

Introduction

Any business, at one point, will face some sort of a public relations crisis and the way you respond can either give you a much-needed image boost or significantly damage your brand, ultimately alienating your customer base and business partners. Especially in this day and age, when news goes viral almost instantly, organizations need to be ready to respond to any PR crisis quickly and efficiently, using all available platforms.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2017/06/20/13-golden-rules-of-pr-crisis-management/>

1. Take Responsibility

First off, don't try to cover up the PR crisis, it will only worsen the damage. Instead, manage the situation by taking responsibility, reacting immediately, and responding to feedback. Instead of arguing publicly, acknowledge people's concerns and questions and respond to the right conversations. Write a press release and post on social media to control the situation and get the message visible.

2. Be Proactive, Be Transparent, Be Accountable

In today's real-time world of social media, and with critics everywhere, reputation management matters more than ever and it can be lost in an instant. The tenets of any crisis communication are to be proactive, be transparent, and be accountable. When put into action it looks like this: acknowledge the incident, accept responsibility, and apologize. - Lisa Allocca, Red Javelin Communications

3. Get Ahead of The Story

If I were the CEO of United Airlines, I would have been tweeting, texting and sending smoke signals the minute after I heard the story about the guy taken off the flight. I wouldn't wait until I had a strategy. Getting ahead of the story is the strategy. Figuring out the fine points of the strategy -- do that over the weekend. But start communicating, apologizing, refunding, or whatever-ing now! - Michael Levin, BusinessGhost, Inc.

4. Be Ready For Social Media Backlash

The worst thing companies can do is ignore the possibility that a firestorm could ignite on social media. Smaller organizations can be more guilty of this, and especially those that are not active on social media. Just because a company is not marketing on social does not mean their customers won't put them in check on those platforms when something goes wrong. Have a plan and review it often. - Chris Dreyer, Rankings.io

5. Remember To Be Human

Saying "you'll look into it" doesn't make anyone feel better. Saying you're deeply saddened by what went down and will work on making things better is important. Then, immediately share how policies will be put in place so it doesn't happen again. Act fast before people lose faith in your brand. - Nicole Rodrigues, NRPR Group, LLC

6. First Apologize, Then Take Action

Extending a heartfelt apology is key to moving forward. Not doing so adds fuel to the fire and delays changing the narrative. Following a public apology, the company must offer a call to action. They must do something substantial to show that they are changing their ways moving forward. - Leila Lewis, Be Inspired PR

7. Monitor, Plan And Communicate

Have your social team on high alert, with monitoring at the forefront. If they start noticing spikes of negativity or increased activity, utilize an already well-versed crisis plan to proactively respond on social with prepared materials. Never let executives go rogue and potentially fuel the flames, but do encourage them to apologize immediately with predetermined and approved key messages. - Matthew Jonas, TopFire Media

8. Seek First To Understand The Situation

Communicate all relevant details to key stakeholders. When asked to comment never reply with "no comment." Even if you're still assessing a situation, simply say that. If you don't have a voice in the matter, people immediately assume guilt or make their own suppositions. Also, recognize when operational improvements are necessary and be transparent about how you're solving the situation. - Ashley Walters, Empower MediaMarketing

9. Listen To Your Team First

It's too easy to be reactive, especially when your company's brand and reputation are at stake. Don't comment, post or tweet before you've conferred with your PR team on what the best, most reasoned approach will be. If you have a great team (and you should!), they will be on top of this and will have crafted language you can use immediately. - Diana Wolff, LRG Marketing

10. Develop Strong Organizational Brand Culture

Prevent the crisis. It's easy to blame frontline employees for recurring viral nightmares, but they're not responsible for the toxic brand culture that breeds them. An organizational brand culture that treats customers badly likely treats its employees poorly too. Dig deep into organizational culture and service delivery and you'll find that new lows in brand experience always start at the top. - Stephen Rosa, (add)ventures

11. Turn Off The Fan

When the you-know-what hits the fan, the first rule of crisis management is to turn off the fan. Don't fuel the fire. Step back, put yourself in the consumers' shoes and ask, "How would I feel if this happened to me?" Looking in the mirror is the best PR advice there is when dealing with crisis situations. It ensures we do the right thing. And right beats spin every time. - Kim Miller, Ink Link Marketing LLC

12. Avoid Knee-Jerk Reactions

Companies, brand representatives or influencers often provide emotional, frenzied responses. Going silent on social is not a bad thing when you are monitoring a crisis. Freeze all external communication until you can assess what's going on. Be sure that the first external communication following the crisis is a well-thought-out response that resonates with your consumers. - Coltrane Curtis, Team Epiphany

13. Be Prepared

No one wants to be at the center of a scandal, but scrambling around because you're not prepared to handle it takes things from bad to worse. Anticipate potential crisis scenarios and establish internal protocols for handling them. Before a crisis hits, outline who needs to be notified, your internal review process and the individuals who are authorized to speak publicly on your behalf. - Lindsay Mullen, Prosper Strategies



By [deleted]
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