



POCONO MOUNTAINSSM
VISITORS BUREAU

Crisis Communications and Community Relations

Welcome to a Press Conference: The Background

- Hersha Resorts has just acquired a large tract of land in Wayne County. It's over 700 acres near I 84.
- Planning a 1,000-room property complete with an outdoor amusement park.
- The Park is projected to present 65 rides and encompass 200 to 300 acres. It's themed as a family attraction.
- The Park is also planned to have complete F&B and retail options with outdoor entertainment venues. Hersha is partnering with Hershey Entertainment and Resorts in the operation of the amusement park

Welcome to a Press Conference: The Background

- The property will provide close to 1,000 full time and 3,000 part time jobs to the community
- Hersha has extensive long term planning initiatives in place that they are discussing in anticipation of the property being successful in it's first three years of operation
- Hersha has all the local and state approvals in hand to go forward with the project

Welcome to a Press Conference: The Background

- On Monday, Deutsche Bank economists announced that the possibility of a recession is facing the country in the second quarter of 2022. Other bank economists soon flowed with the same prediction. Those predictions are based upon recent data released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) that the US economy GDP contracted 1.4% in the first quarter of 2022.
- These rapid announcements are making investors jittery. Herhsa stock value dropped 25% on Tuesday as the travel industry was one mentioned that may experience the economic contraction first.
- This is the first press conference that Hersha is having after the first announcement of the project four years ago.



The Basics

- The media wants to get the story.....that is their job. It's about what the viewer will be interested in.
- Balance in story sometimes compromised due to deadline driven race for a timely turn-around
- Media may get “other sides of the story” from various sources, don't expect them to go with your narrative, regardless of the facts
- Big stories typically originate on local level, then get picked up by country-wide affiliates & higher-level outlets (ex: WNEP to ABC ; WBRE to NBC; Pocono Record to AP)
- Short staffed and under supervised... facts may not always be thoroughly checked or researched
- The more cutthroat the medium... the more competition for eyeballs
- The citizen journalist... via the smartphone - social media becoming the new news source, credibility and facts compromised
- The influencer
- The consumer is not always savvy
- What is trusted content? Yours!
- Reputation management

What is the Best Way to Proceed?

- You know your own story.....tell it
- Don't let someone else get out in front of your narrative
- Build relationships with your community...always nurture them when you can
- Be available if the press calls
- Prepare statement that is timely, transparent, and empathetic (if applicable to situation)
- Always tell the truth no matter how painful. You must be available when the news is good or bad

What is the Best Way to Proceed?

- Enlist good allies...always have a schedule of appointments for updates to situations and hold to the schedules as best as possible
- Position yourself as the expert.....it's your product that you have poured your heart and soul into. You know it best.
- Lean on us for our help. We are available 24/7 and have contacts that we can place at your disposal.
- Some stories may not be newsworthy.....don't give up. Your time is coming!

Why Worry About Crisis Communications...Why a Plan?

- Data Breaches
- Manages Miscommunications
- Unfortunate Mishaps
- Ensures Effective Communications Flow with Key Stakeholders
- Gets in front of the Narrative with the Traditional Media as well as the Social Media Whirlwind
- Tabletop Exercises
- A Crisis can Come when you Least Expect it
- Eric Frein
- Environmental Disasters
- Effective Crisis Communications gives you the Ability to Make Lemonade out of Lemons

STEPS TO CREATING A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



1. **Build a crisis management team.**
2. **Name a spokesperson.**
3. **Identify common crisis scenarios, i.e. anticipate a crisis.**
4. **Identify and address stakeholders.**
5. **Establish monitoring & alerts systems.**
6. **Anticipate stakeholders' questions and provide answers.**
7. **Create a social media action plan.**
8. **Establish monitoring & alerts systems.**

Tips for Handling Crisis Communications

When a crisis occurs, companies should have a plan in place that helps them provide a calm, reassuring response. During a crisis, a communication team should:



Discuss responses
before reacting



Communicate with
public promptly and
clearly



Prioritize customer
risks and concerns



Educate and
support employees



Use modern
communication
technology tools



Monitor sentiment
and assess business
impacts



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

How to plan for, identify, track and resolve crises





Introduction

A crisis can hit at any time, but the threat is much greater in this increasingly digital world. Digital media and the online space have fundamentally changed the pace, volume, and reach of news and social media stories. Today, even the smallest friction can spark and grow into a crisis as millions can view, comment, and share the two-way conversations brands and customers can now engage in online.

Being able **to respond to crisis effectively** is crucial for companies to maintain a positive brand image, reputation, and of course, to not lose their customer base.

In this guide, we'll cover all the trappings, including how to identify a crisis, how to respond, and how to measure the impact of a crisis.

Ready? Let's dive in.



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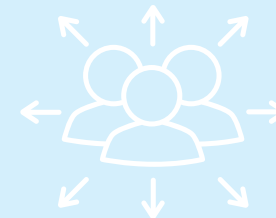
Part 1: Identifying a Crisis

Over the past hour, you've received several urgent internal emails about one unfavorable tweet or Google alert. Sure, it's upsetting, and it's definitely an issue, but is it a crisis? Maybe, maybe not.

A PR issue reaches crisis classification when a **negative story or issue has gained momentum and reached a critical stage where it threatens the reputation of an individual, brand, or organization.**

Today, a crisis could involve anything from a negative news story that develops into customers boycotting your brand to a full-blown natural or human-made disaster. In order to protect and defend existing reputations – and build positive brand perception – one of the key roles of a PR professional is to identify potential risks, develop plans and prepare their organization to face a crisis.

Luckily, not every PR issue or brand incident escalates to crisis levels.





Determining a “Crisis” vs an “Issue”

While the C-suite might panic about a negative news story or a customer complaint online, it's important to remember that **not every issue evolves into a full-blown crisis**. Issues are normal and can occur every day – from negative tweets to competitors badmouthing your brand online.

What PR pros and social media managers need to do is identify – at pace – the issues that matter and manage them appropriately.

How can Meltwater help?

To help put things into perspective for the leadership team, **Meltwater's social analytics** feature can measure the real impact





Don't Let an Issue Develop Into a Crisis

Although a single post isn't a crisis, if it gets amplified, you'll want to move fast.

