	15%
Extensive scenario preparation and testing	8%
Surprise	2%

100%

The Crisis Communication Plan Development Process

There are eight clear-cut and direct steps in the crisis plan development process:

1. Visibility analysis
2. Prioritize exposures, i.e., likelihood, impact, and probable collateral damage
3. Scenario development
4. Message development
5. Crucial contact list development
6. Emergency media relations instructions
7. Installation, testing, drills, table tops
8. Continuous updating and internal education

CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE PLAN COMPONENTS

Crisis Venues

The nature of crisis can be better understood if we recognize the venues in which crisis is likely to occur and the types of crises that may be expected, recognizing that often there are combinations.

The seven venues of crisis are:

1. Headquarters
2. Top management
3. Local
4. Regional
5. National
6. Global
7. Virtual

The six types of crisis are:

1. Operating, i.e., directly involving how the business works everyday
2. Non-operating:

– Berserk employee	– Embezzlement	– Obscene / coercive
– Bomb threats	– Employee violence	telephone calls
– Business loss	– Ethics problems	– Sabotage
– Congressional action	– Extortion	– Scandal
– Crimes in progress	– Kidnapping	– Sexual harassment
– Criminal behavior	– Litigation	– Stock price drop
– Decapitation	– Major allegations	– Terrorist actions

- Demonstrations / protests
- Disgruntled employee
- Major theft
- Major business decisions
- Major crime
- Web attacks
- Whistleblowers
- Workplace violence

3. Combinations of the two, or more

4. Disasters:

- Earthquake
- Evacuation
- Explosion
- Fire / flames
- Flooding / torrential rain
- General disruptions / threats
- Hazardous materials / chemical spills / gas leaks / toxic fumes
- Major storms
- Medical emergencies
- News media response
- Noxious odors
- Power outages
- Ruptured water pipes
- Smoke / burning odors
- Tornado
- Winter storms

5. Insidious unethical behaviors

Besides the more obvious mistakes that lead to unethical behaviors, there are other, less apparent, more insidious kinds of unethical behaviors that can lead to problems.

Sometimes these less obvious behaviors are the precursors to illegal behavior. When you can identify these behaviors in your vicinity, there is trouble ahead. Act promptly to correctly these situations.

- Lax control: A manager's careless enforcement, education about, and monitoring of ethical standards.
- Lack of tough, appropriate centralized compliance within each area of the company.
- No one charged with responsibility of teaching, enforcing, and disciplining in cases where ethical breaches occur.
- Leadership that allows supervisors to overlook bad behavior.
- Leadership that allows employees to experiment with methods and tactics outside established guidelines.
- Emphasis on "doing whatever it takes" to achieve appropriate business and financial goals.
- Managers and supervisors who minimize the importance of oversight and compliance processes.
- Structuring incentives in such a way that they can compromise the ethical behavior of people, the quality of the products and services we deliver, and allow shortcuts to be taken for a variety of obviously questionable reasons.
- Avoiding confrontation with managers who chronically misbehave or chronically overlook misbehavior.
- The tendency to operate "on the edge," always pushing for more than is appropriate.
- Management that ignores the signs of and doesn't question rogue behavior.

- Management tolerating the inappropriate behavior or management by individuals who are “critical to the organization’s mission.” These are the folks who are the super sales people, the high achievers who are allowed to break the rules to maintain the altitude of their performance.
 - Belittling or humiliating those who suggest or seek ethical standards.
 - Dismissing or destroying the careers of employees who report bad or outright wrong behavior.
 - Demeaning the internal or external credibility of those who blow the whistle, those who report or bring management’s attention to lapses in ethics.
6. Virtual:
- Anti-corporate activism
 - Anti-corporate blogs
 - Boycotts
 - Bullying
 - Imposter sites
 - Personal attacks
 - Pornography links
 - Rumors
 - Short selling
 - Web attacks/Web sites

RESPONSE PRIORITIES: THE GRAND STRATEGY

1. Stop the Production of VictimsPage 6
2. Manage the Victim Dimension Page 6-7
3. Employee CommunicationPage 8
4. Contact Those Indirectly AffectedPage 8
5. Deal with the Self-Appointed, Self-Anointed, and the MediaPage 8

1. Stop the Production of Victims

Stop the production of victims. Resolve the problem promptly; begin addressing key issues. If it’s leaking, foaming, smoking, burning, creating victims, deal with the underlying problem first.

