

# THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST:

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN THE WORST HAPPENS



# MEDIA FIRST AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

This checklist pulls on our vast experience of providing [crisis communication training](#) and making sure organisations of all sizes are best prepared for when the worst happens.

This includes working with organisations in more than 40 different sectors, such as automotive, charity, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, retail and travel.

We've worked closely with Nationwide – the world's largest building society – and have tested all aspects of its crisis plans.

James Puxty, its head of incident communications, business continuity & incident management, said afterwards: "As we've come to expect from Media First, their contribution was incredibly professional, well thought out, and extremely well executed.

"The expertise of their journalists really helped our fictitious scenario come alive and provided some valuable lessons which we have been able to fit directly into our future planned crisis response."

This guide is designed to complement our training - together with our [crisis management testing](#) and regular crisis communication [blogs](#) – and help keep your organisation safe.

# INTRODUCTION

***You're never far away from finding yourself in crisis mode.***

Crises tend to happen when you least expect them.

And when one strikes, you must move quickly to protect your brand's reputation.

There is little time for planning your responses, fact-checking with colleagues, or ensuring you have covered all the crucial bases.

So, when the worst happens, wouldn't it be handy to have a checklist you can follow that takes you through every stage of crisis?

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Crises are unpredictable.

Each one is different and will take unique twists and turns.

And the causes can vary hugely.

Your crisis could be caused by a natural disaster, workplace accident, an act of terrorism, technology failure, financial wrongdoing or criminal activity, to give a few examples.

In the digital age – and at a time of increased scrutiny – even an employee's social media posts can be enough for the crisis team to assemble.

What that means for this guide is that while we have attempted to put the checklist in order of priority, there may be times when you need to move back and forth between the different stages.

But this guide will help you communicate with clarity and confidence, take control of the narrative, and put you in the best position to emerge with your reputation intact and maybe even enhanced.

# CRISIS PLANNING CHECKLIST

## *Crisis planning checklist*

Preparation lies at the heart of effective crisis media management.

So, it's time to take that crisis plan off the shelf, dust it down, and make sure it is still fit for purpose.

An effective crisis plan should include:

- ☐ A definition of what constitutes a crisis for your organisation
- ☐ Who is in your crisis team (and an emergency contact list)
- ☐ Your risks and vulnerabilities
- ☐ Holding statements (and passwords for social media accounts so statements can be quickly shared)
- ☐ Internal communication plan

☐ Additional resources

☐ Evaluation

Your plan may look good on paper.

But does it work?

No crisis plan is complete until you've put it - and those who will use it - through a real test with scalable live crisis scenarios.

Tests can identify gaps and flaws and help crisis team members become confident in their roles.

Companies like Media First can design and run bespoke [crisis management tests](#) for your organisation.

Let's have a look at these essential elements of a crisis plan in more detail.

# DEFINE WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRISIS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Let's start the crisis planning part of your checklist by contemplating what would trigger a crisis for your organisation.

Some things have the potential to test the reputation of all organisations, such as deaths, serious injuries, natural disasters and, of course, global pandemics.

Large-scale IT failures and data breaches are also increasingly the cause of reputational crises and can cause share prices to spiral. Some news channels now have reporters dedicated to covering data stories.

But beyond that, there are no set rules. What may cause one organisation to press the button and activate its crisis management plan may feel pretty ordinary or routine for others.

You must consider what feels normal for your organisation and what would take it into crisis territory.

# DEFINE WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRISIS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Some global organisations may be comfortable with a thousand complaints a week, or even a day. Percentages matter. For some smaller ones, that would be out of the ordinary and could impact their reputation and finances.

It is also vital to remember a crisis doesn't have to be triggered by something that has just happened.

Oxfam and Prince Andrew are among those who have found themselves in crisis mode recently because of historic allegations and reports.

# UNDERSTAND YOUR VULNERABILITIES

Once you have defined what a crisis would be for your organisation, you must probe further and understand its risks and vulnerabilities.