More often than not, crises worsen due to ineffective communication with consumers and stakeholders – especially those directly involved – or from avoiding a crisis altogether. Generally, PR professionals face five key challenges:

1. Lack of information
2. Losing control of what is said by consumers online – especially on social media
3. Intensifying media attention – negative and positive
4. Response time
5. Mixed messaging and inappropriate spokespeople

How can Meltwater help?

Use **media monitoring tools** and social listening to filter through the noise and tap into the conversations that matter the most.



Criteria For a Crisis

- As we've mentioned, not every customer complaint made on Twitter or every rumor speculated on in someone's blog constitutes a crisis. The tools we use every day to keep up with what's going on will also tell us when it's time to shift into crisis mode.

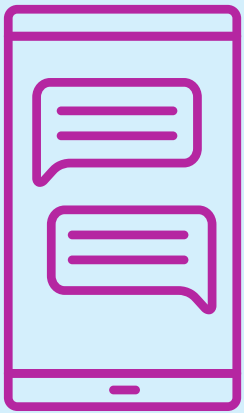
A good media intelligence tool helps us identify crises, providing insight into:

1. Influencer Participation: Sometimes, the difference between a crisis and business as usual is who is doing the talking. Use media intelligence tools to track key influencers, both on social media and in the press, to assess what stories are picking up traction.

2. Trending Keywords: Word clouds can point us to the right answers for questions such as: Is negative chatter originating from a small but vocal minority? Is it being picked up by traditional media, or vice versa? Is a story in the press trending on social?

3. Sentiment: As you assess negative sentiment, think about it from the point of view of key stakeholders. Who is most likely to be affected by a negative story? How influential are they? What are the paths for the story to grow? Track sentiment analysis in real-time to know when you should jump in.

4. Duration: We typically think of a crisis as an explosion (or implosion), at which time we encounter aftershocks of negative sentiment. But a crisis can also take a slower trajectory, permeating associations to your brand over time and building gradually. Test the impact of your ongoing responses and monitor the trajectory of negative sentiment to determine if further action is needed.



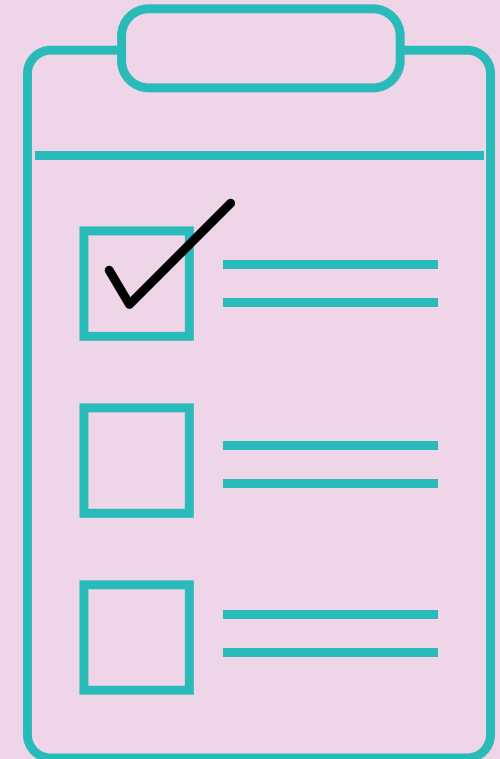
Issue vs Crisis Checklist

To the stewards of a brand, it can be easy to conflate issues with crises. That's why it's important to have a framework for evaluating when something is an issue that must be addressed and when it is an actual crisis that merits a larger, coordinated brand response.

A crisis is something that:

- Has an immediate, negative impact on your brand reputation
- Results in a significant monetary loss to the company

ISSUE	CRISIS
The website is unavailable due to a technical glitch.	The website was hacked and is being held for ransom by the hackers.
Monthly statement delivery is delayed due to extreme weather.	An important customer delivery is delayed due to inclement weather.
One of our offices is closed due to extreme weather.	One of our offices is currently open and being affected by a natural disaster.
The brand was mentioned unfavorably in an article in the national press.	The brand was mentioned unfavorably in the national press due to a significant product flaw or alleged misconduct by one of its leaders.
A beloved employee has died.	A beloved has died as a result of gun violence, terror attack, or workplace accident.
An inappropriate Tweet was sent from the brand account.	An inappropriate marketing campaign has been pushed live and is seeing significant public backlash including brand boycotts.



Different Kinds of Crises — Real-World Examples

It is important to note that an issue left unaddressed could have the potential to become a crisis if enough momentum swells behind it.

However, that doesn't mean every negative social media mention merits creating a response command center. Here are **5 common issues** that don't need to become a full-blown crisis.

In most of these cases, having a solid crisis preparation process in place, including regular social media monitoring, should be capable of keeping issues like those above from escalating.



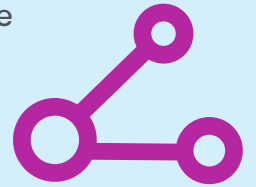
Brandjacking



We all know that it's relatively easy for an individual to assume another's identity online. This can happen to a brand as well. If an interloper uses your company's name and logo and makes no attempt to distinguish themselves from you, we've got a case of trademark violation.

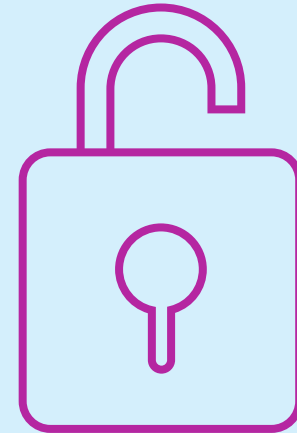
Another murkier possibility is that someone creates a parody account or takes a branded hashtag — one we've put out into the world to spur engagement — and starts associating it with negative stories.

McDonald's was one of the first big brands to see a branded hashtag campaign go awry. When McDonald's #McDStories was hijacked, the company changed its hashtag policy. For several years, McDonald's stopped branding their hashtags.



Instead of the familiar “Mc” appended to a keyword or phrase, they used hashtags such as [#LovinSimpleSweeps](#) and [#SampleWholeGrains](#).

