Crisis Communications

• Making The Best of an Unfortunate Situation

Presented by: Stacia Kirby

Kirby Communications
Topics to be discussed

• Let’s Talk Crisis
• Crisis Communications Requirements
• External and Internal Audiences & Messaging

Let’s Talk Crisis

be the difference
The importance of managing a crisis

- Nothing else tests a company’s competency or reputation like a crisis!
- A crisis is the most important time to protect and express your brand.
- The slower the response, the more damage will be incurred
- Improperly handled, a crisis can threaten the very existence of your community.
- Handled successfully, you will help minimize the impact of the crisis and maintain a solid reputation.

What events usually lead to a crisis?

- A missing resident
- Medication or other theft
- Complaints or accusations
- Abuse allegations
- Power Failure
- Building Incidents
- Sexual Harassment
- Fraud/embezzlement
- A bad survey
- A natural disaster
- A virus outbreak
- Accidents
- An unusual or suspicious death
- Mishandling of medication
- ..And Others
The Top 10 Rules

• Always communicate and listen -- PERIOD!
• Responsibility is on you, step up
• Be prepared – what “can’t happen to you” just might
• Gather and centralize your information
• Communicate clear, concise and accurate information to all stakeholders
• Crisis Team ready to go
• Respect the role of the media
• Keep staff informed, internal PR is key to crisis management these days
• Work in real time and do it quickly
• “Plan for the worst, hope for the best”

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The secret of crisis management is not good vs. bad, it’s preventing the bad from getting worse.

Andy Gilman
Crisis Requirements: 4 Elements

“Plan for the worst; hope for the best”

Pre-Crisis
- Planning
- Preparation

In-Crisis
- Procedure

Post-Crisis
- Faith
Crisis Communications Planning

• Begin with the conversation
• It’s not a matter of “if” but when...
• Ask yourself “what will we do when”?
• What do you have in place?
• Assess potential devastation
Crisis Communications Preparations

- Anticipate potential crisis situations
- Assess your communications methods
- Assess your operation team and procedures
- Identify your crisis team and spokespeople
- Assess your media awareness and reputation
- Determine audiences to be affected - internal and external stakeholders

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Crisis Communications Preparations - resources

- Create/review your crisis plan
- Crisis resources (attorney, health department, police and fire departments)
- Media kit
- Media policy
- Social media policy
- Establish notification and monitoring procedures

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Determine the Audiences Affected by a Crisis-
The Stakeholders

**Internal**
- Residents
- Employees/Staff

**External**
- Residents’ families
- Employees’ families
- Referral sources
- Business/Vendors
- General public
- Other

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Media Kit

- Community fact sheet
- Community principals background
- Spokesperson background
- Business and civic contributions
- Press releases / backgrounders

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"be the difference"
Media Policy

- Creates awareness how media is handled at the community
- Establishes who speaks on behalf of the community
- Guards residents’ and employees’ privacy
- Media procedures for inquires and visits
- Maintain a log of media inquiries

Social Media Policy

- Spells out what can be shared on public forums
- Assumes nothing is private
- Establishes rights to delete and/or block posts
Crisis Communication Procedures

Put your plan in place
- Notify your team an incident has occurred
- Gather all information— from all sources
- Create materials for external and internal audiences – sticking to the facts
- Make certain information is clearly stated, simple to understand and above all else accurate.
- Everyone needs to have the same information
- Decide on your audiences and distribute messages accordingly
- Respond quickly!

Faith

A true leader not only cares about their success, but the success and empowerment of others -

www.lifecoachingwithang.com
External & Internal Audiences

Good Vs. Bad Crisis Communications

GOOD
• Factual
• Timely
• Spokesperson/Staff stay on point
• Spokesperson/Staff offers reassurance

BAD
Incorrect
Lag time
Saying as little as possible
Person with authority not available
Rumors start
No reassurance by someone with authority
“I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.”

– Abraham Lincoln

**Communication Materials**

**Internal**
- Q&A
- Talking Points
- Statement
- Resident Letter

**External**
- Media
- Statement
- Talking Points
- Press Release

*be the difference*
Key Crisis Messages

- Concern for residents is #1
- Concern for employees is #1
- Information and talking points
- Answer the 4 “w” and “how”
  - What
  - When
  - Where
  - Who
  - How

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Key Crisis Messages Continued

- Explain what the community/company is doing
- Express regret
- Offer reassurance

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Techniques for Messaging

Context
“In the ten years we have been operating our community, we never have had a situation like this.”

Regret
“Our main concern is for our residents. We are working closely with families to provide support ...working with authorities...working with specialists.”

Action
“We are reviewing our procedures and meeting with employees to ensure this situation does not occur again.”