And think about how the damage could be avoided and the impact reduced.

What could expose your organisation to public attention, intense media scrutiny and damage your reputation?

Perhaps many of your services have moved online. Maybe you are about to make that move. What would happen if your IT failed and online services collapsed? What data do you hold on your customers? And what would be the impact of it being leaked?

Maybe there has been a Health & Safety Executive investigation into your organisation, and the report is due to be published.

Perhaps your CEO is keen to speak about controversial political and societal issues.

What would happen if you had to recall one of your main products?

How much do you know about your supply chain? Is there potential for an exposé on the working conditions in that chain?

These are just a few examples. And you will not be able to anticipate every possible cause.

But spending time considering potential risks can reduce your chances of being caught off guard.



# UNDERSTAND YOUR VULNERABILITIES

If you still need a little more help with this, consider the worst-case scenario for your organisation and work backwards from there.

You can then use this information to create a risk register. This is a way of identifying, categorising and staying on top of potential issues.

If your organisation has a risk manager, they will probably have one of these in place and you should ensure comms is included on it.

If not, you can find an example of what a simple version could look like in our ['Why you can't afford to put off planning for a crisis' eBook](#).

# BUILDING YOUR CRISIS TEAM

*“If you have a problem, if no one else can help and if you can find them, maybe you can hire, The A-Team.”*

Or make sure you know who is in your crisis team and what roles each member performs.

Once you are clear on what a crisis looks like for your organisation, you must consider who you will call on when the worst happens.

Typically, a crisis team will include the CEO, other members of the senior leadership team and representatives from HR, communications and legal.

If your organisation has customer service advisers, they should also be represented.

You will also need to be able to bring in subject matter experts to this team when specialist knowledge is required to resolve an issue.

Team members need to be assigned specific roles.

If you've got lots of sites, you may need a crisis team in each location. In this case, there must be clarity around the chain of command and how the local teams link to headquarters.

And because crises have an annoying habit of happening outside of normal working hours, good planning involves being clear on what should trigger the plan being activated and the crisis team asked to assemble.

You'll also need out-of-hours contact details for each team member. And the plan should identify deputies in case someone is on leave or unwell.

# BUILDING YOUR CRISIS TEAM

Part of the crisis team building should involve ensuring you are clear on who will face the media if the worst happens. And ensuring they have had recent media training. Ideally, you need several trained spokespeople who could step into the media spotlight.

Also, ensure there is an agreed communication sign-off process. You can't afford an extensive or unclear sign-off process to prevent quick communication.

Keep the process light-touch, ideally with one person checking and approving material before it goes out. And ensure everyone in the team is clear on who has the responsibility.

# HOLDING STATEMENTS

*When a crisis strikes, you need to communicate quickly.*

The longer you stay silent, the more rumour, gossip and misinformation will take over.

And the rise of social media means the 'golden hour' - a term traditionally used to describe the first 60 minutes organisations have to respond to an incident - has shrunk to about 15 minutes.

That's not much time.

This is where holding statements come into their own. Once you have identified your organisation's potential risks and vulnerabilities, you can prepare what you would say in the initial stages of each one.

These can be tweaked when the worst happens. The crucial thing to remember is that no one will expect you to have all the information at your fingertips in the initial stages.

So, these statements are about showing you are aware of the incident, acknowledging something has gone wrong, and outlining how you are trying to resolve the situation.

The other benefit of holding statements is they allow you to think about how you want to communicate during a crisis.

We recommend you stick to personal language rather than corporate phrases.

And try to avoid formulaic, cliché language, like "deeply concerned" and "thoughts and prayers".

# HOLDING STATEMENTS

*In short, your holding statements need to show CARE.*

It is an acronym we use during our training.  
It stands for Compassion, Action, Reassurance and Examples.