Presumably, this decision was made so that if a hashtag got hijacked and went viral, the association with the brand was less immediate. The lesson here is to carefully monitor keywords and phrases to make sure they aren't being used against you.

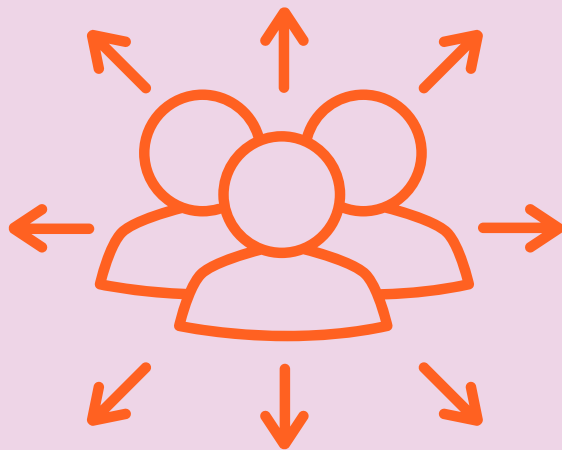


Of course, depending on who your brand is and how you interact on your channel, there is a case to be made for taking brandjacking in stride and engaging in a humorous way. Before jumping into this kind of engagement, it will be worth doing a pro/con analysis and drafting some sample responses to run by your team.



Competitor Sabotage

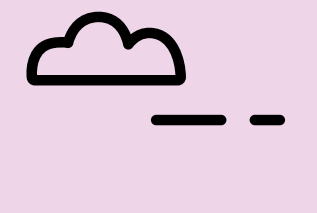
What would you do if a YouTube influencer trashed your brand in a viral post? While many companies might choose to ignore it, when Lashify received a negative review from influencer Manny Mua, things got heated on social media between the company's CEO and the influencer.



But where this story gets really interesting is in the allegations that this influencer's negative review was as a result of a competitor paying him to do a "takedown" video trashing the product. While the FTC rules make it clear that influencers are supposed to disclose any paid content they create, many brands are willing to pay influencers a high price to partner with them without making the proper disclosures, especially if the content is a negative review of a competitor.



So what's a brand to do in this situation? First of all, keep calm and don't resort to trashing the influencer in return. You can consider responding publicly to the influencer's claims — including correcting any false assertions they may have made. But the best defense of your product is one that your raving fans make on your behalf. That's why having an engaged community of brand advocates is so important.



Need some inspiration? See how **3 grade-A blunders** turned into speedily resolved crises by these quick-thinking brands.



A stylized illustration of a laptop with a teal outline. The screen shows a simple interface with horizontal lines and a cursor icon. Surrounding the laptop are various digital icons: a plus sign, an envelope, two speech bubbles, a double arrow pointing left, a speech bubble with an exclamation mark, a square, a double arrow pointing right, a thumbs up icon, and two more plus signs. The background is a light blue gradient.

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Step 1: Contingency Planning

While there is no way to proactively plan for all possible crisis scenarios, frequently occurring incidents merit preparation. To get started, here are seven scenarios companies should plan for:

1. Sexual harassment allegations
2. White-collar crime amongst the leadership team
3. Workplace violence
4. Lawsuits
5. Dismissing a public-facing employee
6. Terrorism
7. Death of the CEO or another key leader



Consider every possible scenario and workshop some solutions — including your intended media response, content ideas (media releases, social media posts, direct contact with those involved), and high-level action plan. Get sign-off from the C-suite on big decisions ahead of time, so you can respond to media and consumers in real-time.

TIP: PR pros often measure their job and program performance based on reach, quality of coverage, and share of voice. You should also add crisis contingency planning to your list of measurable quarterly goals.

- Pace yourself
- Make sure that accomplishing this goal is part of your performance review.
- Map out two or three crisis protocols per quarter.

Step 2: Media Relations

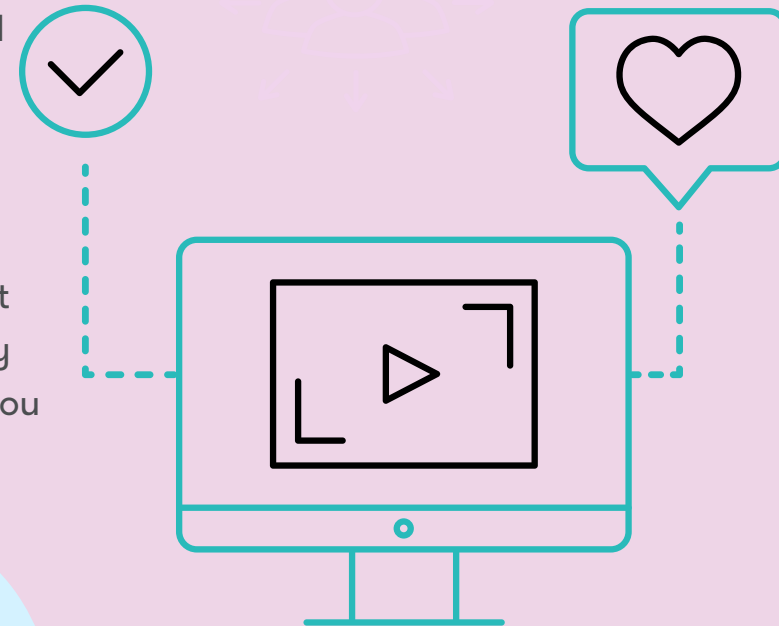
While members of the media have the potential to tarnish your brand, they also have the power to improve your reputation and assist in crisis resolution. Journalists, influencers, and other key opinion leaders are the best points of contact to resolve a crisis and can help to communicate your key messages.

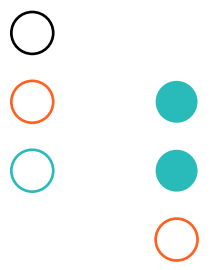

REMEMBER: It's much easier to deal with journalists who have an understanding of your brand and a relationship with your business. Maintaining and updating media lists and making regular contact ahead of a crisis can make getting a positive response from journalists so much easier.

To start, develop a media relations strategy for each of the scenarios outlined in your contingency plan. Consider who is already writing about you, your industry, and your competitors, and target them. Monitor every aspect of the media — including social media pages and profiles — so you know just who to target, when, where, and why.

