



CRISIS COMMUNICATION: THE NEED FOR SPEED

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Any organization can face a crisis at any time. Domino's Pizza was the most recent company to feel the heat, as now-former employees posted a video hoax on YouTube. So how can companies prepare for the worst? With timely preparation — a crisis communications plan, trained spokespeople and a rapid-response team. Having a plan in place and a partner at hand to help you through a crisis can mean the difference between keeping your good name and risking it. Even in an economic downturn, protecting your business reputation should always be a priority.

NO SPEED LIMIT ON THE WEB

In the movie *Top Gun*, Tom Cruise's character, Maverick, says to his co-pilot, "I feel the need ... the need for speed!" Well, that's what communications experts who are the top guns in their profession feel like today. We feel the need for speed.

Today's communications professionals, charged with protecting a company's reputation, must be able to think and react at lightning speed. There's absolutely no speed limit on the social media freeway! Information — or misinformation — spreads in real time on Internet forums, weblogs, wikis and podcasts.

Keys to Swift Crisis Response

- > Invest in a crisis communication plan**
- > Identify and pre-train spokespeople**
- > Partner with communication professionals before a crisis occurs**

Getting your message out before negative or misleading reports circulate is critical to safeguarding your business reputation. If your message isn't fine-tuned and released in an instant, your company could be vulnerable to an onslaught of imbalanced and biased coverage.

In the last few months you've heard a lot about transparency and the importance of companies being open, accountable and communicative. While transparency is vital, even the most transparent statements are undermined if they don't reach newsrooms and the Web quickly enough.

Rapid-response Team

Speed is essential, but it's still necessary to provide deliberate and accurate information. How do you get your basic messages out at warp speed? You prepare — not after the crisis or issue arises, but before.

Your best insurance policy is having a crisis communications plan in place and partnering with a specialist who can quickly and effectively work through any problem.



A new communication frontier — maybe not better, but absolutely faster — has arrived. And while you may not have time to get up to speed with these new platforms, your marketing and public relations professionals should be prepared to hit the ground running.

Buzz Control

Whether it's an accident at a construction site or a fire at a building you manage; the announcement of a lawsuit or the criminal behavior by an employee; a financial disturbance or workplace violence — any event that threatens harm to your organization, employees and stakeholders is a potential reputation disaster.

While these events are unpredictable, they can be expected. You must be proactive. If you don't control the message, the media and the blogosphere will. You need to be out in front of rumors and other damaging material with the truth and only the truth. Honesty and ownership during any crisis demonstrates leadership, control of the situation and continuity of your business.

Crash Course

The costs of planning for a crisis are minimal compared to the price a business pays for inadequate preparation. Facing a crisis without a team or a plan can shatter a reputation it took years to build. Too many companies have arrived at that lesson the hard way — with a crash course.

About DickinsonGroup

At DickinsonGroup we believe in telling the truth, telling it all and telling it first. Our detailed crisis plans help our clients prepare by setting strategies, formulating tactics, defining messages and identifying spokespeople up front. And if an emergency arises, our crisis hotline ensures we're always on call.

DickinsonGroup is the nation's leading real estate marketing firm, specializing in branding, print and digital communications, and public relations. Fusing strategic thinking and creativity, we help owners, developers and professional services firms build market visibility, asset value and business volume for their companies and properties. To learn more, visit www.dickinsongroup.com, or contact Colleen Scrivner at 312-239-1102 or cscrivner@dickinsongroup.com.

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