ORGANIZATION
Crisis Contingency Plan

January 2012

Introduction

How organizations respond through communication channels in the event of a crisis can have a significant impact on their business. In today's digital world, news breaks at lightning speed, and the ability to respond quickly in a crisis is crucial. Bad news spreads faster than ever before via Twitter, Facebook, and blogs, so it is crucial to monitor all relevant user-generated media, and not just the mainstream media. When responding to a crisis, speed is of the essence – an organization may need to react fast, in a matter of days, not hours. That is why it is important to have the streamlined approach outlined in this plan and a dedicated, trained crisis communications team in place.

It does not take long for a crisis to gain full force. In the first six hours alone, bad news can be spread through micromedia such as Twitter, the online sites of mainstream media outlets, and the relevant industry chat rooms, forums, communities and blogs. Within 12 hours – just ½ of one day – sharing tools such as Digg, Flickr, Facebook, and YouTube can give a crisis a life of its own. By the end of the first day, the crisis can literally be spread around the world through those tools as well as search engines and news portals such as Bing, Google and Yahoo! News.

However, many organizations still try to take a command and control approach to communication channels. Not only can that result in significant delays in being able to engage online in the conversation during a crisis, it can also lead to organizations trying to hide the truth or sugarcoat the crisis.

The cost of entry to online communication is low – detractors only need a computer and access to the Internet to engage even the largest organization – so hypertransparency when using online and social media channels is not only desired, it is expected. Organizations can no longer assume that they can hide information. Anybody – a disgruntled employee, a partner, an industry pundit – has the power today to expose what were once considered private conversations.

Planning for a Crisis to Avert Disaster

The time to plan for a crisis is not when it hits, but long before it hits. ORGANIZATION's contingency plan is designed to help us communicate internally and externally with clear, succinct direction in a timely manner to minimize confusion and maintain confidence whatever crisis may occur.

It's not possible to predict the exact crisis we will face, but here are some of the scenarios we want to be prepared to address:

- Facility or infrastructure issue

- Product, service or business failure

- Staff departures, successions

- Bad news (reputation hit)

- Major news at major partner, which could create concern for customer (such as HP changing CEOs or SUN acquisition)

Many of the above situations are challenges to our business but may not necessitate a rapid response OR ANY response from ORGANIZATION. The following criterion should be used to assess whether a true crisis exists for ORGANIZATION and a rapid response is required:

Ordinary and customary business challenges involve:

• Early warnings

• Sufficient time to develop strategies

• No immediate harm or disruption to business

Crises involve:

• An imminent threat to "business as usual"

• An imminent threat to the organization

• Media attention – either immediate or potential

• Possible harm to individuals or property

Assuming a true crisis exists, this plan identifies key members of the rapid response communications team, the expected communications flow for three potential scenarios, and the platforms that will be used to reach all influencers.

To streamline the response development time for any situation that may arise, crisis messaging to internal audiences should follow this template:

• (ENGAGE w/WHY) Tell people the impact the situation has had on their particular business operations.

• (ELABORATE the WHAT) Describe what happened with concise language.

• (EDUCATE w/HOW) Explain to people how they should respond to the situation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Deploying the plan requires an understanding of stakeholder roles and responsibilities. In crisis situations, members of the ORGANIZATION play these roles:

- **Field Personnel** – Any ORGANIZATION employee in a corporate office, monitoring the Web or working in the field is responsible for vigilance and diligence, watching for any form of the three basic crisis situations:
  - o Facility or Infrastructure Failure
  - o Product, Service or Business Failure
  - o Negative Publicity of Any Type

  Once a crisis situation is observed, employees report the situation to Corporate Communications. Employees in this role should err on the side of caution in their role; raise any issue to the Communicator on Call that seems out of the ordinary or potentially problematic.