How can Meltwater help?

Monitor industry news and other related media. You can also create specific media lists using Meltwater. Use the Influencer Contact Management tool to search for relevant media contacts, build focused lists and engage directly through personalized outreach.





Develop a Media Relations Strategy

How you **manage your relationships with journalists** and influencers could have an impact on how your crisis plays out. Remember to use existing relationships to your advantage and to always be honest — providing accurate, useful, newsworthy information.

At the end of the day, the media's ultimate goal is to break news — so if you can't offer them accurate updates, or honest comments, you may damage your relationships and risk them going to other sources.

And unless absolutely necessary, avoid “No Comment” — it almost never works and could bring more unwanted negative attention and investigation to your brand or organization.



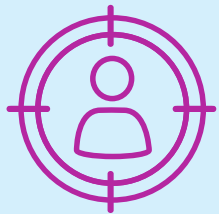
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5 Steps of a Media Relations Strategy:



1. Identify the facts

- What, when, where, and why did this crisis happen?
- Who is involved?
- When is the problem expected to be solved? Who knows about it?
- How bad can it get?



2. Establish who needs to know what

- Stakeholders: determine who has been impacted and what needs to be communicated. Consider clients, partners, regulators, government, interest groups, industry, customers, business affiliates, and staff.
- Media: determine if the media needs to be informed and how/when they should be.

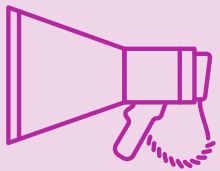


3. Develop a media statement(s)

- The statement(s) needs to be driven by key messages and support the facts — not the other way around.
- Keep statements brief and to-the-point, but be sure to include contact details for the first point of contact.
- Provide supporting documents, fact sheets, or technical data to support complex information.

5 Steps of a Media Relations Strategy:

4. Distribute the Statement(s)



- Have your statement/s ready for the media and give a copy of the statement to every member of your crisis communications team.
- If necessary, share with staff (via email, notice board, Intranet) and highlight that all media inquiries must be forwarded to the PR team.

5. Decide whether a media conference should take place



- High-profile crises might require a media conference. However, be aware that it can be challenging to manage journalists and questions at a conference, which often puts spoke people under additional pressure.
- If possible, consider pre-briefings for key journalists, pre-recorded video statements, or live-streamed panel discussions instead.

Step 3: Set Up Tracking to Detect Warning Signs

Find early warning signs so you can jump on a crisis quickly.

Set up searches on any number of topics and track them on all your channels. Start by making a list of the kinds of messages you've already put out that have met resistance.

At any point, this same resistance might resurface, get amplified, and take on a life of its own. You'll also want to talk with your sales reps, customer support, and legal counsel on issues that they've encountered. Once you've made a list of crisis triggers, create news and social searches for them.

TIP: Make sure you're not only monitoring your own brand keywords. You should, of course, **track your competitors**, but also what's going on in your industry. This will help you keep a close eye on any rumblings that, though not targeting your brand specifically, could indirectly cause friction among your customers.

EXAMPLE: Consider, for example, a package food brand that is revealed to have a contaminant in an entire batch of products, resulting in a recall. This type of event will likely spark discussion among the food safety industry, and reach wider news outlets. Even if your package food brand has a stellar reputation, this sort of chatter negatively affects your industry and you'll want to track all this news very closely and carefully.

What to Track to Stay Ahead

Dig deep into industry trends, reports, and media coverage. You should know as much about your industry as possible so you can make statements and decisions with confidence — and with little-to-no backlash.

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Set up automatic notifications for trends, keywords, and key opinion leaders to get the complete picture across news and social media. Stay on top of your industry by tracking the following:

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Industry executives: Stay clued in to high-ranking executives' Twitter and Facebook feeds, what videos and blogs they post, and how everything they share is received.

Competitors: Pay as much attention to **competitor brand mentions** as you do your own. Their crisis could easily become yours.

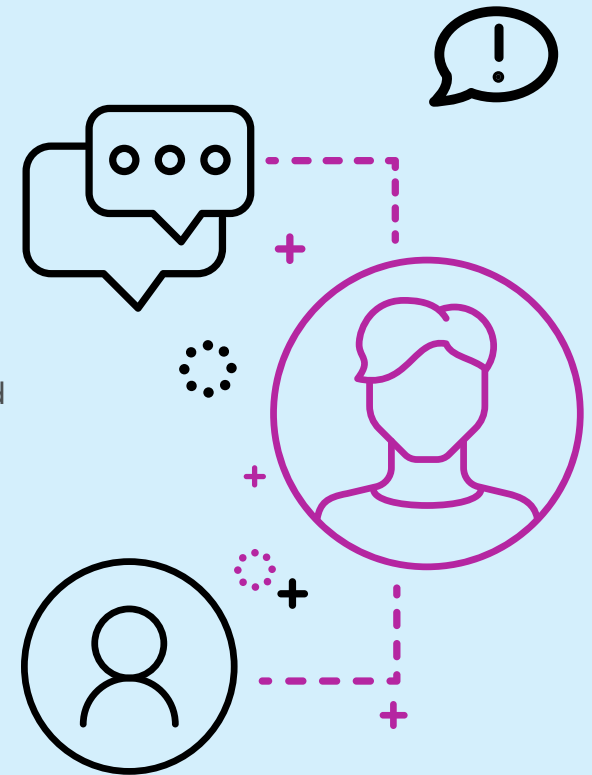
Industry news: Sometimes crises hit by association. Keep track of how your industry is perceived and any events that might impact it so you can address issues as an industry leader.

Events: Keep track of trending topics related to events to prevent speakers and other brand representatives from getting caught with their guard down.

Controversy: Know when hot button topics are trending and get ready to explain your position on them before any fallout online.

Complaints: Make a list of consumer complaints and keep an eye out for them in your search results.

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Step 4: Crisis Workflow & Content Plan

So now you have the tools in place to identify a crisis and you know what to look for. The next step is to determine concrete actions to take once a crisis hits. Don't skip this step! Nailing down these details is extremely important.

