

Crisis Communications Planning



- **NOT about what phones to use**



- **Planning what to say and how to say it**



Why communicate?

- Retain the confidence of your stakeholders
- Keep your business going
- Manage the organisation's reputation
- *“Many savvy companies are starting to realise that a good name can be their most important asset—and actually boost the stock price” Business Week, 2007*



Why plan?

- NOT about being a merchant of doom
 - Crises ALWAYS have the ability to surprise
 - Law of unexpected consequences
 - Volcanic ash combined with good weather paralysed European air travel
- Planning is a logical process
- Means of engaging senior management
 - Implications
 - Need
 - No ostriches or naysayers
- Rudyard Kipling got it right in 1895
 - “If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs”



First step – scenario planning

- Develop portfolio of scenarios of graduated impact
 - Minor, moderate, serious, major, disaster
 - Key messages for each

Crisis level	Description	Approach	Spokespeople	Comms approach	Method of crisis team comms	Media handling	Employee comms	Message
AMBER	Dispute over pay & conditions	Prepare statement No other action	None	Reactive	Email	Incoming calls to press office; issue agreed statement only	Prepare short statement for briefing all employees	We are talking to employee representatives to resolve this issue
ORANGE	Strike among some (less than 5%?) of workforce and not affecting safety & client projects	Prepare statement No other action	MD of division affected/SMT rep	Reactive	Email	Incoming calls to press office; issue agreed statement only	Prepare short statement for briefing to employees	We're talking to employee reps to resolve this issue and get those affected back to work. The dispute is not affecting safety or normal working.



Second step - planning audiences

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- Identify audiences
 - Local residents, staff, customers, council, MPs, parent company, venture capital, bank, distributors, media
- Order of importance – the Six S's
 - Safety
 - Security
 - Story
 - Staff
 - Stakeholders – who are they (council, MPs, parent company, venture capital, partner organisations)
 - Suppliers



Third step – planning the messages

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- Tailor core messages to each audience
 - Key points
 - Tone
- Delivery channel
 - Internal
 - Local
- National, regional, local, staff etc

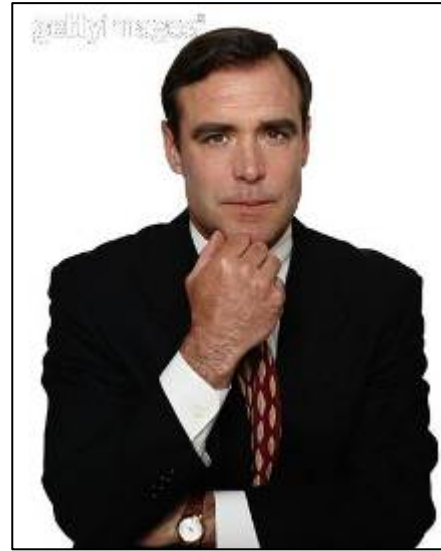


Problem-Solution-Benefit

	Problem (not for communication)	Short-term view in the past	Build-up of stock in USA	Too many cars being produced for USA market	The Elise and its variants are tailored for the purist enthusiast niche	MSC is a big single price/position step above Elise, needing conquest sales	The engineering consultancy business has not been proactively grown	The new Esprit is a vital car for Lotus and must be a real flagship	Our cost base is too high and we need to recapture the 'can do' spirit	The Lotus brand is under-exploited	
	Solution	New high-level 5-year strategic business plan approved in principle by LGIL Board	Investment in additional sales & marketing in US	Reduction in production	So we're going to introduce three new models	So we're going to introduce a new 'mid range' Lotus within 27 months	So we have implemented an aggressive business development programme globally	So we're going to delay introduction and enhance the car to meet changing market conditions	So we're reducing headcount in overhead areas and manufacturing	So we're creating a joint vehicle project with our shareholder	
	Benefit	Commitment of Board to a long-term vision that will deliver growth and profitability	Greater brand awareness, increased sales and demonstration to dealers of factory support	Meeting short-term problem and shaping business to deliver the five-year plan	That will extend the model range and the customer base and confirm Lotus as the maker of iconic sports cars	Which will help customers move up through the range and increase loyalty	Expansion into new geographical markets, creating joint ventures, strategic alliances and developing branded variants of OEM products, fully exploiting its potential	So we can make it the icon for Lotus we know it can and must be	That will help us maintain competitiveness in world markets	That will generate revenue for Lotus, expand brand awareness and generate 'halo effect' for Proton	
Audience	Comms method	✓ = Priority message									Writer/deliverer
Staff	verbal & briefing paper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MJ/PP
Shareholders	Call/letter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MJK
Media:											
Local media:											
Print: EDP, Evening News	Release/interview	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	PP/AF & MJK
Radio: Radio Norfolk, Broadland, Radio Norwich etc	Release	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	"
TV: Anglia & BBC news	Release/poss interview	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	"
Online: all of above		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		PP/AF
National media:											
News (FT only)	Personal briefing										MJK
Motoring correspondents		✓			✓	✓				✓	PP/AF & MJK
Motoring (print & online) –	Release/brief	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	PP/AF & MJK



- Spokesperson
 - As senior as possible
 - Not business-critical
 - Media-trained
 - Available/accessible



- Tone
 - Authoritative, honest
 - Do not speculate (do not go off-message)
 - Clear and concise
 - Calm, caring when necessary
 - **CONSISTENT** and **ON GUARD**
 - No 'bigot gate' unguarded moments



- Tools
 - 'dark' mobile phone & charger
 - dark website or dark web pages
 - list of key contacts
 - survival kit
 - Personal hygiene, drinks, food
 - briefing room
 - two exits
 - message board, contact database, contact log
 - Can you access/reinstate your data backup quickly?
- Remember media have a job to do – help them while maintaining control and distance



Prepare 'template' statements in advance:

Five points – if possible

1. (Re-)State crisis
2. **Current situation**
3. **What you are doing to address/control**
4. What you plan to do next
5. **Timing of next update**



- No 'skeletons in the cupboard'
- Think the unthinkable
- Trust the experts
- Encourage internal vigilance and awareness
 - Hear it from staff first, not the media
- Consider using an external agency:
 - Expertise
 - Resource
 - Buffer
 - External objectivity & less emotional involvement



Somewhere you know?



- Worldwide media interest
 - media relations team handled over 800 calls in first 24 hours
- Constant live TV feeds broadcast worldwide from airport
- PR objectives clear
- MD led from the front
- ‘Business as usual’ message
- Glasgow Airport website received 130k hits in week after incident
 - 6,000 during previous week



- Incidents can be protracted - reliefs required
 - List of staff volunteers
- Counsellors on site from Sunday through to Tuesday
 - Available to business partners
- Essential to have robust, workable plans
 - One team dealing with the crisis
 - Separate business continuity team
- Plans and participants must be fully tested regularly



- Death of six-year-old from swine flu – London Borough of Hillingdon
 - <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=12283256>
 - “At the beginning we underestimated the extent that communications would be relied on to lead, advise and coordinate the response internally and externally”
- The ongoing oil leakage crisis for BP in the Gulf
 - <http://www.thedrum.co.uk/news/2010/05/07/13750-bp-pr-a-well-oiled-machine->



This is about managing your reputation

- An invaluable asset that took years to build up
- On your balance sheet as 'goodwill'

- Plan in detail, but keep it simple
- Practice
- Review frequently

And if a crisis occurs

- Act fast and consistently
- Good luck – you CAN and WILL reduce the adverse impact of a crisis



Contact



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