C

**COMPASSION** - You must show concern and sympathy for those affected in a crisis incident, whether that is people who have been physically injured or customers unable to access their accounts because computer systems have gone down. Putting those people at the start of your holding statement and everything you subsequently say shows you understand the severity of what has happened and will show empathy, concern and humanity. Theodore Roosevelt famously once said: "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

A

**ACTION** - You need to show your customers you are taking steps to rectify the situation and ensure something similar cannot happen again. Even in the initial stages, it is vital to outline what your organisation is doing to deal with the crisis. It could be as simple as stating you have launched an investigation to determine what has happened, that you are reviewing procedures or are working with the relevant authorities.

R

**REASSURANCE** - Try to put the incident into context and show it is isolated (if it is). If the crisis has been triggered by an accident, highlight the safety protocols you have in place and your previous good record.

E

**EXAMPLES** - Use specific illustrations to support the message you want to get across. Look to include details of the steps taken in response to the incident, examples of the company's previous good safety record and examples of how the company is taking care of those who have been affected.

# DON'T FORGET YOUR COLLEAGUES

In a fast-moving crisis, it can be all too easy to focus on your external messages and forget your internal communications.

Organisations can become preoccupied with what the media are saying and how the story is reported – and discussed on social media.

But employees are your ambassadors and can be the strong brand advocates you need during difficult times.

A fully engaged workforce is also less likely to give potentially damaging information to a journalist or post something unhelpful on social media.

So, when a crisis strikes, you need to make sure they hear about it from you at the same time as the media – and not through news reports or social media posts.

And they should receive regular updates throughout the crisis.

What channels will you use to make this happen?

Internal communications should also remind employees what they should do if approached by the media.

Receptionists, security and maintenance staff will all wear branded clothing and are highly-visible members of the team and easily accessible to journalists.

Would they know how to react or who to make aware of the media interest? Are they allowed to speak to the media? What should they do if a journalist calls outside of usual office hours?

Similarly, what is the organisation's social media policy? Should they be talking about the crisis on their personal accounts?

As with external holding statements, much of this can be drafted in advance. And those templates can then be tweaked when you know what has happened.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This is quite a broad section.

But there are other crucial factors organisations may need to consider and include in their plan.

Let's say your crisis creates huge media interest, and journalists and film crews gather at one of your sites.

Do you have the facilities to hold a press conference?

Depending on the nature of your work, your crisis team may need access to hard hats, high-visibility jackets and other personal protection equipment.

Could they need access to site maps?

Do you have a building that would act as your crisis command centre?

If you need to send a member of the communications team to the site, do they all have access to a car?

You may also want to include details of your main suppliers and stakeholders in this section.

It may not seem like the most exciting part of crisis planning. But this information will help avoid confusion and delay when a crisis happens.

# CRISIS TEST

***Don't leave it until the worst happens to put your crisis plan to the test.***

Without proper testing, you can't be sure that what looks good on paper will withstand the pressure of 24-hour news coverage, social media storms, unhappy customers, employees asking questions and falling share prices.

And you can't be confident crisis team members know their roles and responsibilities inside out.

We can help.

Our crisis tests are tough, testing and realistic.

But we also pride ourselves on ensuring our crisis exercises are supportive and nurturing, ensuring all training and testing needs are met.

No one benefits from members of your crisis team feeling anxious or intimidated. Our tutors have delivered many crisis test exercises to help organisations across different industries and sectors identify risks and prepare and practice how to respond.

And they know how to strike the right balance between ensuring those participants with lots of crisis management experience are tested and the inexperienced are supported.



# CRISIS PLANNING CHECKLIST

<i>Crisis planning checklist</i>	RESPONSIBILITY	LAST CHECKED	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CRISIS PLAN UP TO DATE			
CRISIS TEAM CREATED			
CRISIS TEAM EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS			
RISK REGISTER			
HOLDING STATEMENTS PREPARED			
INTERNAL COMMS PLAN			
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (PPE ETC)			
CRISIS TEST			

# DURING A CRISIS

You've got your crisis plan in place.

You've tested it and are confident it works.

