

NAVIGATING COMMUNICATIONS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

New approaches to crisis planning for business leaders



**THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC.**

**WORKPLACE
VIOLENCE.**

CIVIL UNREST.

Businesses around the globe are feeling the effects of unanticipated events, underscoring the importance of crisis communications planning to effectively handle a crisis and to mitigate long-term damage to operations and business reputation.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, CEOs were forced to adapt, communicate and operate differently, virtually overnight. In a global survey of senior leaders and communications executives, 55% said their organization was only somewhat prepared for COVID-19.¹



NUMBER OF HEADLINE-MAKING
CRISES PER YEAR HAS RISEN

80%

IN 10 YEARS

Now is the time to recognize that the bar has been raised — business leaders should take the opportunity to learn from their organizations' recent crisis response and react accordingly. In fact, the frequency of high-profile corporate crises is growing.

The number of headline-making crises per year has risen by more than 80% during the past 10 years, and companies that are unprepared when a crisis hits can spend years repairing reputational damage.²

At Branigan, we continually assess the landscape to define new best practices and interface with experts in law enforcement and the legal sector to inform our approach to crisis communications and reputation management. This e-book contains information on new approaches brought on by recent events and specific threats to help business leaders assess their organization's crisis preparedness and guide them in the steps to take to protect reputation.



REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS ON CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

DURING A WORKPLACE INCIDENT

"The biggest internal challenge during a crisis for companies without a crisis communications plan is deciding what to say to employees. They're either not going to say anything or just the bare minimum, or they will overindulge and provide information that isn't relevant but creates hysteria in the workplace. If an employer comes forward with a well-thought-out plan on how to address the issue, the hysteria is lessened for the employees."

BOB SIMANDL
ATTORNEY
von Briesen

32%

OF COMPANIES CONTINUALLY
UPDATE THEIR CRISIS PLAN

REPUTATION AND CRISIS RESPONSE

Studies show that 63% of a company's overall value is tied to reputation.³ It only takes one event to drastically affect that, even if it's due to circumstances unrelated to your business operations. Yet, just one-third of companies say they have a current crisis plan that's continually updated.⁴

Effective plans evolve and incorporate learnings and new practices. Ensuring employee and customer safety is the first priority — protecting human lives is a moral imperative. Aside from the tragedy of injury or loss of life, organizations that fall short in their preparedness for a crisis could be at risk for lawsuits, unexpected media attention, facility damage and business interruptions, among other consequences.



Organizational leaders can assess their crisis preparedness level by asking themselves key questions in response to recent events, such as COVID-19:



Leaders should conduct a critical assessment of the crisis communications infrastructure within their organizations after a crisis occurs. **Start with the question: "Was the overall response effective?" and evaluate each area of the infrastructure, such as the following:**

- Were the right people on the crisis team?
- Did we take advantage of credible and effective outside experts?
- Did we have an enterprise-wide crisis response plan and did we use it?
- Were there any bottlenecks in the communication process?
- Were we agile enough to respond to feedback?
- Were we able to maintain business continuity or restore it quickly?

REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS ON CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENT

"You have to know your values as an organization. These moments are the ultimate test of whether or not your values will drive your actions. You've got to know what you prioritize and how you are going to act in this moment that is totally unexpected. Ultimately, that first reaction is what's going to be remembered. You don't get the benefit of waiting three or four days and hope you've figured it out by then. It's that first moment, what did you do, what did you think, that matters most."

ADAM COLLINS

Chief communications & corporate affairs officer
Molson Coors

CRISIS NOTIFICATION PROCESS

It is essential to have a quick and reliable way to reach leaders and employees when it matters most. Not responding quickly, or with the right information, could put your organization at significant risk. The crisis notification process has become much more sophisticated, thanks to advances in technology. Yet, according to recent research, most emergency response teams have fewer than 7% of their employee and contractor personal cell phone numbers.⁵

Using the latest in notification technology enables organizations to reach stakeholders day or night and seamlessly activate the crisis communications plan. The system Branigan provides clients has high-tech capabilities that are critical during a crisis. It's the same one used by companies such as American Airlines, Bed Bath & Beyond and AAA.

KEY FEATURES OF A CRISIS NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

MULTICHANNEL NOTIFICATION DELIVERY

TEXT, CALL, EMAIL

NOTIFICATION ESCALATION

RECEIPT CONFIRMATION

GEOFENCING NOTIFICATION

LANGUAGE TRANSLATION

USAGE REPORTS AND INSIGHTS

REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS ON CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

DURING CIVIL UNREST

"In the event of a public protest at or around your business, understand what you can legally do to prepare and protect your business, including the following:

SAFEGUARD PHYSICAL PROPERTY

- Post no trespassing signs
- Board up windows
- Have security personnel in place as well as video monitoring

ENSURE BUSINESS CONTINUITY

- Formalize communications process
- Move operations to another location
- Ensure product integrity
- Formalize a contingency plan in the event of suspended operations

PROTECT EMPLOYEES

- Implement systems and protocols in place to ensure employee safety

MITCH ROSS

Officer

*Milwaukee Police Department
Intelligence Fusion Center*

BOB SIMANDL

ATTORNEY

von Briesen

PROTECTING ONLINE REPUTATION

Online reviews impact perceptions of an organization's brand and its ability to attract and convert new customers. Statistics show 82% of consumers read online reviews, and only 53% of consumers are willing to use a business with less than a 4-star review.³

Social media has the potential to be a minefield for organizations as crises can catalyze quickly, breed misinformation and are fueled by emotion, necessitating a well-planned social media strategy and response protocol. Having a robust online reputation management system and recovery process in place provides learnings for business leaders prior to, during and after a crisis.

Branigan has developed a reputation management program that helps you understand what's being said about your organization.

OUR PROCESS TO IMPROVE YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION INCLUDES:



MONITORING
ONLINE
CONTENT

A PROCESS TO
IMPROVE ONLINE
REPUTATION

DEVELOPING
RESPONSE
PROTOCOLS

PREAUTHORIZING
COMMUNICATIONS
STATEMENTS

MEASURING
EFFECTIVENESS



Sources:

1. Peppercomm and the Institute for Public Relations, March 2020
2. McKinsey Crisis Response Analysis
3. "The State of Corporate Reputation in 2020: Everything Matters Now," January 2020
4. PR News
5. Alertfind

GETTING **STARTED**

As a leader, you may see a need for proactive crisis communications and reputation management planning, but your organization may not have the staff or the capacity to develop a program. The Branigan team can help. Branigan has more than 25 years of reputation management under its belt, confidently guiding small, midcap and Fortune 500 companies in assessing threats and avoiding pitfalls to safeguard their brands and protect their businesses.

CONTACT US | >



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