2. Manage the Victim Dimension

It is victims and others who are directly affected that cause incidents to become crises. Be prepared to understand the dynamics of victims and anticipate those dynamics as the response process proceeds.

Victims Are:

- People
- Animals
- Living systems

Victimization Is:

- Self-designating
- Self-maintaining
- Self-terminating

Victimization Is Caused by:

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • Abuse | • Commission | • Disparagement | • Minimization |
| • Arrogance | • Confrontation | • Embarrassment | • Negligence |
| • Bullying | • Deception | • Fear | • Omission |
| • Blame shifting | • Denial | • Ignorance | • Sarcasm |
| • Callousness | • Discrediting | • Insensitivity | • Shame |
| • Carelessness | • Dismissiveness | • Lies | • Surprise |

Victims Feel:

- Anger
 - Betrayal, disbelief, dread, and fear
- Frustration
 - Powerlessness, helplessness
- Inadequate
 - Walking but wounded, agonized, alone

Victims Suffer:

- Intellectual deafness
- 24/7 internal and external monologue
- Everything is a question

Victims Need:

- Validation
 - Preferably by the perpetrator
- Visibility
 - To describe their pain and warn others
- Vindication
 - Resolution that prevents the victimization of others
- Apology
 - The single most powerful litigation stopping act

3. *Employee Communications*

Every employee is a communicator when something happens. Whether there are 10 employees or 10,000 employees, when questionable activity or crisis occurs, everyone affected becomes a communicator. Inform, educate, and script employees promptly. Non-communication is a toxic strategy.

4. *Contact Those Indirectly Affected*

(neighbors, regulators, governments, friends, allies, families, relatives)

Every crisis causes damage, injury, or fear in a large number of individuals who are indirectly affected: your Agency infringes on another Agency or your problems taint your relationship with an ally, allied organization or interest group. Inform them.

5. *Deal With the Self-Appointed, Self-Anointed, and the Media*

Almost every crisis brings out individuals and organizations with their own agendas. Your crisis presents the opportunity to activate those agendas. Then there is the news media that can bring substantial attention to your crisis and you, usually focusing on or speculating about what went wrong, who's responsible, who the victims are, how bad it could possibly be. . . and even worse.

THE GOLDEN HOUR

The key concept to remember here is that each of these five steps must be activated in the first hour, or first two hours, of any crisis. Failure to activate all of these priorities will cause additional victims, questions, misunderstandings, and collateral damage, which the perpetrator will have to deal with as the crisis is resolved.

The Golden Hour Metaphor

The first hour or two of crisis situations are often referred to as the Golden Hour or hours. The phrase comes from military medicine at the close of World War II, and during the Korean conflict. Military medical studies indicated that the single most prevalent cause of death for wounded soldiers was blood loss, the failure to get these individuals into serious life-saving medical treatment quickly after being wounded. They were bleeding to death in the Jeeps driving them to the hospitals located in rear areas of the battlefield.

The helicopter, which was brought into ever wider military use following World War II, was the perfect vehicle to get wounded soldiers quickly off the battlefield. But one more critical component was needed. Surgical facilities had to be as close as possible to the battle lines to reduce even further the risks and damage associated with transporting the wounded to urgent care.

The U.S. Army came up with the mobile hospital concept, the "Mobile Army Surgical Hospital," or MASH as they became widely known, just like the television show. These mobile facilities were located right on the battle line and moved with the progress of the battle.

Here's the point, 96% of wounded soldiers who arrived alive at a MASH, regardless of the severity of their injuries, left the MASH alive.

To me, this is the perfect metaphor when combined with following the Grand Crisis Response Strategy to address what management has to be ready to accomplish in those first 60 to 120 dangerous, frightening and chaotic minutes of a crisis.

PROFILES IN FAILURE

Sometimes the only way to help organizations avoid embarrassment, humiliating visibility, enormous litigation, and just plain stupidity is to illustrate dramatically the pattern of behaviors and attitudes that lead to catastrophic reputational trouble. I call this pattern "Profiles in Failure." These behaviors can be easily recognized and their impact predicted. If you are looking for trouble, here's the way to quickly multitask your way into long-term difficulty.

