

HOW TO GUIDE

# *Manage communications when your organisation is dealing with a crisis*

# A crisis communication plan is a critical tool for managing and protecting an organisation's reputation in the event of a serious event that requires a quick, multi-level response.

A crisis communications plan is your lifeline during challenging times. It will be a roadmap to guide communication, minimise potential damage, and bring a sense of control and calm when things are uncertain. With a solid plan in place, your organisation can navigate the turbulence, stay steady, and work toward recovery.

An organisation should have a regularly reviewed plan in place before any crisis arises.

Crisis situations can strike suddenly and without warning, disrupting your organisation's or business's day-to-day operations.

Common examples include a product safety scare, a cyber-attack resulting in data loss, a shock departure, or an industrial accident.

Regardless of the cause, the consequences and fallout from a crisis can be far-reaching. The ability to respond effectively can mean the difference between a minor setback and lasting damage to an organisation's reputation and ability to operate.

**10 key communication actions to take during a crisis:**

## 1 Establish a comprehensive crisis management team

*Form a cross-functional crisis management team with key members from PR, legal, HR, operations, and senior leadership.*

Assign clear roles and responsibilities to team members, such as a crisis communications lead, spokespersons, legal advisors, and coordinators.

## 2 Identify potential crisis scenarios

*Conduct a detailed risk assessment to pinpoint any potential crises that could impact your organisation's reputation, operations, or stakeholders.*

Think ahead to various scenarios, such as product recalls, cybersecurity breaches, employee misconduct, natural disasters, or negative publicity.

## 3 Develop a detailed crisis communication plan

*Create a comprehensive crisis communication plan that outlines communication protocols, key messages, spokespersons, escalation procedures, and communication channels.*

Be sure to establish clear guidelines on when and how to communicate with your internal and external stakeholders during a crisis. This includes employees, customers, suppliers, media, and regulatory bodies.

## 4 Monitor and detect early warning signs

*Use monitoring tools and systems to track mentions, news, social media conversations, and emerging trends related to your organisation.*

Watch out for early warning signs like negative sentiment, rumours, or unusual spikes in activity so you can respond quickly and proactively.

## 5 Respond quickly and transparently

*Immediately activate the crisis management team when a crisis is detected and gather them for a quick assessment and response.*

React swiftly, transparently, and authentically to manage the situation, share accurate information, and minimise damage to the organisation's reputation and stakeholders.

## 6 **Communicate effectively** across multiple channels

*Develop a coordinated communication strategy that uses various channels, including press releases, social media, website updates, internal memos, email alerts, and direct communication with key stakeholders.*

Ensure consistent messaging is used across all communication channels to maintain clarity and coherence in your crisis response.

## 7 **Monitor** public perception and media coverage

*Continue to monitor public sentiment, media coverage, and social media conversations to gauge the effectiveness of your crisis communication efforts.*

Stay responsive to all feedback, address misinformation or rumours promptly, and adjust your messaging and strategies based on emerging developments and stakeholder reactions.

## 8 **Conduct post-crisis evaluation and learning**

*Once the crisis is resolved, conduct a thorough post-crisis evaluation. Review your response to see what worked well and what could be improved, and capture key lessons learned.*

Hold a debrief with the crisis management team and key stakeholders to assess the entire process and the effectiveness of the response. Review and update your crisis communication plan regularly.

## 9 **Rebuild** trust and reputation

*After a crisis, it's crucial to take proactive steps to rebuild trust and reputation with your audiences and stakeholders. This means acknowledging mistakes, taking responsibility, and actively fixing the issues.*

Show your organisation's commitment by communicating transparently about the steps you are taking to address problems, improve processes, and prevent future crises. Keep the lines of communication open through ongoing updates, proactive engagement, and follow-ups.

## 10 **Enhance** preparedness and resilience

*It's essential to regularly review and update your crisis management plan, communication strategies, and response protocols to keep up with changing risks, feedback, and emerging best practices.*

Hold regular crisis simulation exercises, training sessions, and scenario planning to strengthen preparedness, test response effectiveness, and build the organisation's resilience for future crises.

*Using our guide, your organisation can effectively navigate and mitigate the impact of a crisis on its reputation, stakeholders, and operations.*

*Remember, proactive planning, rapid response, transparent communication, and continuous learning are essential in successfully managing a crisis and safeguarding your organisation's long-term reputation and resilience.*

If you want to know more about how we can help your organisation plan for a crisis, please get in touch with [michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk](mailto:michael.gregory@limitlesspr.co.uk)

