



# CRISIS

## Management Planning

Sometimes, when you least expect it, things go wrong. It happens in life and in business. Our instinct is to panic, which can lead to misjudgement and hasty decisions. As none of us expect things to go wrong we rarely plan for it, leaving our business exposed and at risk.



The Product Marketing Company  
01462 432303  
deb.reeve@product-marketing.co.uk  
www.theproductmarketingcompany.co.uk





Living in an age where news can travel half way around the world in minutes, should make us more aware of the speed at which bad news can travel. Therefore having a plan in place for such an event will not only give you some peace of mind, but it will keep everyone focused on the correct ways to manage the situation in the unlikely event that a crisis does occur.

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### Why should you have a Crisis Management Plan?

Fortunately, most businesses don't have many serious issues and equally, most business don't think that they will. However, it wouldn't take you long to recall a business that has been in the public eye for the wrong reasons: a product recall, a near or fatal accident at work, food contamination, employee arrest or misconduct; financial difficulties; failure to meet legislative criteria and so on. Even the smallest of incidents can sometimes get out of hand and escalate into a public fiasco.

We all know that bad news makes good news (for some) so the quicker and more effectively you manage a situation, the better the outcome.

The following is a guide to creating a plan that will keep you focused and limit any potential brand damage.

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### 1. What are the facts?

When a situation arises it's critical that the full facts are gathered quickly. Hearsay and rumours are not sufficient. Times, places, names, witnesses, photographs, documents are all factual and they need to be carefully collated and recorded, regardless of how serious or damaging they may be. Gather all of the facts together and timeline them so that you have a quick reference should you be questioned.

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### 2. Who should manage the crisis?

Assign a team of individuals who will manage and escalate the situation, from a department head up to the CEO and agree a coordinator and a spokesperson. Ideally you will have an experienced PR agent, who you can call on if the situation looks set to leave the confines of the business.

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### 3. How should the situation be managed?

Swift management of a crisis situation is so important. Your team will need to know when escalation is required and at what point you need to make internal or external communications. Containment is key to managing a serious situation. If it can be quickly dealt with by a department or division it will avoid any requirements for external publicity. However, the most important thing to remember is that if you contain a situation, your customers, staff and stakeholders have a right



to know about it. Should it subsequently be made public, this could have a worse effect than coming clean in the first place. If you need to make a statement to any of your publics, do it quickly and ensure that your PR agent writes or reviews your statement and that it is announced by a senior member of staff or your PR agent.

Depending on the circumstances, a statement should first be communicated to your staff and customers and then the wider press. If you make a public statement without first informing your customers, they may take a dim view of this. Always give the facts and never hide anything.

You don't have to reveal every detail but you must be truthful and show how you are managing and intend to deal with the situation. Remember, journalists may already have more facts that you know so you don't want to be publicly questioned or caught out. Honesty is ALWAYS the best policy.

#### 4. When should you act?

As soon as possible. Any crisis plan should have timescales built in to the escalation process. If a situation is serious and potentially damaging, immediately

contact your PR agent and they will work with you to create a communications plan. If the news gets out before you have announced it, there is the potential for it to go viral on social media very quickly, so all the more reason to contain and communicate.

If you do make a public announcement it's important that you indicate when you will provide an update and stick to it. Don't be tempted to think it has all gone quiet - there are people who will be waiting to jump on the situation and fan the embers at the first opportunity.

#### **Remember 3 things:**

#### **COLLECT, CONTAIN, COMMUNICATE.**

The quicker you react and the more open you are, the more sympathy you will get, as opposed to adversity. If you manage the situation correctly you will come through it with minimal brand damage and in some instances, excellent crisis management can lead to positive media due to the way you handled it.

If you require any help in developing a plan or managing a situation please contact us – it could be the best PR decision you make!

The Product Marketing Company is a successful full service B2B marketing outsource service for the manufacturing and engineering sectors.

For more information or an informal discussion please telephone 01462 432303 or email [deb.reeve@product-marketing.co.uk](mailto:deb.reeve@product-marketing.co.uk)