Let's look at what you need to do when the time comes to put it into action.

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

### *Crisis team assemble*

Get your crisis team together as soon as the crisis plan is activated. If the incident has happened outside of work hours, you may need to hold the initial meeting(s) on Zoom or Teams.

Make sure everyone is clear about their duties.

Do you need to add anyone to the team with specialist knowledge of this incident?

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

### *Establish the facts*

What do you know about the incident so far?

Thinking like a journalist can help you gather the detail. You need to try to answer the following questions:

- ☐ What has happened?
- ☐ When did it happen?
- ☐ Where did it happen?
- ☐ Why did it happen?
- ☐ Who is involved?
- ☐ Is there an immediate danger to life?
- ☐ How did it happen?
- ☐ What are the implications?
- ☐ Who else is involved?

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

### *Start communicating*

Once you have established the facts, it's time to start communicating – remember you need to start doing this in the first 15 minutes.

So, update your relevant holding statement with the established facts and get it out to journalists and on your website and social media channels.

Make sure your internal teams and key stakeholders are made aware at the same time.

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

### ***Monitor***

Put monitoring tools in place so you are aware of the level of interest, sentiment and attitudes about the incident.

Tools like Hootsuite, Twitter and Google Trends can all help. But there are also specialist media monitoring agencies that can help further.

This listening work may help shape future communication during the incident and guide what additional information may be needed.

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

### *Pause*

Have you got any marketing activity scheduled to go out on social media channels?

Double check. And if you do, pause it for the duration of the crisis.

You may recall, when Tesco was embroiled in a crisis about burgers containing horsemeat, its customer care team tweeted: “It’s sleepy time so we’re off to hit the hay! See you at 8am for more.”

The post, which the supermarket said was a scheduled one, triggered a fresh social media storm.

# STAGE 1: THE ACTIVATION PHASE

## – FIRST 15 MINUTES

<i>Crisis activation checklist</i>	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CRISIS TEAM ALERTED		
DO YOU NEED TO ADD SUBJECT MATTER SPECIALISTS TO TEAM?		
FACTS ESTABLISHED		
HOLDING STATEMENT ISSUED		
MONITORING STARTED		
MARKETING MATERIAL PAUSED		



## STAGE 2: CONSOLIDATION – NEXT HOUR

You've established the initial facts. And your holding statement has brought you a little time.

So, it's time to move into a consolidation phase.

## STAGE 2: CONSOLIDATION – NEXT HOUR

### *Set-expectations*

Your holding statement will only hold for so long.

Let journalists know when they can expect an update and what form it is likely to take.

Will it be a more detailed statement? Are you putting people up for interviews?

Will you hold a press conference or send a video update? Where will people go to get more information?

Do you have a web page or social media profiles set up to help you communicate crisis related information?

Remember, you will need to speak consistently to avoid the information vacuum and to establish yourself as the main source of information.

# AMEN

## *Time to call for some divine intervention?*

No. It is instead time to develop the message you want to get across in the rest of your crisis communication. And it works alongside the CARE model we discussed earlier.

**AMEN** stands for Audience, Message, Example and Negatives.

### ***Audience:***

Who are you talking to?

What are they likely to want to know?

What will they be concerned about?

Have a clear idea in your head of the person you want to reach.

### ***Message:***

What message do you want to get across to the audience?

The temptation here can be to try and get lots of messages across.

But you need to keep it to one main message and no more than three supporting messages.

And it needs to be simple, using everyday language rather than corporate words and phrases.

# AMEN

## *Examples:*

Your main message will need examples to support it. Otherwise, it may sound hollow.

If your message is that you have acted quickly to resolve the situation, for example, what examples can you use to highlight that?

## *Negatives:*

What are the negative questions you could get asked, not just by journalists, but by customers, social media users, stakeholders and employees.

Could you face questions about investment in the site, supervision of contractors or scrutiny of your supply chain?

Are there any warnings that have been ignored or lessons not learnt from a previous incident?