Tailor a step-by-step guide for your organization, so your team has a process to follow during a crisis, and the C-suite knows your plans from the outset. Assign stakeholders where relevant, so everyone knows what they're responsible for.

Here are some suggestions for your crisis workflow:

- 1. Assess the Situation:** Use **media intelligence** to understand the full scope of the communications landscape and all of the points you'll need to address. Don't do anything until you fully understand all sides and angles of the issue, including how it started and the current sentiment rating.
- 2. Assign Duties Within Your Team:** When you're engaged on multiple fronts, you need to ensure all stations are manned by the best and most appropriate people. Decide who will manage influencers, keep the executive team informed, serve as liaison to other key stakeholders (including partners, customers, members, etc.), and record every detail, action taken, external response, and resolution.

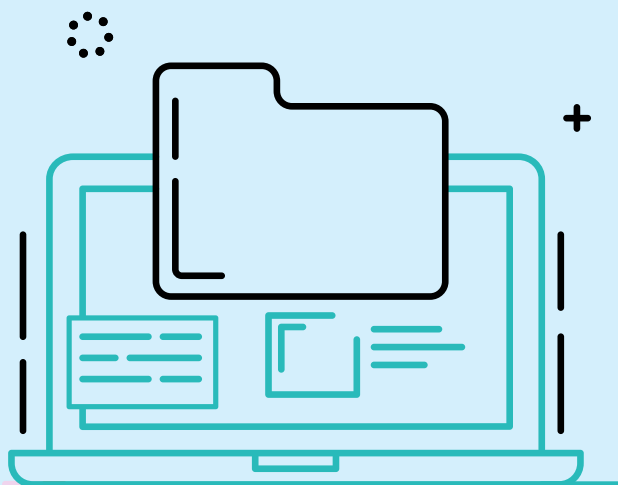


3. Identify Key Advisors: A crisis may require technical information or strategic insight that you'll need to get from leaders in IT, accounting, HR, or elsewhere. Identify all relevant functions specific to a given crisis and how to contact them quickly.

TIP: Build an internal communications list so you can contact the right person.

4. Draft a Statement: If you believe a press release or statement is warranted, make sure you have a draft ready for the C-suite as soon as possible. You want to leave as much time as you can for up-to-the-minute changes. Depending on the nature of the crisis, you may even want to draft multiple statements to ensure you cover all bases and appropriate tones.

TIP: Not every crisis necessitates a public statement. Sometimes when a global crisis takes place, such as a devastating earthquake, global companies will sometimes stop all activity on their social channels as a show of respect and solidarity. If you're a smaller brand, you may want to do the same for crises that affect where you live and operate.



5. Legal review: Any statement you make during a time of crisis should be reviewed by counsel to assess any legal consequences and minimize damage should legal action be taken against the company.

6. CEO Review: During a crisis, your CEO (likely your company's primary spokesperson) must be kept in the loop.

TIP: Throughout your preparation for responding to a crisis, keep the rest of the business aware of any emerging issues so you can avoid increasing the risk and exposure for your business from a poorly timed action, like a promotion from the marketing team.

Spokespeople

Another important part of the planning process is to consider who will speak on behalf of your organization or brand when a crisis hits.

Will it be the CEO to emphasize how seriously you are taking the issue?

Or will it be a product manager to provide expert insight into why the issue has emerged?

Will it be the corporate affairs manager to provide regular updates in real-time?

Situations differ, so each crisis will call for a different spokesperson (or combinations of spokespersons). But regardless, it should be someone who can speak to the issue on behalf of the organization with confidence and authority.

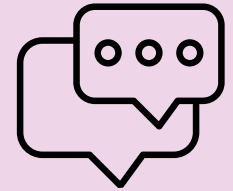
TIP: Make a list of potential spokespersons and allocate them to the scenarios outlined in your contingency plan. Inform them ahead of time and share your content strategy and key messages, with them so they're well briefed prior to a crisis. And make sure you know how to reach them if a crisis breaks.

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Train Your Spokespeople

While most spokespersons are used to the limelight, it's critical for every spokesperson to be properly trained so they can defend their organization on the spot under pressure.

Journalists and members of the public will ask difficult, often uncomfortable questions, so it's important for your spokesperson to know how to answer questions calmly, authoritatively, and genuinely.

Crisis communication training, like media training, should include:

- An understanding of the challenges the organization is likely to face
- How journalists and the news media operate, and the types of questions they'll likely ask
- **How social media works** and the expected consumer response
- How to speak calmly and authoritatively and come across as genuine while delivering key messages — both on and offline
- Body language training and other non-verbal communication tips
- Practice in different media environments — piece-to-camera, one-on-one interviews, press conferences, live-streaming
- General media training — interview techniques to block and bridge questions

TIP: Plan for the worst-case scenario. What if your first choice of spokesperson isn't available? Have a pinch-hitter who's trained and ready to jump in.

Step 5: Pre-Write as Much as Possible

Because social media and news move so quickly today, it can hurt your brand to wait for executive stakeholders to approve detailed statements. As we'll cover, timeliness is key when responding to a crisis.

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Waiting too long often means you won't even be able to get your crisis workflow up and running because you're now dealing with a micro crisis-within-a-crisis addressing the complaints that you've stayed silent.

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Having something pre-approved that acknowledges your awareness of the problem without saying too much will go a long way in putting your audience at ease.

TIP: Draft for specific platforms. Have a tweet approved that meets the character count, a LinkedIn post specific to the business & networking audience, etc. Make sure all posts meet your brand voice and tone guidelines.

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Here's an example of a sample statement:

SAMPLE STATEMENT

Fill in the blanks for any situations.

A _____ at _____ involving _____
occured today at _____ .

The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.





Managing Notifications

Dot as many 'i's and cross as many 't's as you can for your crisis workflow by setting up a notification system.

To start, break down your audience into key stakeholders — both internal and external — and list the best channels to reach them. Consider journalists, influencers, business leaders, and others with enough online clout to sway public opinion. What are they saying about your brand? How often? Is it negative, positive, or neutral?

How can Meltwater help?

Using Meltwater, you can have **real-time updates** sent straight to your mobile. You can then forward these on to relevant stakeholders via text message or instant messaging apps to keep them up-to-date.

