WASHINGTON HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

Crisis Communications 101: Essential Strategies and Best Practices

Effective communication during a crisis for hospitality industry organizations

FEAREY

YOU, AMPLIFIED.

Your Presenter

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Crisis Communications

- Understanding Crisis Communications
- Samples of recent crisis situations
- Preparation and Planning
- Effective Communication Strategies
- Crisis Response and Management
- Post-Crisis Evaluation and Learning

LET'S GET INTO IT…

SCENARIOS – WHAT COULD WE HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Seattle-area sushi bars reopen after controversy over alleged worm

https://www.seattletimes.com/life/food-drink/seattle-area-sushi-bars-reopen-after-keith-lee-worm-controversy/

https://youtu.be/mSasRDxEAM0?si=YiSQQJkQzfnQqJ2K

https://www.buzzfeed.com/claudiasantos/keith-lee-fob-sushi-worm-controversy

As Warren Buffet said…

"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it."

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Brief examples of successful and unsuccessful crisis management in hospitality

• Nearly 80,000 pounds of Costco butter recalled for missing "Contains Milk statement: FDA" - https://www.cbsnews.com/news/costco-butter-recall/

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

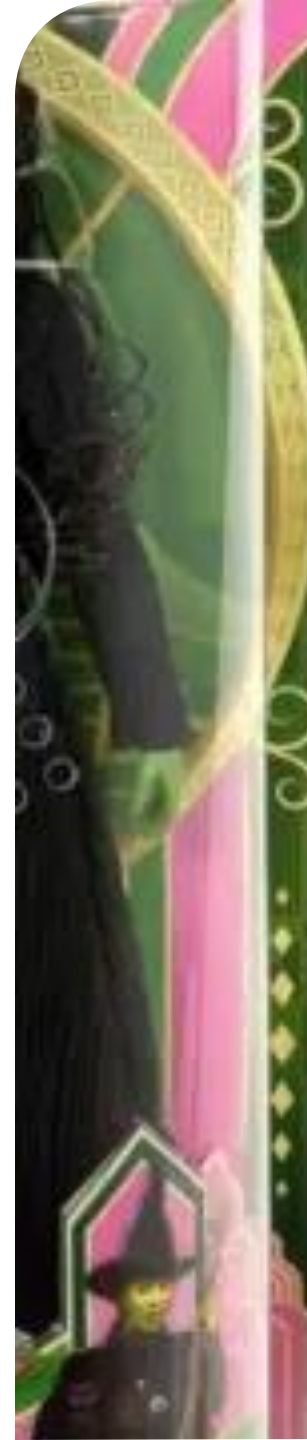*Brief examples of successful and unsuccessful crisis management in hospitality*

- "Caution: Hot" on McDonald's coffee cups

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Brief examples of successful and unsuccessful crisis management in hospitality

- Mattel apologized after mistakenly printing porn site on Wicked movie dolls packaging

DEFINE IT: WHAT IS A CRISIS?

It is a significant threat to an organization's operations or reputation that can have negative consequences if not managed properly.

Any crisis can create these three threats:

1. **Public safety**: incidents that may result in injury or loss of life.

2. **Financial loss**: events that disrupt operations, lead to a loss of market share or results in a lawsuit.

3. **Reputation loss:** situations that tarnish a reputation due to a negative result of a crisis.

THINKING AHEAD

When it comes to crisis, it is rarely a question of "if" your organization will be affected, but **"when,"** and to what extent?

- Ensure your organization has an established **protocol and chain of command** in place; assign **roles**, including spokespeople.

- Understand the **types of issues** and crises your organization might encounter; where are you most vulnerable, etc.

- Create **holding statements** related to the most common potential issues.

- Consider creation of **Q&A sheet**.

- Identify **spokespeople** in crisis situations must be disciplined; ability to remain calm and confidence; and be a trusted member of the organization.

