

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A CRISIS COMMUNICATOR

1. Have a crisis management plan ready

Every organization needs to have a crisis management plan in place that would outline the key steps in response to various emergencies. Research shows that organizations with such plans fare better in terms of preserving their reputations and financial stability at a time of crisis.

2. Respond fast

Your organization should address the situation with an official statement when the crisis becomes known to your employees, the media or general public. Every hour that passes without your response, gives others time to frame the issue and draw their own conclusions on how it is being handled.

3. Get your facts straight

Communicating quickly during crises is extremely important. But no less important is ensuring that the information you communicate is accurate. Providing erroneous assessments of the situation will add to the confusion and further exacerbate the problem.

4. Say it as it is

Avoid downplaying the situation. If you don't know the exact scope of the problem – say so.

5. Identify a spokesperson

Identify the person who will provide regular updates to the media. This will allow you to centralize your messaging and minimize the risk of misinformation and misinterpretation, which happen when multiple people speak on behalf of the organization.

6. Communicate with all audiences

Make sure to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders, including customers, vendors, suppliers, employees, shareholders, etc.

7. Accept responsibility if at fault

Don't waste time trying to evade responsibility or admitting a transgression. Sooner or later, the investigation will reveal if procedures were neglected or rules broken. If you are at fault, apologize and explain what actions you'll take to prevent this from happening in the future.

8. Use all communication channels

To increase the effectiveness of your crisis response, it is important to use all the communication channels available. Engage with the public on social media and inform your stakeholders via email, press releases, dedicated online pages, etc.

9. Prioritize public safety

Public safety should always be an organization's primary concern. If your organization is perceived as not putting public safety above all, it is likely to result in greater financial and reputational loss in the aftermath of the crisis.

10. Take real actions to remediate the crisis

Good communication is essential for an effective crisis response, but it won't be of much help if not accompanied by concrete actions. In addition to having your crisis communications plan, make sure your organization has a solid strategy designed to remediate the crisis and help those affected by it.