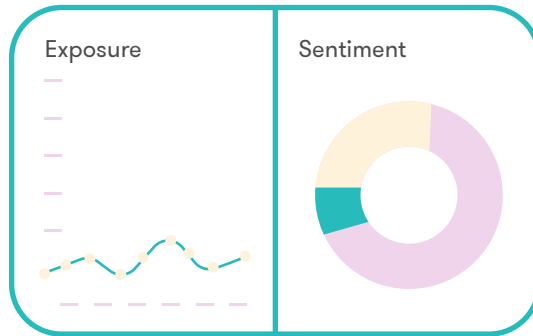
Step 6 - Finalize Summary Messages and Update Corporate Talking Points

By this point, the worst is over, but it's not time to celebrate and relax with a beer just yet.

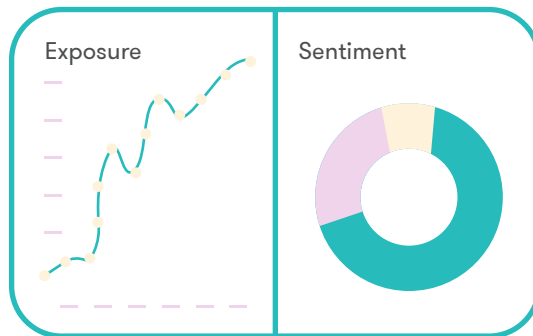
Now is the crucial step of crafting some final thoughts — both for internal stakeholders as well as external. Explain what your company learned from the crisis and how you've adapted your processes, policies, or products accordingly.

Remember, people will want to know you've taken action, not just paid lip service. You can then update any relevant company-wide talking points.





Here's an example of your baseline: sentiment and exposure at normal times.



Crisis is building as we can easily see - and confirm by comparing to our baseline above.



As things calm down, track your return to baseline level as an indication the crisis is officially over.

Step 7: Reset Your Benchmarks and Finalize Your Report

A crisis will throw your **goals and KPIs** out of whack. Go back and look at where your sentiment, media impressions, key themes, and reach were before the crisis and ask yourself: Is the goal to get back to where you were before things went wrong? With your new visibility can you turn bad press into good press and up the ante on your brand?

TIP: To create a final report on the crisis, export the **media intelligence dashboards** you used (including the high and low points in coverage sentiment, geographic reach, and share of voice), add some context to each one, and create an illustrated timeline that shows: the crisis being triggered, your reaction to it, and what's been done to ensure it won't happen again.



Part 3: During a Crisis

Ok. So now, you've done the prep work, you have your workflow, you have your pre-written templates.

Here are some tips for what to do during a crisis...

1. Respond in a timely, sensitive manner
2. Never lose sight of your goals
3. Know your audience and the media landscape
4. Measure and track as you go, adjusting if necessary
5. Know when to walk away





1. Respond in a Timely, Sensitive Manner

When a crisis hits, brands today are expected to respond with accountability, empathy, speed, and transparency. Try to avoid a cold corporate response as much as possible.

For your initial response, a simple “we are aware of the issue” is completely acceptable; however, be ready to follow up as soon as possible with more details, hard facts, and actions you plan to take. These updates should be communicated through clear, personable, non-jargon-laden copy.

REMEMBER: The speed at which you respond to an unfolding crisis situation will shape how the media and consumers perceive your brand. Leave it too late to comment, and you allow negativity to build, making it harder to address the actual crisis.

2. Never Lose Sight of Your Goals

As things escalate, get yourself prepared to move fast. This does not mean that your goals in approaching this crisis should fly out the window. You will get frenzied and frazzled at times during a crisis — it's natural. But that's why you have a framework developed before one occurs. Return to this regularly and keep everyone that's involved in the loop as much as possible.

Keep in mind that you'll be measured on:

Speed: Even in the best of times, people want results fast. Acknowledge the problem quickly and deliver updates regularly. You're better off being the first to provide an update, even if you've got less to say, as opposed to seeing a journalist, critical influencer, or your competition do it for you.

Transparency: It's getting harder and harder to keep secrets. Getting ahead of a crisis means sharing what you know and being open about your commitment to a solution. If you're open, sincere, responsive, and responsible, you'll engender more trust and respect for your brand after the crisis dissipates.

Accessibility: You will also be judged by how easy you make it for people to find and understand what they want to know. Have clear CTAs and a landing page or blog you can refer people to and add to it as questions arise.

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How can Meltwater help?

Use **media and social listening** to track if your message is sticking (reach), how people feel about it (sentiment), and if it's being amplified (engagement). Use these insights to adjust your message as you go (but be careful not to flip-flop your message or accidentally backtrack on a promised solution).





3. Know Your Audience and the Media Landscape

Different people care about different things. Customize your message and the channels you use to reach each stakeholder group.



STAKEHOLDER	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Customers	Customers are usually most directly affected by a crisis. You need to understand to what extent the crisis has negatively impacted them and how many customers are unhappy.
Investors	A crisis can have a negative impact on your company's stock price. Find out how the financial community is reacting, taking this into consideration when you communicate with investors.
Employees	Employees act as representatives, or brand ambassadors, for your company. It's important to provide them with corporate-approved messaging and monitor their public-facing communication regarding the crisis.
Influencers	"Influencer" has come to designate bloggers, social celebrities, analysts, and other tastemakers. Among the first two, some might be established advocates for your company, and some detractors.
Media	Those media relationships you've been building over time come in handy during a crisis. Reach out to friendly journalists and proactively give them your side of an issue. Then use a media intelligence tool to uncover which other journalists are likely to pick up the issue as a story, based on their coverage of competitors or similar issues, and reach out to them as well.



4. Measure and Track as You Go, Adjusting if Necessary

Keep close tabs on how your messaging is being received, as well as any changing sentiment ratings throughout your crisis communication workflow. This will help when you report and summarizing how effective your communication efforts were and inform any changes you want to make next time.