- **Executive Spokespeople** – The following individuals have been trained to handle media inquiries, and are approved as spokespeople for ORGANIZATION:
  - o Name,
    TITLE, Phone, Email

- **Web of Communicators** – The internal Web of Communicators represent their respective departments in regular team meetings and in crisis situations. Members of the Web contribute their respective functional expertise and business experience to developing communication plans in crisis situations, but also facilitate a measured response by working with and through their respective groups to ensure the crisp execution of plans. Recommended members of this team should come from:
  - o Senior Leadership Team (all senior-level officers)
  - o Corporate Counsel
  - o Human Resources
  - o Marketing
  - o Sales
  - o Information Technology
  - o Facilities
  - o PR Firm

  Members of this Web of Communicators team will also fill specific roles, such as:

  - o **Communicator on Call** – This member of the Web of Communicators serves according to a revolving schedule. During his or her tour of duty, the Communicator on Call remains vigilant for alerts from Field Personnel about possible crisis situations. The member on call exercises discretion in judging alerts from the field and is responsible for calling emergency meetings of the Web of Communicators. The head of Corporate Communications typically serves as the primary on-call communicator.

  - o **Manager of Corporate Communications Infrastructure** – The Manager of Corporate Communications typically manages the communications infrastructure, maintaining lists

of spokespeople and the Web of Internal stakeholders. This list should include dial-in numbers, URLs, IDs, passwords for all email, voicemail, conferencing or Web platforms that may be used for internal and external communications in the time of a crisis. The Manager of the Communications Infrastructure takes responsibility for ensuring the Communications Infrastructure is up-to-date and functioning at all times. (Incident management card…)

- o **Manager of Employee, Client and Partner Networks** – The managers of employee, client and partner networks are responsible for maintaining current lists and communications platforms to disseminate crisis communications to employees, client liaisons and partners during a time of crisis. Lists should include dial-in numbers, URLs, IDs and passwords for all email, voicemail, conferencing or Web platforms that may be used for communications with these groups.

- o **Manager of Social Networks** – The manager of social networks is responsible for maintaining current lists and communications platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, etc.) to communicate via social channels and with social media influencers.

- o **PR Firm** – ORGANIZATION's PR firm is responsible for communicating with ORGANIZATION's media or analyst influencers in a crisis situation. The firm also is responsible for monitoring the news flow through these influencers and identifying possible crisis situations – particularly in the realm of negative publicity. The PR Firm consults with the Manager of Corporate Communications on matters of crisis communications strategy, messaging and execution.

Scenario 1: Facility or Infrastructure Failure

Communication Flow:
1. Affected ORGANIZATION's Facility to Corporate Communications
2. Corporate Communications to:
    - PR firm with instruction message
    - ORGANIZATION's Web of Communicators with notification message
    - All ORGANIZATION's employees (AMs) with notification message
    - All ORGANIZATION's AMs with notification message
    - ORGANIZATION's client and partner contacts with notification message
    - Conference bridge for Web of Communicators
    - ORGANIZATION's internal comm network with instruction message
    - ORGANIZATION's AMs with instruction message
    - ORGANIZATION's client liaisons with instruction message
    - Managers of client, partner and social networks to inquiring influencers

Communication Platforms:
- ORGANIZATION's internal communications
    - Voice messaging system
    - Text message by e-mail
    - Text bulletin on Intranet home page
    - Text bulletin on Web site home page
    - Web of Communicators (established bridge line)
- ORGANIZATION's AMs, partners and client liaisons
    - TBD by sales, partner and client care organization
- Web of Influencers (monitored & maintained by Corporate Communications or Social Media Manager with PR Firm)
    - Media
    - Analysts
    - Social Networks

Notification Message - Template
 "ORGANIZATION _____ has experienced a _____. Our rapid response team has been notified and is investigating and evaluating the issue. We will provide more information, including what actions you may take to manage the situation, within 24 hours of this message. Thank you for your patience as we work to ensure our employees, clients and partners receive the support they have come to expect from ORGANIZATION."

Instruction Message – Template
- (ENGAGE w/ WHY) Tell people the impact the situation has on their particular business operations.
- (ELABORATE the WHAT) Describe to people what happened with concise language.
- (EDUCATE w/ HOW) Explain to people how they should respond to the situation.