1. ***Silence:*** The most toxic strategy possible. Makes you look like a perpetrator, whether true or not. There is no credible way to explain silence in the face of crisis. Silence is the most frequent career-killer in crisis situations.
2. ***Stalling:*** Speed beats smart every time. Failure to act immediately, even incorrectly, is impossible to explain or apologize for. Doing nothing, even for what appear to be good reasons, is never explainable.
3. ***Denial:*** Refuse to accept the fact that something bad has happened and that there may be victims or other direct effects that require prompt public acknowledgement.
4. ***Victim Confusion:*** Irritable reaction to reporters, angry neighbors, and victims' families when they call asking for help, information, explanation, or apology. "Hey! We're victims too."
5. ***Testosterosis:*** Look for ways to hit back, rather than to deal with the problem. Refuse to give in, refuse to respect those who may have a difference of opinion or a legitimate issue.
6. ***Arrogance:*** Reluctance to apologize, express concern or empathy, or to take appropriate responsibility because, "If we do that, we'll be liable," or, "We'll look like sissies," or, "We'll set a precedent," or, "There will be copycats."
7. ***Search for the Guilty:*** Shift blame anywhere you can while digging into the organization, looking for traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinced.

8. ***Fear of the Media:*** As it becomes more clear that the problem is at least partly real, the media begin asking, “What did you know, and when did you know it?”, “What have you done, and when did you do it?”, and other humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions for which there are no really good, truthful answers anymore because you have stalled so long.
9. ***Whining:*** Head down, finger in your navel, shuffling around, whining, and complaining about how bad your luck is, about being a victim of the media, zealous do-gooders, wacko-activists, or people don’t know anything; about how people you don’t respect have power; and, that you “don’t get credit” for whatever good you’ve already contributed.

Execute one, some or all of these behaviors in any order and I guarantee trouble, serious reputation problems, and brand damage. By the time you recover – if you do – look for some career-defining moments including involuntary departure, and a new team may replace you and yours.

RELATED INFORMATION TO HELP YOUR PLAN SUCCEED

Key Ingredients in a Successful Planning Process

To avoid response failure, certain key ingredients must become part of the crisis communication planning process:

- Top management buy-in
- Specific rules for leaders
- Strategies by scenario
- Activation procedures (see triggers above)
 - Corporate management team
 - Senior management response team
 - Special response unit
 - Crisis czar
 - Incident command
 - Call center
- Call Headquarters If, process
- Corporate level buy-in
- Division / branch / field buy-in
- Follow up and updating procedures
- Installation, testing, and effectiveness programs
- Web site readiness

Key Roles for Leadership

What the Boss Should Really Do in a Crisis

One of the more powerful weaknesses in crisis response is the lack of specific roles and assignments for top management. The result of this crucial gap in crisis management planning is the mismanagement, lack of management, or paralysis that afflicts crisis response efforts. This defect occurs all too frequently in plans I review, responses I analyze, and scenarios I explore with client companies.

In the course of directing a client's crisis developing powerful response strategies, it's clear to me that crisis response promptness and effectiveness depends on having five essential responsibilities spelled out carefully in your crisis plans for the CEO (or surviving leaders): response, analyzing past responses to crisis, or

1. ***Assert the moral authority expected of ethical leadership.*** No matter how devastating or catastrophic the crisis is, in most cultures forgiveness is possible provided the organization, through its early behaviors and leadership, takes appropriate and expected steps to learn from and deal with the issues. The behaviors, briefly and in order, are:
 - Candor and disclosure (acknowledgement that something adverse has happened or is happening)
 - Explanation and revelation about the nature of the problem (some early analysis)
 - Commitment to communicate throughout the process (even if there are lots of critics)
 - Empathy (intentional acts of helpfulness, kindness, and compassion)
 - Oversight (inviting outsiders, even victims, to look over your shoulders)
 - Commitment to zero (finding ways to prevent similar events from occurring again)
 - Restitution or penance (paying the price – generally doing more than would be expected, asked for, or required)
2. ***Take responsibility for the care of victims.*** The single most crucial element in any crisis, aside from ending the victim-causing event, is managing the victim dimension. There are only three kinds of victims: people, animals, and living systems. It's top management's responsibility to see that appropriate steps are taken to care for victims' needs. This is both a reputation preservation and a litigation reduction activity. Most devastating responses to crises occur when victims are left to their own devices, when victims' needs go unfulfilled, or for whatever reasons (usually legal) the organization that created the victims refuses to take even the simplest of humane steps to ease the pain, suffering, and victimization of those afflicted. Out of all of the CEO's essential responsibilities, taking a personal interest and an active role in the care of victims is the most important. Maintain a positive, constructive pressure to get victim issues resolved promptly.