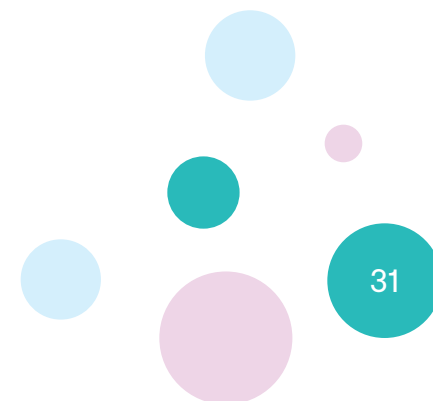
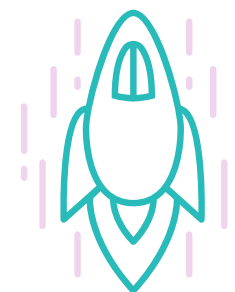


5. Know When to Walk Away

There is no such thing as completely shutting down a crisis that's being played out on social media. While you should never ignore it or hope it goes away on its own, it's important to know when to leave the conversation.

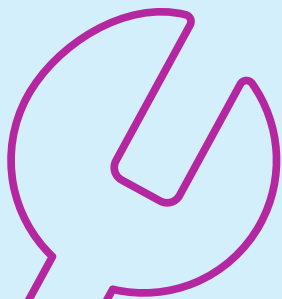
If you've made all the points you can make, but there is still a vocal minority of detractors who are saying the same thing over and over, any response you provide just adds fuel to the fire.

Stepping away gives them less to react to. Although you want to encourage dialogue, depending upon the situation, you do occasionally have to delete inflammatory posts on social media fan pages or community sites, turn off comments on posts that have gone off the rails (Instagram), report abusive behavior (Twitter), or block disruptive users (Facebook). These are drastic steps in the age of transparency, but they can be effective (and warranted) as a last resort.





Addressing a Crisis — The First 24 hours



0-15 minutes: Release the first tweet and/or other social media response to acknowledge your organization is aware of the issue.

15-60 minutes: Issue a longer summary of information confirmed to date via multiple channels and post live updates on your website. Release key facts as the story develops. Reach out to directly involved stakeholders prior to making an official media statement.

1-2 hours: Pull promotional content and images from online platforms. Arrange and hold the first media appearance or make the first official media statement.

12-24 hours: Continue to update the public and media as often as possible — producing further statements as necessary. Make sure all online messaging remains sensitive and appropriate. Organize additional media appearances and interviews if necessary.

24 hours+: Transition approach to positive actions — communicate the steps your business will be taking to ensure issues are identified, addressed, and prevented from reoccurring.

Addressing a Crisis — Finalizing Key Messages

You should already have some preliminary key messages set up as part of your contingency plan for possible crises. However, once a crisis hits, you'll need to finalize content and brief key spokespeople.

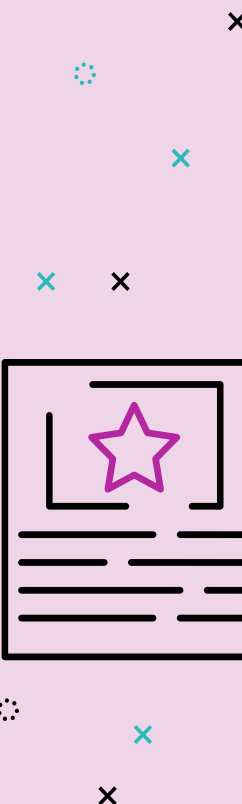
Once you know your plan of attack, align your key messages for all channels and stakeholders. Keep the following in mind as you tailor your messaging to the situation:

Concern: Remember to be human. First and foremost, your key messages need to be genuine and show compassion — especially if the crisis involves loss of life or injury.

Action: Secondary to showing concern, you need to demonstrate a determination to resolve the crisis by stating what action you and your organization are taking.

Context: People will be asking questions, so to avoid confusion put the situation into perspective and provide as broad a context as possible. Link as much as you can to your written statement, press conference, and a landing page answering common questions.

Call to action: The final message should be bold. State what you want to happen, and call on the industry, the government, or your own organization to lead by example and drive change. (Be careful though — you aren't out of the woods yet, and until the crisis truly passes, you don't want to give the impression of trying to absolve your company or pat yourself on the back).





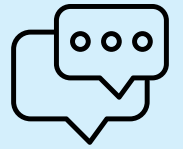
Addressing a Crisis — Social Media Management

Today, most crises break on social media — either by those observing a crisis, those directly involved, or those (like media) who highlight issues within an organization or industry. As a result, the best way to approach a crisis is by communicating openly on the very platforms your customers, clients, or communities use.

To start, establish a relationship with the team in charge of **managing your organization's social media profiles**. **During a crisis, it's important for these channels to be taken over by the crisis communications team — at least temporarily.** This way, all inappropriate and insensitive marketing and promotional content can be removed to make room for your key messages.

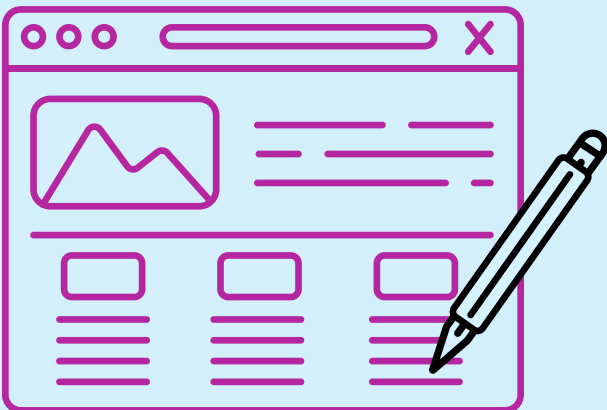
It's also a way to ensure every platform (Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and your website) maintains consistent messaging and live updates. Once you've gone out with your first tweet, Facebook post, or Instagram Story, you'll need to use monitoring software to listen to the conversations and track key message penetration.

Addressing a Crisis — Social Media Management



How can Meltwater help?