Scenario 2: Product, Service or Business Failure

Communication Flow:
1. Affected ORGANIZATION's Business Unit to Corporate Communications   asap
   Or PR firm to
2. Corporate Communications to:
   - PR firm with instruction message
   - ORGANIZATION's Web of Communicators with notification message
   - All ORGANIZATION's employees (AMs) with notification message
   - All ORGANIZATION's AMs with notification message
   - ORGANIZATION's client and partner contacts with notification message
   - Conference bridge for Web of Communicators
   - ORGANIZATION's internal comm network with instruction message
   - ORGANIZATION's AMs with instruction message
   - ORGANIZATION's client liaisons with instruction message
   a. Managers of client, partner and social networks to inquiring influencers

Communication Platforms:
- ORGANIZATION's Communications Network
  - Voice messaging system
  - Text message by e-mail
  - Text bulletin via Intranet
  - Text bulletin on Web site
  - Web of Communicators (established bridge line)
- Client and Partner Communications Network
  - TBD by sales, client and partner care organizations
- Web of Influencers (monitored & maintained by Corporate Communications or Social Media Manager with PR Firm)
  - Media
  - Analysts
  - Social Networks

Notification Message - Template

"ORGANIZATION _____ has experienced a _____. Our rapid response team has been notified and is investigating and evaluating the issue. We will provide more information, including what actions you may take to manage the situation, within 24 hours of this message. Thank you for your patience as we work to ensure our clients and partners receive the high level of performance they have come to expect from ORGANIZATION."

Position Message – Template
- (ENGAGE w/ WHY) Tell people the impact the situation has on their particular business operations.
- (ELABORATE the WHAT) Describe to people what happened with concise language and ORGANIZATION's position on the issue.
- (EDUCATE w/ HOW) Explain to people how they should respond to the situation and what ORGANIZATION is doing in response.

Scenario 3: Negative Publicity that Poses Risk to Business

Communication Flow:

1. PR firm to Corporate Communications from monitoring Web of Influencers   asap
   Or ORGANIZATION monitor to CorpComm   asap
2. CorpComm to:
   - ORGANIZATION's Web of Communicators with notification message
   - All ORGANIZATION's employees (AMs) with notification message
   - All ORGANIZATION's AMs with notification message
   - ORGANIZATION's client and partner contacts with notification message
   - Conference bridge for Web of Communicators
   - ORGANIZATION's internal comm network with instruction message
   - ORGANIZATION's AMs with instruction message
   - ORGANIZATION's client liaisons with instruction message
   a. Managers of client, partner and social networks to inquiring influencers   asap

Communication Platforms:

- ORGANIZATION's Internal Network
  - Voice messaging system
  - Text message by e-mail
  - Text bulletin on Intranet Home Page
  - Text bulletin on Web site Home Page
  - Web of Communicators (established bridge line)
- Client and Partner Communications Network
  - TBD by sales/client and partner care organization
- Web of Influencers (monitored & maintained by Corporate Communications or Social Media Manager with PR Firm)
  - Media
  - Analysts
  - Social Networks

Notification Message - Template

"ORGANIZATION _____ was mentioned in a recent report on TITLE OF REPORT. We were not asked for input to this article, and do not believe the examples shared present an accurate picture of the industry today. We have reached out to the editors of NAME OF PUBLISHER to better understand the source of their findings, and to address any concerns raised in a timely fashion. We will provide details on this issue as soon as we have all of the information on this story and are able to address it.

Position Message – Template
- (ENGAGE w/ WHY) Acknowledge what you are hearing, and that you are working to confirm what is valid, so you can address any customer or public concerns
- Tell people the truth, so they know the complete picture, and know that you are willing to work with any customer who expresses a real concern.

- (ELABORATE the WHAT) Describe to people what happened with concise language and ORGANIZATION's position on the issue.
- (EDUCATE w/ HOW) Explain to people how this information impacts them (if at all), and how they can help you dispel myths or inaccuracies.