3. ***Set the appropriate tone for the organizational response.*** Tone refers to internal management behavior that helps the organization meet the expectations triggered by a crucial, critical, or catastrophic situation. If senior management takes on the posture of being attacked or victimized, the entire organization will react in the same way. Very rarely are large organizations and institutions considered victims. They're generally considered to be the perpetrators at worst, or arrogant bystanders at best.

It's the most senior executives who need to set a constructive tone that encourages positive attitudes, language, and prompt responses. This approach protects the organization's relationships with various constituents during the response and recovery period, shows respect for victims, and reduces the threat of trust or reputation damage.

4. ***Set the organization's voice.*** Put a face and a voice on the organization or institution as it moves through the crisis. This action is directed towards the external world – how we describe ourselves, what we're doing, how the response is going, what responsibilities we're taking, and what outside scrutiny we're inviting.
5. ***Commit acts of leadership at every level.*** Leaders acting like leaders has significance during urgent situations. Literally walk around and talk to people. Encourage, suggest, knock down barriers, and help everyone stay focused on the ultimate response process goals. Random acts of leadership are always welcome in any environment, but especially during crisis. Rather than huddling in their executive offices trying to determine what steps should be taken to resolve the situation, ninety percent of senior executive activities should have executives out-and-about being leaders, motivators, and instigators of empathy.

Of all of these, it's the prevention of similar occurrences that will help victims come to closure and provide sufficient evidence that enough lessons have been learned to avoid the need for litigation and other forms of public embarrassment and humiliation.

All crises are management problems first. Preplanning executive actions can avoid career-defining moments. Include specific executive instructions in all plans and response scenarios.

Typical Organization Barriers

An audit of potential organizational or process disruptions needs to be completed early in the process. Look for:

- Resistance to automatically trigger corporate notification, i.e., a *Call Headquarters If* list
- Competing response priorities between divisions, functions, and product lines
- Other existing plans, e.g., plans developed by others or required by government regulations
- Relationship between corporate and division/branch/field operations
- Response confusion and turf issues
- Existing management response plans

READINESS PLANNING CYCLE

Readiness preparation and planning processes to manage crisis communication can each be divided into important subcategories.

- Preemption:
 - Codes of conduct
 - Compliance
 - Integrity
- Preparation:
 - Business resumption
 - Dark sites:
 - Typical Web content:

– Advertising	– Dear So and So	– Our purpose
– Applications and filings	– In the news	– Overview
– Comparisons with other sites	– Issues and policies index	– Presentations
– Contrast analysis	– Letters	– Publications
– Corrections and clarifications	– Links	– Q&A
	– News and views	– Who we are
 - Disaster recovery
 - Crisis communication
 - Incident response triggers
 - Senior management team
 - Corporate management team
 - Crisis czar
 - Special response unit
 - Incident command
 - Call centers
- Planning:
 - Corporate
 - Leadership team
 - Division / branch / field
 - International or non-domestic
 - Combinations of the above
 - Web
- Response:
 - Corporate leadership
 - Corporate headquarters
 - Branch / division / field
 - International
 - Virtual
- Recovery:
 - Scenario driven
 - Collateral damage assessment and remediation

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you've presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss' shoes and why.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you've suggested or by doing nothing.

