

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CRISIS MANAGEMENT

1. PREPARATION

You simply cannot be too prepared when it comes to crisis management. Sure, you are unlikely to be able to predict the exact scenario you will face in a crisis, but you can take a detailed look at your organisation and anticipate its vulnerabilities.

It is important to remember that a crisis can come in many different forms. Fatal accidents, environmental spills, product recalls, data loss, removal of services, natural disasters, criminal activity and redundancies could all trigger a media crisis.

Don't wait until you are in a crisis to start putting your media and communications plan together. Prepare now. It will not be wasted time.

2. PUT YOUR PLAN TO THE TEST

Once you have identified your organisation's vulnerabilities, put your media response to the test with some role play and desktop exercises, involving realistic and fast moving scenarios. Use this to develop your holding statements and anticipate questions and problems you are likely to face.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR SPOKESPEOPLE

Who will you put in front of the media in a crisis situation? You need someone who knows your business and the sector but who also has previous media experience. Recent media training from current working journalists is essential. If the crisis is likely to be long-running or across different sites you are going to need to identify several spokespeople.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

The rise of social media means a crisis will no longer just be reported in the traditional media. Your customers will be talking about it openly on the likes of Twitter and Facebook and raising concerns. In fact your social media team are likely to be the first people to be aware of the crisis. Make sure you have enough resources to handle a social media storm and consider how you will monitor and use these channels out-of-hours. Consider the basics – for example, does everyone have passwords to access the accounts?

5. RESPOND QUICKLY

This is vital. The longer you leave it before you respond, the more damage will be done. People will not expect your initial statements to contain lots of detail, but they are vital for showing you are aware of the situation and are taking action. From there you can provide further updates showing compassion, concern, honesty and empathy.