Or are there other issues in the business that could come up? Perhaps you are already subjected to an investigation from the Health and Safety Executive or an ombudsman.

## STAGE 2: CONSOLIDATION – NEXT HOUR

### *Scene*

Depending on the nature of the crisis, the initial level of interest, and the travelling distance, consider at this stage if you need to send members of the comms team to the scene.

Let's say there has been an explosion or fire at one of your sites. Journalists will arrive at the scene.

Getting someone there quickly will help manage the interest on the ground.

Make sure it is safe to send them, and they have all the required personal protection equipment. And ensure they have the skills and confidence to deal with the media.

## STAGE 2: CONSOLIDATION – NEXT HOUR

### *Establish links*

There could be other authorities involved in the management of the incident.

The fire service, police, local council, government bodies and industry authorities could also be involved.

Establish links with them at this early point and look to coordinate the release of information to try to ensure consistency.

## STAGE 2: CONSOLIDATION – NEXT HOUR

### *Consolidation stage checklist*

	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
SET EXPECTATIONS WITH MEDIA / STAKEHOLDER / EMPLOYEES		
MESSAGES DEVELOPED		
COMMS TEAM MEMBERS SENT TO SCENE?		
DO THOSE AT SCENE HAVE RELEVANT PPE?		
CONTACT MADE WITH COMMS TEAMS OF OTHER AUTHORITIES		

## STAGE 3: REVIEW AND CONTROL - HOUR 2

### *Review*

Get the crisis team together and review the initial handling of the incident.

What has the initial reaction been to the incident in the media, on social media, among stakeholders and internally?

What is the tone and sentiment of coverage?

How much interest is there in the incident?

What questions are being asked that you've not yet been able to answer?  
Can you get that information?

Do you have enough resources?

Use the answers to these questions to shape your future communication, briefings and FAQs.



## STAGE 3: REVIEW AND CONTROL - HOUR 2

### *Predict – the ‘Daily Mail test’*

As part of the review, you need to consider what twists and turns the story could take.

How might the story develop over the next few hours? The ‘Daily Mail test’ can help here.

It is something Sean Ryan, one of our expert tutors, highlighted during a master class for members of [The Media Team Academy](#).

He said: “We have a saying – common, I believe, to many organisations that come under scrutiny – which is that we ‘need to think like the Daily Mail.

“When you think like the Daily Mail, you can work out what is coming, how a story might develop, and predict the twists and turns it may take.”

How would your crisis look on the front page of the Daily Mail or another tabloid publication? And what would the fallout of that be?

These questions can help shape future communication on the crisis.

## STAGE 3: REVIEW AND CONTROL - HOUR 2

### *Communicate, communicate, communicate*

If you have not already done so, it is time to issue an update.

Even if little has changed, it is better to overcommunicate than stay quiet and let others fill the gap – speculation and rumour travel fast.

Regular updates also help to build trust and credibility. So, keep the information coming and drive the narrative.

Also, consider your approach on social media. Are you looking to respond to everyone who posts about the crisis? Those who have questions? Those posting inaccurate information? Or maybe just those with large numbers of followers?

If you opt to reply to everyone, can you sustain that approach? And how can you do it without sounding robotic or that you are copying and pasting your replies?

## STAGE 3: REVIEW AND CONTROL - HOUR 2

### *Interview?*

Should you go further than an updated statement and offer interviews?

Changes to the media landscape with the use of Zoom and Team interviews on television and radio, mean it has never been easier to get your spokesperson on air quickly.

As long as they are trained and properly briefed, putting them forward for interview at this stage could help you control the narrative.

Written statements on their own are rarely enough and can seem defensive and secretive.

If there are several interview requests, make sure there is a gap between each one for a quick review of what went well and what could be changed.

An alternative option is to record a video with your spokesperson that you post on your website and social channels. But this approach could lead to accusations of trying to avoid scrutiny if it replaces interviews.