TYPES OF CRISES

- Foodborne illnesses & health violations

- Business closures

- Sexual harassment or HR issue

- Natural disaster

- Crime and guest safety incidents

- Accidents and Injuries

- Data breaches involving guest information

- Controversial statements or actions by staff or management

- Supply chain disruptions

- Negative online reviews

Understanding Crisis Communications

Definition and Importance

Definition of Crisis Communications

Crisis Communications refers to the strategies and tactics used by organizations to communicate with stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the public, during a crisis or emergency.

Importance of Crisis Communications

Crisis Communications is important for protecting an organization's reputation, maintaining trust with stakeholders, and minimizing the impact of a crisis on the organization and its stakeholders.

THE CRISIS PLAN BLUEPRINT

CRISIS IMPACTS YOUR BUSINESS

This is what you are aiming to protect:

- Customer trust and loyalty

- Your financial situation

- Long-term reputation

- Your business and all its assets

- Your personal life

ARE YOU PROTECTED?

CRISIS PLAN BLUEPRINT

- Being fast by offering speed and accuracy by factually based

- 100% transparency and honesty

- Offering empathy (showing you care) and accountability (owning the issue)

- Monitor and setup alerts for online reputation management (google alerts)

CRISIS PLAN BLUEPRINT

- Identify your potential risks

- Establish a protocol for activating the crisis communications team

- Know the media: Create a media list

- Think through your digital media channel strategy and consider developing a "quiet" webpage for the worst-case scenario (your online presence is your "other" storefront)

- Include the "public" in your plans

CRISIS PLAN BLUEPRINT

1. Sit. Pause. And then REACT.

2. Listen. Assess the situation and identify what went wrong and understand the facts that you have at your hand before you react.

3. Develop an idea for how you want to respond to your audiences. Who are your audiences? And what do you want to say, if anything?

4. You don't need to say anything. But you should. Simply saying "sorry" or just acknowledging how sad of a situation it is can be enough.

5. Reassess and regroup.

CRISIS PLAN BLUEPRINT

If you ever have to talk to the media, know these things:

- Avoid saying "no comment!"

- Instead say: "I don't have that information at this time, but what I can tell you is…"

- Or: "I won't speculate on that. But I will say…" or "I don't have anything more to share at this time, but I will update you as soon as possible…"

- I am **sorry** for [insert situation].

- We don't have anything to offer at this time.

- If you can… [always point people to the PIOs at city government or police or fire if the situation involves them]

Stages of a Crisis

Warning Stage

The warning stage is the first stage of a crisis where the crisis is identified and assessed. It is crucial to take immediate action to prevent the crisis from escalating.

Initial Impact Stage

The initial impact stage is where the crisis has an immediate impact on the organization, and it is crucial to take swift action to mitigate the damage and prevent further harm.

Management Stage

The management stage is where the crisis is being addressed and managed. It is crucial to have a crisis management plan in place and to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

Recovery Stage

The recovery stage is where the organization is recovering and rebuilding after the crisis. It is crucial to learn from the crisis and to implement changes to prevent similar crises from occurring in the future.

Preparation and Planning

Developing a Crisis Communication Plan

Roles and Responsibilities

A crisis communication plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of the crisis management team, ensuring that everyone knows what they need to do in a crisis.

Communication Protocols

A crisis communication plan includes communication protocols for internal and external communication, ensuring that information is shared in a timely and effective manner.

Messaging Strategies

A crisis communication plan outlines messaging strategies to ensure that consistent and accurate information is shared with stakeholders during a crisis.

Establishing a Crisis Management Team

Diverse Team Composition

A crisis management team should be composed of individuals from different departments and areas of expertise to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and skillsets.

Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of a crisis management team should have a clear role and responsibility in order to avoid confusion and ensure that everyone is working towards a common goal.

Quick Reaction Time

A crisis management team should be prepared to act quickly in response to a crisis situation in order to minimize damage and ensure a timely resolution.

Crisis Simulation and Training

Benefits of Crisis Simulations

Crisis simulations and training exercises can help the crisis management team prepare for different scenarios, identify areas for improvement, and develop effective crisis management strategies.

Tabletop Exercises

Tabletop exercises are a type of crisis simulation exercise that involves team members discussing and reviewing a hypothetical crisis scenario. They are a cost-effective and low-stress way to test and improve crisis management plans.

