



CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Here are 6 steps to successful crisis communication:

1. **Communicate early and often.** Anticipate and lead; don't merely react. Be honest, accessible, responsible and visible. If **you** don't control the agenda, others or events will. It's a mistake to wait until you know everything, or to rely solely on the media to convey your message.
2. **Prepare in advance.** Most crises occur with little or no warning. But often early signals are ignored, hiding the more serious problem lurking just below the surface. Keep a record of the actions you've taken to avoid threats to public safety, even if the odds of crisis seem small.
3. **Make sure you're addressing the real, underlying issue.** Sometimes the immediate problem or incident can be interpreted quite differently by the press or the public. What **really** concerns them about this incident? Is it possible you're not foreseeing the way this issue will play to outsiders? Is your perspective too narrow?
4. **Analyze all stakeholder positions.** Make a real effort to see the issue from the perspective of all those involved. Predict the responses of all stakeholders to your words and actions. If possible, prepare a special message for each constituency affected by the crisis.
5. **Focus on action—yours and theirs.** Words aren't enough. Be sure to tell them what **you've** done to help solve the problem, and then give **them** something useful to do, so they don't feel helpless and frustrated.
6. **Keep open lines of communication.** Let the press and public know how they can reach you for more information: announce a schedule of press releases, offer an 800 number for questions, give them the names of the people to contact.

Here are 5 traditional strategies for “image restoration”:

1. **Denial** You can deny that the act occurred, or that you (or your organization) performed the act. Or you can minimize your blame, or shift it to someone else.
2. **Evasion of Responsibility** You can argue that the offensive action was merely a response to someone else's act, that you lacked information or control over the situation, that the wrongful action occurred by accident, or that the offensive behavior was done with good intentions.
3. **Reduction of Offensiveness** You might describe positive actions you've performed in the past, show that the action was less offensive than it first appeared, downplay the extent of damage it caused, distinguish the act from other more offensive actions, justify the behavior on the basis of some higher good it accomplished, counterattack your accusers, or simply offer compensation.
4. **Corrective Action** Restore the state of affairs that existed before the offensive action, or promise to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.
5. **Mortification** Confess and beg forgiveness.