## STAGE 3: REVIEW AND CONTROL - HOUR 2

### *Review and control stage checklist*

	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CRISIS TEAM REVIEW MEETING		
'DAILY MAIL TEST' COMPLETED		
EXTERNAL UPDATE		
INTERNAL UPDATE		
SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACH		
FAQ		
CRISIS SPOKESPERSON AVAILABLE		
CRISIS SPOKESPERSON BRIEFED		
ONGOING MONITORING		

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

*Every crisis is different.*

Some may be over relatively quickly. But on other occasions, an organisation can find itself in crisis mode for a long time.

Whatever the length of the crisis, these are the steps we think you should take after the initial first three stages.

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Continue to communicate*

We can't stress the importance of this enough, so we will repeat it. As long as the crisis lasts, you must communicate regularly.

Continue to issue updates and make spokespeople available for interviews.

If the media demand remains high, consider holding a press conference.

It will take some pressure away from spokespeople to give continual interviews while ensuring journalists have footage, audio and quotes for their bulletins and articles.

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Continue the internal comms*

Make sure your employees continue to hear any bad news from you first and demonstrate leaders are responding well to the crisis.

Internal comms should also focus on keeping up morale. It can be demoralising to be the focus of negative coverage and receive hostile enquiries. So, tell them the good things that are also happening.

And don't forget well-being. Having reporters at your door is stressful. Make sure your people feel reassured and supported.

This was something we discussed in more depth during a [webinar with the British Medical Association](#) about how it managed the covid pandemic.

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Hold regular reviews*

Continue to review the crisis, how it is being covered and the questions that continue to be asked.

What quotes are getting picked up?

Who is carrying the interviews?

Is your message being conveyed?

Who else is speaking about the crisis?

What is the sentiment of the coverage?

What concerns are customers, stakeholders and employees expressing?

Based on the answers to these questions, do you need to change your approach?



# STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

## *Correct errors*

When you analyse the media coverage, are there errors that could be repeated as the story develops?

Challenging mistakes and seeking corrections can feel daunting during the best of times.

But left unchallenged during a crisis, those errors could shape future coverage. And live forever on the internet.

Consider the importance of the misinformation. If it is relatively minor, it may not be worth highlighting and risk damaging your relationship with the journalist or media outlet.

If it is a serious factual error, avoid a heavy-handed approach. Ask for it to be removed from online stories and seek a correction.

You could also consider a letter to the editor for an error in a newspaper.

And you can use your website and social media channels to publish the correct information – just avoid the trap of repeating the inaccuracy you want to correct.

**Follow these steps until the story begins to fade and business as usual returns.**

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Ongoing management checklist*

	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
REGULAR EXTERNAL UPDATES		
ONGOING MONITORING		
SPOKESPEOPLE BRIEFED ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS		
PRESS CONFERENCE		
REGULAR INTERNAL UPDATES		
ERRORS CORRECTED		

# STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

## *After the crisis*

What happens when the crisis is over?

Time to put the crisis plan back on the shelf for next time and get back to normal?

Well, not just yet.

After a crisis, there are some crucial steps to take that can strengthen your organisation and its ability to respond to similar incidents in the future.

As President John F. Kennedy once said: “When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.”

# STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

## *Assess the damage*

Let's start by assessing the damage of the crisis.

This is tricky because it is not an exact science.

Rather than having a standard way of measuring the reputational hit, it tends to be about perception.

Typically, a loose assessment is made by judging the tone of media coverage and the social media reaction.

But you can do better.

## *Income*

A crucial way of assessing the reputation ramifications is to look at how the crisis has impacted your income.

Remember, this is the age of the boycott. Almost as soon as an organisation is perceived to have done something wrong, there are social media calls for people to boycott it.

#Boycott has become a popular way for consumers to show their displeasure.

So, has your crisis resulted in customer loss? Has it affected your bottom line?

If you are a charity – and some of the most damaging recent crises have involved them – are you getting fewer donations? Are you losing volunteers?