Full-Scale Drills

Full-scale drills are a type of crisis simulation exercise that involves the actual deployment of crisis management teams and resources to test and improve the effectiveness of crisis management plans.

Effective Communication Strategies

Crafting Clear and Consistent Messages

Tailored Messages

Messages should be tailored to different audiences, taking into account their interests, priorities, and communication preferences.

Multiple Channels

Messages should be conveyed through multiple channels, including social media, email, websites, and print materials, to reach a wider audience.

Using Multiple Communication Channels

Reach Different Audiences

Using multiple communication channels allows organizations to reach different audiences, ensuring that messages are received quickly and efficiently.

Social Media

Social media is an effective communication channel for reaching a large audience quickly and engaging with followers. It's important to have a social media strategy in place to ensure that messages are consistent and on-brand.

Email

Email is a reliable and direct communication channel that allows organizations to send personalized messages and track responses. It's important to keep email lists up-to-date and to avoid spamming recipients.

Press Releases

Press releases are an effective way to communicate with media outlets and share important news and updates. It's important to have a strong narrative and to use clear and concise language in press releases.

Engaging with Stakeholders and the Public

Transparency

Transparency is key when engaging with stakeholders and the public during a crisis. Being transparent about the situation can help build trust and maintain a positive reputation.

Responsiveness

Being responsive to the needs of stakeholders and the public during a crisis can help build trust and maintain a positive reputation. Responding to questions and concerns promptly can show that you care and are taking the situation seriously.

Empathy

Empathy is crucial when engaging with stakeholders and the public during a crisis. Understanding their needs and concerns can help build trust and maintain a positive reputation.

Crisis Response and Management

Initial Response and Action Steps

Quick and Decisive Response

The initial response to a crisis should be quick and decisive to minimize harm and prevent the situation from escalating.

Activate Crisis Management Team

Activating the crisis management team is crucial to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the crisis. The team should be composed of individuals with diverse skills and expertise.

Assess the Situation

Assessing the situation is an important step to determine the severity of the crisis, identify potential risks, and develop an appropriate response plan.

Take Immediate Action

Taking immediate action is crucial to prevent the situation from escalating and minimize harm. The actions should be well-planned, coordinated, and consistent with the crisis response plan.
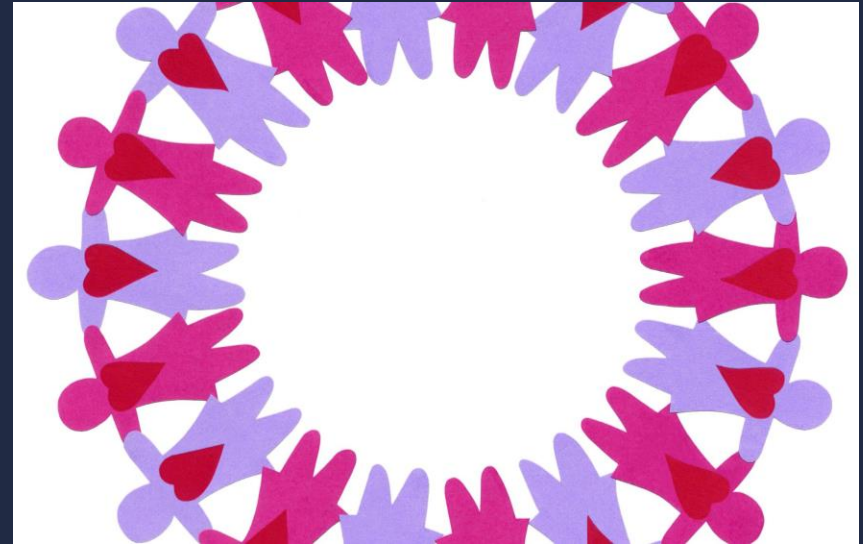
Media Relations and Press Conferences

Designated Spokespersons

Designated spokespersons are critical during a crisis to communicate key messages to the media and public, and to maintain consistency in messaging.

Key Messages

Preparing key messages before a press conference is important to communicate the necessary information in an effective and concise manner.