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE**Drug raid on a branch plant****SITUATION**

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- Feds and state authorities raided the second shift.
- Twenty-six employees were taken into custody.
- Media were tipped and went in with police.
- Story is all over the television and radio.
- Employees believe that we knew about the drug problem, but didn't do anything about it.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- We looked like we were afraid or reluctant to act.
- Everyone who worked there seemed to know more about the situation than we did.
- Drugs are manufactured in an old part of the plant.
- There may be some who weren't caught (ringleaders).
- There's fear among employees that it's not over.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you've presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- Reveal that we worked with cops to set up raid.
- Provide counseling for innocent employees.
- Try to save those who are victims.
- Make sure ringleaders get punished.
- Let the cops handle it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss' shoes and why.

- Work to reduce tension in the facility.
- Keep police collaboration confidential since we need to catch everyone.
- Establish employee committee to set rules to prevent future occurrences.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you've suggested or by doing nothing.

- Get more bad press.
- Good employees leave.
- Become known as a “gang” place.
- Lose customers.

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

Employee violence

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- Former co-worker got past security with a gun.
- Former employee shoots former girlfriend in the lunchroom.
- Former employee holds other employees hostage.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- Employees are rattled.
- Police have taken over scene.
- News reporters call all over the place.
- We are all paralyzed.
- People don't know what to do or where to go.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you've presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- Let police handle most of it (it is a crime scene).
- Focus on employee shock and discomfort.
- Help families of the afflicted, as well as those who are bystanders.
- Find a way to assess impact on co-workers.
- Find a way to assess impact on company.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss' shoes and why.

- One, two, and three . . . and try to bring in counselors to help people by talking through what they've experienced and what they feel.
- There must be an empathetic, positive response by top management to employees to set emotions down.
- Should there be a memorial or remembrance services?

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you've suggested or by doing nothing.

- Lack of action could adversely affect employee morale.
- Lack of action could trigger similar events.
- Lack of action sends message that we don't care.

COMMUNICATING INTENTIONALLY

A trust building platform from which all behaviors, intentions, strategies and decisions flow.

Over the years, I've developed, teach, coach and advocate a very powerful and helpful communication philosophy. At the same time, this approach defines my ethical approach to life, to work and to trouble. I call these "intentions" because this is how I seek to operate my life every day, and to teach others to do the same. These behaviors build trust

1. ***Candor – Truth with an attitude, delivered now (the foundation blocks of trust).***
 - Disclose, announce early.
 - Explain reasoning and reasons.
 - Discuss options, alternatives considered.
 - Provide unsolicited helpful information.
2. ***Openness, accessibility – Be available for the disasters as well as the ribbon cuttings.***
 - Be available.
 - Be willing to respond.
3. ***Truthfulness – Truth is 15% facts and data, 85% emotion and point-of-reference.***
 - Point of reference matters more than facts.
 - Factual overload victimizes people and makes them feel stupid, therefore angrier.
 - Unconditional honesty, from the start.
 - Get good at handling emotional situations, subjects and people
4. ***Empathy – Action always speaks louder than words.***
 - Action illustrates concern, sensitivity, and compassion.
 - Act as though it was happening to you or someone you care about.
 - It is literally impossible to put yourself in someone else's shoes in any meaningful way, from the victim's perspective.
5. ***Responsiveness – Answering questions relentlessly in every situation validates your integrity.***
 - Every concern or question, regardless of the source, is legitimate and must be addressed.
 - Answer every question; avoid judging the questioner.
 - Avoid taking any question personally.
 - Build followers and be nice, even in the face of anger or aggressive negativity. Anger and arrogance create plaintiffs.
6. ***Transparency – No secrets (because important things and stupid stuff always come out.)***
 - Our behavior, our attitude, our plans, even our strategic discussions are unchallengeable, positive, and explainable.
 - Our families would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, and discussions on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper.