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Share price*

As well as customer churn, another good reputation indicator is your share price.

The rise and fall of share value tends to mirror an organisation's image.

Research from Deloitte has revealed it can take 80 days for a company to recover lost share price after a crisis.

### *Brand tracking*

This is a way of continually measuring the health of your brand and what people think about it.

It can include metrics such as brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand preference.

The daily data provided by some of these services, such as YouGov, can help you detect emerging crises.

And it can also enable you to evaluate your crisis response and the impact the incident has on your reputation.

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Internal*

Your people are your greatest assets. How do they feel about what happened?

The impact of a crisis stays with employees much longer after the public and media have moved on.

If they feel disgruntled about how an incident has been managed, and believe their concerns are not heard, you could get leaks - potentially triggering another reputational crisis.

Longer-term, this could result in a loss of talent and hinder your ability to recruit the best people.

Employee engagement surveys are an excellent way of assessing the impact of a crisis on your people.

### *News cycle*

How quickly does the media spotlight move on?

If the news cycle rapidly moves on to something else and there is no longer much attention on your organisation, the reputational hit will likely be less.

However, the longer the media focuses on your crisis, the more damage there is likely to be to your reputation.

A good media monitoring agency should be able to help here.

# STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

## *Review*

While the crisis is still fresh in everyone's mind, it is crucial to review your response.

Remember the John F Kennedy quote about a crisis also presenting an opportunity? This is the opportunity to improve your crisis response for the future.

So, regroup. What parts of the crisis plan worked? What aspects could be improved?

How did the crisis team perform under pressure? Do you need to add anyone to the team?

Would you use the same spokespeople? Do your spokespeople need more media training? Do you need to look at different social media monitoring tools?

The key here is to encourage an open discussion.

It should not be about blaming individuals for any shortfalls.

Instead, focus on identifying how your systems and processes can be improved.

Consider seeking feedback from stakeholders, including trusted journalists.

Once those lessons have been learnt, update your crisis plan and ensure all team members are aware of the changes.

## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### *Rebuild media relations*

It might be tempting to batten down the hatches for a while and keep a low profile.

If you've endured a tough time in the spotlight, you could even view the media as the enemy.

But you need to engage with critics – try to rebuild any relationships that have been strained or damaged and identify your allies.

Start to share positive news again. It can help change the perception of your brand.

It might also push coverage of your crisis further down search engine results.

This positive coverage can include changes you've made following the crisis to avoid something similar happening again in future.

This may include changes to the leadership of the organisation or new procedures.



## STAGE 4: ONGOING MANAGEMENT

<i>Post crisis checklist</i>	RESPONSIBILITY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT		
CRISIS TEAM REVIEW MEETING		
VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS GATHERED		
POSITIVE COVERAGE		

# FINAL THOUGHTS

While we can't predict the future, we know no organisation is immune from a crisis.

Don't let your organisation be the one that is caught off-guard.

Prepare for the unexpected.

Make sure you have crisis plans in place and know that they work.

Use this checklist as a guide to help you get that preparation right.

And steer you through a crisis when it happens, navigate the aftermath, and restore your reputation.

If you need any help with any aspect of crisis communication training, message development or crisis management testing, we're only a call away.

# ABOUT MEDIA FIRST

We've been delivering communication training for around 40 years.

This includes working with 40 of the FTSE 100, public relations companies, charities, public sector organisations and businesses of all sizes.

Increasing numbers of organisations turn to us to test their crisis management performance and ensure their spokespeople are ready for the spotlight.

Our [crisis communication training](#), led by current working journalist tutors, will enable your organisation to communicate with clarity, confidence and compassion when media pressure is at its most intense and there is public, customer and staff hunger for information.

We'll work with you to understand your crisis management testing needs. And devise a realistic, challenging, unpredictable and bespoke scenario based on your risks.

And our bespoke [crisis management testing](#) will put your plan to the test with a realistic crisis that builds throughout the day and challenges your response and decision-making.