Anticipating Questions and Concerns

Anticipating potential questions and concerns from the media and public is crucial during a crisis to prepare the designated spokespersons for the press conference.

Monitoring and Adapting Strategies

Monitoring the situation and adapting strategies are crucial in a crisis. Tracking media coverage, social media conversations, and stakeholder feedback helps in making adjustments to messaging and tactics.
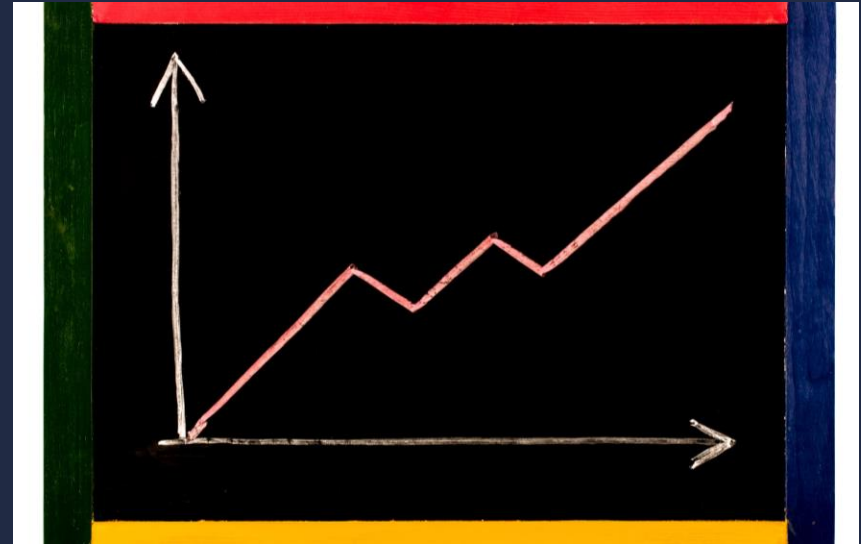
Post-Crisis Evaluation and Learning

Conducting a Post-Crisis Analysis

A post-crisis analysis should include an assessment of what went well and what could have been improved. This includes gathering feedback from stakeholders and the crisis management team and identifying areas for improvement.

Implementing Lessons Learned

Updating Messaging and Tactics

Lessons learned from a crisis should be used to update messaging and tactics in future crisis communication plans. This helps to ensure that the organization is better prepared to handle a similar crisis in the future.

Refining Communication Protocols

Lessons learned from a crisis should be used to refine communication protocols in future crisis communication plans. This helps to ensure that the right message is delivered to the right stakeholders in a timely and accurate manner.

Improving Crisis Simulations and Training

Lessons learned from a crisis should be used to improve crisis simulations and training in future crisis communication plans. This helps to ensure that the organization is better prepared to respond to a crisis and can effectively communicate with stakeholders during a crisis.

Updating and Refining Crisis Plans
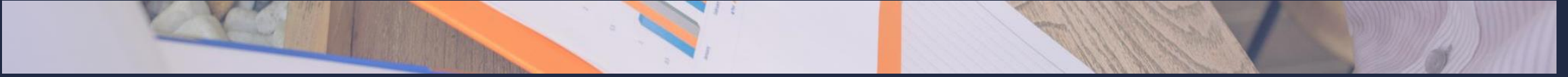
Regular Review and Update

Crisis communication plans should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain effective, and to incorporate changes in risks, technology advancements, and personnel changes.

Identifying New Risks and Hazards

Updating a crisis communication plan involves identifying new risks and hazards and updating the plan accordingly, as well as ensuring that the plan addresses any new threats that may have emerged since the last update.

Roles and Responsibilities

Updating a crisis communication plan also involves reviewing and updating roles and responsibilities to ensure that the right people are in the right roles and that everyone is clear on their responsibilities during a crisis.