7. ***Engagement – Face-to-face is the communications approach desired by just about everyone and every victim.***
 - Take aggressive positive interaction with those who challenge us.
 - Our base and those who give us permission to operate expect us to deal with unconvinced and victims.
 - Prompt direct interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator.
8. ***Destiny Management – It's your destiny, which only you can manage in your own best interest.***
 - Manage your own destiny, or you'll find someone waiting on the sidelines to do it for you.
 - Relentlessly correct and clarify the record.
 - Prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts preempts critics and empowers employees, supporters and those who give us permission to operate.
9. ***Apology – The atomic energy of empathy. Apologies stop just about everything, including litigation.***
 - Acknowledge personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed, or wronged another.
 - Explain what happened and the known reasons for the circumstance.
 - Talk about what you and your organization have learned that will help prevent it from ever happening again.
 - Humbly ask for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends.
 - Make restitution

You can call this anything you like: communications policy, guidelines or manifesto. I like the word intentions because it signifies that we are fully engaged in communicating in the most effective, honest, empathetic and open manner possible, all the time.

By publically professing these intentions you will set a standard to which you can be held accountable. This behavior can lead to an extraordinarily interesting, useful and trustworthy life and besides, you sleep better at night.

SEEKING FORGIVENESS:**Nine Steps to Rebuilding and Rehabilitating Trust**

Seeking Forgiveness is society's requirement for relationship, trust, and credibility restoration. Adverse situations using this template are remediated faster cost a lot less, are controversial for much shorter periods of time, suffer less litigation, and help the victims come to closure more quickly. Obtaining forgiveness involves completing the nine steps below. To achieve success in the shortest possible time, these steps should be completed as quickly as possible: like start them all today. Skip a step or be insincere and the process will be incomplete and fundamentally fail.

- Step #1** **Candor:** Outward recognition, through promptly verbalized public acknowledgement, that a problem exists; that people or groups of people, the environment, or the public trust are affected; and that something will be promptly done to remediate the situation.
- Step #2** **Extreme Empathy/Apology:** Verbalized or written statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow, acknowledging personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed or wronged another, humbly asking for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.
- Step #3** **Explanation** (no matter how silly, stupid, or embarrassing the problem-causing error was): Promptly and briefly explain why the problem occurred and the known underlying reasons or behaviors that led to the situation (even if we have only partial early information).
- Step #4** **Affirmation:** Talk about what you've learned from the situation and how it will influence your future behavior. Unconditionally commit to regularly report additional information until it is all out or until no public interest remains.
- Step #5** **Declaration:** A public commitment and discussion of specific, positive steps to be taken to conclusively address the issues and resolve the situation.
- Step #6** **Contrition:** The continuing verbalization of regret, empathy, sympathy, even embarrassment. Take appropriate responsibility for having allowed the situation to occur in the first place, whether by omission, commission, accident, or negligence.
- Step #7** **Consultation:** Promptly ask for help and counsel from "victims," government, the community of origin, independent observers, and even from your opponents. Directly involve and request the participation of those most directly affected to help develop more permanent solutions, more acceptable behaviors, and to design principles and approaches that will preclude similar problems from re-occurring.

- Step #8** **Commitment:** Publicly set your goals at zero. Zero errors, zero defects, zero dumb decisions, and zero problems. Publicly promise that, to the best of your ability, situations like this will be permanently prevented.
- Step #9** **Restitution:** Find a way to quickly pay the price. Make or require restitution. Go beyond community and victim expectations, and what would be required under normal circumstances to remediate the problem.

Implementation, Installation, and Testing

Depending on need, affordability, and practical reality, there are a number of ways crisis communication management plans can be installed and implemented:

- Simulations
- Table-top exercises
- Drills
- Coaching and training
- Updating existing plans

Remember that without competent installation or periodic research or testing, the plan will not work.

Keeping Plans Current

The typical crisis plan has a shelf life of approximately 36 months, even with consistent updating. It's painfully true that the moment a crisis communication plan is developed and installed, it's out-of-date in one respect or another. Thus, continuous but reasonable follow-up activities must be undertaken to ensure the validity of the plan, approaches, and the capacity to respond under its guidance when a crisis or emergency occurs. The most helpful are:

- Developing case studies as a vehicle to share critical crisis communication experiences
- Interpreting useful corporate crisis management situations
- Maintaining an active first response team
- Managing corporate exposures and surveillance
- Ongoing indoctrination of managers and supervisors
- Ongoing preparation and training
- Prevention efforts
- Producing right-way/wrong-way videotapes
- Training for new hires

Having compiled this snapshot of the process, it's time to focus your approach on the process of developing a crisis communication management plan within your organization.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE TEMPLATE