External Audiences

- Your biggest concern when it comes to external audiences is THE MEDIA. The media are the biggest and most influential communicators- they influence others
### Media Crisis Flowchart

1. **Incident!**
2. **Take care of emergencies**
3. **Contact appropriate corporate contacts with details**
4. **Distribute media statements**
5. **Create Media Statement and prepare for media inquiries**
6. **Inform staff about the incident and in-service them on handling media calls**

### Media Spokesperson

- Usually the **Executive Director** should be the media contact in the event of media inquiries. In most cases, this role will only involve sending the reporter the prepared media statement.

- If the ED is not available, a member from corporate can act as the backup media contact.

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**be the difference**
Working with the media

- They are doing their job
- If crisis warrants media, they will do the story
- Be prepared - they are ......
- Stay on point
- Stick to the facts
- Balance bad news with good news
- Offer a positive perspective on the community/company

Dealing with the Media

- If the media come calling, you must respond
- If you do not, they will do the story without your input
- No comment may imply guilt/wrong doing
When the Media “calls”

- Staff should indicate that the ED is currently with a resident and that they will get back to them before the deadline.
- Obtain this information:
  - Reporter’s name/affiliation
  - Email address/Phone #
  - Deadline (very important)
  - Any questions he/she needs answered
- If the reporter’s deadline is sooner than the ED can respond, enlist a Regional Director.

When the Media “shows up”

- Stick to the prepared media statement. Do NOT ad lib information. You do not need to answer all questions.
- Be professional and watch your emotions
- If the reporter pushes and asks more questions, it’s fine to repeat the media statement. Use the transition statement, “as I stated earlier...” and repeat the media statement.
- Tell the truth, stick to confirmed facts, and do not speculate. Be comfortable saying: “I don’t know,” or “I can’t speculate on that.”
When the media announces they are coming with cameras

- Cooperate. This shows them you have nothing to hide, and you can get our message heard.
- Ask for the reporter’s questions and arrival time
- Enlist crisis/media team to help
- Explain you don’t allow filming inside the building for privacy reasons. They are allowed to film the front of the building.
- Explain they are not allowed to interview people
  - On your property
  - Use the prepared media statement
  - Get backup from if needed

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When the media shows up unannounced

- Handle an unannounced visit exactly the same way. Cooperate. Be courteous, and helpful.
- Remember, you don’t need to answer any questions you aren’t comfortable with. Say, “We are investigating and will issue a statement as soon as we have all the facts.”
- If pressed, say, “I’m sorry, I don’t have any more information at this time. If you give me a list of your questions, I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”
Social Media In a Crisis

- MONITOR, MONITOR, MONITOR
- Engage your social media avenues
- Advise staff on posts
- Most prevalent, useful - Facebook

INTERNAL AUDIENCES

- Your most important internal audience is YOUR STAFF.
Communicating with Staff

- Inform staff of the issue and potential for media
- In-service the entire staff on handling media inquiries and visits, especially concierges or anyone who answers a phone.
- Prepare Q&A for staff.

Preparing Your Staff NOW

- Educate them on events that will attract the media
- Post a crisis contact list including Media/Opps Team and cell phone #s
- Discuss the appropriate conduct for 9-1-1 calls
- Train them for handling media inquiries/visits
- Tell them who they should refer media questions to
- Make it clear they are not to talk with the media
- Council them that they may make statements such as “We are investigating and will issue a statement as soon as we have all the facts.”
- Never say “No comment.”
- They will talk to family, and friends so let them know what they can say.

- Most importantly - KEEP THEM INFORMED
Conduct for calling 9-1-1

- Calls to 9-1-1 are public record and can be played by the media. Talk to your staff about these points:
- Be prepared with all the pertinent information.
- Be brief and succinct
- Remain calm and unemotional
- Let the 9-1-1 operator ask the questions, and give clear and concise answers.
- Stay on the line if you can. This will help them locate you and make sure help has arrived.

Watch and Learn

Learn from Others by Watching the News!
- This is a great way to see how other companies and communities are handling media crises.
- Real-life scenarios and coverage is the best way to see what works, and what doesn’t.
Post Crisis- The 4 R’s

- Review
- Reflect
- Regroup
- Regenerate

• Remember: A well handled crisis situation can result in the potential to mitigate against claims, and to survive the court of public opinion.

Q&A

• Please ask me any questions you may have
• Any comments?
About Stacia Kirby

Stacia Kirby has a background that combines media and public relations experience. She launched her agency, Kirby Communications in 1992. Since which time she has served clients from those on the Fortune 500 to start-ups. Her agency offers a full range of public relations and marketing communications services including traditional, digital and social media. She loves working with companies that are making a difference and are standouts in their field of expertise.

While Stacia works with a variety of clients, specifically she has worked in the area of senior living for over 10 years, assisting corporations and communities with a wide variety of public relations and marcomm needs. It is an area she is passionate about and finds as she gets older to be ever so relevant!

Stacia is a member of PR Consultants Group, a nationwide network of public relations specialists. She has a BA in Journalism from the University of Washington, and a Certificate in Social Media Management from the University of Washington.

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