

Defining Crisis Communications

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Presenter: Valerie Martinez

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Agenda

- Welcome
- Crisis Communications – An Overview
- Crisis Communications – Best Practices
- Exercise – Crisis in Practice



First Rule

Be Prepared!!!



When Crisis Goes “PR” Bad

- Move too fast with unconfirmed information
- Delayed response times create information void with media
- Inaccuracies undermine credibility
- Multiple people providing multiple messages
- Reporters don't know who the primary source is for the agency
- Agencies are providing information that is not their expertise
- No foundational data/reports are available
- No foundational PR has been done, so the crisis is defining the brand
- Deaths/injuries are treated inappropriately (wrong structure or emotion)



Defining “Crisis”

- What types of crises are possible?
- Classify your crisis - this is bad... this is REALLY bad...
- What has happened in the past and what can we learn?
- How can we prepare for different solutions?



Preparation is Critical

- Update crisis plan
- Conduct a table top review with relevant decision makers and spokespeople
- Identify and update materials/data/reports that can be made available to reporters
 - Safety reports
 - Maintenance reports
 - Ridership
 - Revenue



Preparation is Critical

What is public information and what isn't?

CONSULT YOUR AGENCY COUNSEL

- “Executive and Deliberative Privilege”
- Working Drafts
- PRA Exemptions - PRA Exempt Under Government Code 6254 et seq

Transparency is the best policy



Crisis Plan - “Must Haves”

- Understand hierarchy and write the specific process into the document
- Identify Decision-Makers and their roles
- Immediately ensure relevant elected officials are looped with appropriate messaging
- Ensure riders/clients/users know ASAP if they will see impacts



Crisis Plan - “Must Haves”

- Identify Spokesperson hierarchy
 - Understand what you know
- Ensure “One Voice” Messaging
- Utilize multiple platforms to drive your message
- Consider “Situation Plans” to support the Crisis Communications Plan



Crisis Plan - “Must Haves”

Establish agency policy on HIPAA Protected Health Information (PHI) in the cases of injuries.

HIPAA does not apply to many public agencies but customers and patients may appreciate respecting privacy.



Crisis Plan - Avoiding “Unforced PR Errors”

- 1) “E” in Email stands for “evidence” – If you don’t want it on the evening news, Twitter and Facebook don’t write it
- 2) The world of ongoing PRAs and “gotchyas” – don’t become the example
- 3) Have a legally compliant and aggressive email retention policy
- 4) Don’t post everything you do in your life on social; even with privacy settings you’re vulnerable and subject to scrutiny



Putting Plans into Action

- Scenario Building Exercises
 - Table Top
 - Drill
- Mock Interviews
- Situation Plans



Three Parts of a Crisis

BEFORE

- Are you prepared with a Crisis Communications Plan and crisis protocols?
- Have you provided a strong PR foundation to inoculate your agency?



Three Parts of a Crisis

DURING

- Is everyone following protocols?
- Is there one, clear message?
- Are spokespeople strong, confident and providing reliable, accurate information?
- Are reporters clear about what happened and do they have information to report that you are managing?
- Is your Board briefed and do they have Board-appropriate talk points?



Three Parts of a Crisis

AFTER

- Is there a strategy in place to address/drive appropriate follow-up stories?
- Are there other stories in the pipeline that will support the agency's brand?





Exercise – Crisis in Practice



For more information:

Valerie Martinez

VMA Communications, Inc.

(909) 445-1001

valerie.martinez@vmapr.com

Jeff Corless

Venture Strategic

jeff@venturestrategic.com