NINE TIPS TO OWNING YOUR MEDIA INTERVIEW

1. Before the start of the interview, reconfirm what the reporter wants to speak about, flow, etc.

2. Deliver the headline first, details follow. Today's typical sound bite is 6 seconds and shrinking.

3. Repeat the key messages throughout the interview.

4. Tell the audience what the value is for THEM, not for you.

5. Bridge back to your key messages, especially on tough or off-topic questions.

6. Use conversational language, no technical jargon.

7. BUT, if you don't want to be quoted on some issues, use jargon to your advantage.

8. Always use the positive frame: what you will do, not what you won't do; who you are, not what you are not.

9. Smile. It will help you relax, project confidence.

SEVEN WAYS TO AVOID MISTAKES

1. Never go "off the record" in the middle of an interview. If "off the record" is necessary, arrange it in advance of getting on the phone/meeting.

2. Do not show anger or sound defensive.

3. Never mislead or lie.

4. Do not forget to make connections to key messages in your answers.

5. Avoid repeating the reporter's negative words or questions, rephrase using positive language.

6. Do not be afraid to correct their false assumptions or if they repeat something incorrectly or out of context.

7. Never use the negative frame: "I did not lie." Always use positive language: "I will continue to be cooperative and honest with my staff, authorities and the community during this investigation."

SHOW THAT YOU'RE LISTENING

1. Let the reporter lead the interview, and don't interrupt their questions or comments.

2. Use body language to show that you're listening and considering their side.

3. Repeat part of their question/comment in your answer - "Like you said earlier..." Or "This is something we take very seriously..."

4. Use "and" instead of "but" - "we hear your concern AND here's our perspective on it..."

5. It's okay if you don't have an answer – "Thank you for bringing that perspective, that's something we'll keep in mind as we move forward"

Conclusion

Understanding Different Types of Crises

Effective crisis communication begins with understanding the different types of crises, including natural disasters, technological failures, and human-caused crises.

Preparing and Planning

Preparation and planning are key components of effective crisis communication. Organizations must identify potential crises, create a crisis management team, and develop a crisis communication plan.

Using Effective Communication Strategies

Effective communication strategies, such as transparency, honesty, and empathy, are crucial in managing a crisis and maintaining trust with stakeholders.

Responding Quickly and Decisively

Organizations must respond quickly and decisively to a crisis, keeping stakeholders informed and taking appropriate action to mitigate the impact of the crisis.
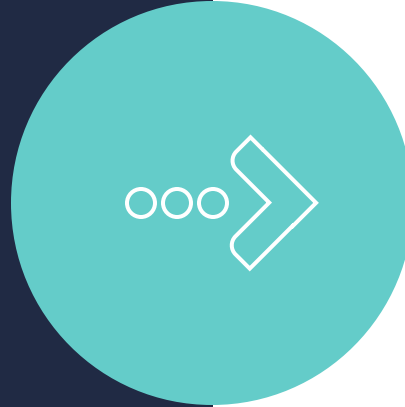
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

PR FAILURE NEWSLETTER

TOP 2024 PR FAILURES

Chick-fil-A: Filleting Free, Positive PR on Purpose

Chick-fil-A's former employee and avid advocate, Miriam Webb, had her TikTok account @mirithesiren filled with near-daily, positive reviews the public loved. With more than 120,000 followers and 3.5 million likes back in May, Webb began each post with: "It's a great day at Chick-fil-A." But after being informed her videos ran afoul of Chick-fil-A's employee handbook, Webb chose to leave the company, taking her signature cheerfulness and growing social following with her.

TOP 2024 PR FAILURES

Kyte Baby: A Poor Delivery Redefined Parental Policy

Baby clothing manufacturer Kyte Baby had long enjoyed staunch support across its socials from "momfluencers" in love with the brand. But the company kicked off a controversy when its parental leave policy at that time fell far short of the values it espoused. Then employee and new mom to an adopted baby, Marissa Hughes, needed to be near her infant son in the NICU nine hours from Hughes' home. Hughes was granted the two weeks leave Kyte's policy afforded to employees who had worked for six months, but when Hughes put in a request to work remotely (from the hospital), she was terminated. Kyte CEO Ying Liu has previously praised remote work for its empowerment of women, and after issuing an apology Kyte's mom audience deemed inauthentic, Liu tried again with better success.

THANK YOU!
WE'RE HERE TO HELP

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