Using **Meltwater's social analytics reporting**, you can consolidate the 'digital breadcrumbs' your audience members leave behind online to measure the rate of their engagement and gauge an understanding of how they feel about your brand immediately after the crisis. You can then adjust your messaging and response plan appropriately. You can also use **Meltwater Engage** to publish and schedule content from one platform and leave notes, content, and images for other teammates to use — ensuring consistent messaging across the



Part 4: Post Crisis — Reporting and Measuring Success

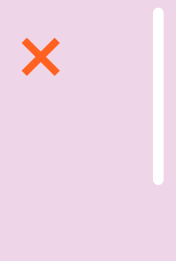
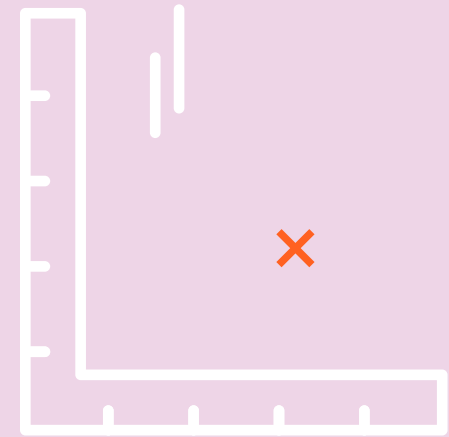
Whether your crisis communications activities played out the way you wanted them to or not, it's important to reflect, measure, and report on performance following a major incident.

Report

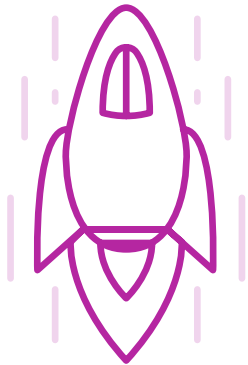
First and foremost, you need to report on the crisis — how it came about, why it happened, your intended response, your actual response, and how the media and public reacted. This is an important step and will provide an overview of how, when, where, and why a crisis came about — and how your actions either lessened or worsened the end result.

In terms of media and social media coverage, engagement, sentiment, and key message penetration, you can use Meltwater's Dashboard Reports to consolidate all of the data and highlight problem areas or actions that worked in your favor.

Meltwater Dashboard Reports record and measure media exposure, tonality, top publishers, share-of-voice, top influencers, key messages, website impact, and geo presence to give you a comprehensive view of your media engagement and online activity before, during, and after a crisis.



Record Lessons Learned and Improve Your Crisis Workflow



No crisis response will be completely perfect. Once you've collected the data, take some time to understand any missteps and to identify the areas that you could improve on for next time.

Create a list of the concerns you had prior to the crisis and draw on the data to understand how they played out and what you did to respond.

Did the media respond the way you wanted them to? Did consumers attack your brand on social media as anticipated? Why, or why not?

In a crisis report, every detail matters and can be used as a case study to prepare for future crises or train new communications team members and spokespeople.



Finally, update your contingency plans and KPIs for future crises. Remember to think about your communications team and the role each person played. Did anyone crack under pressure? Is there someone who stood out and would benefit from more responsibility next time? Assign new roles and spokespeople, and edit the wording of your key messages to keep up with the changing media landscape.

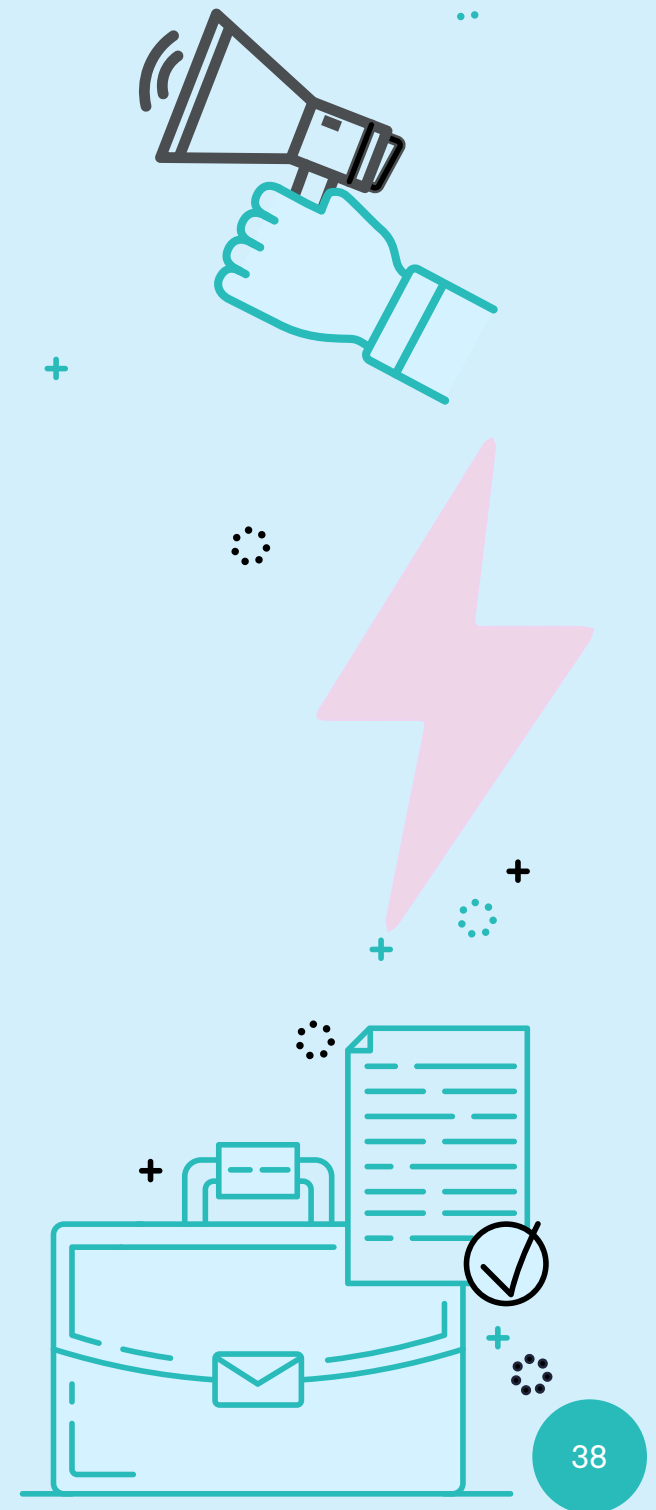
Should You Get Legal Involved?

Crisis can leave your brand open to attack. It can also leave your business open to legal consequences. To ensure you can get legal questions resolved quickly, build a close relationship with your legal team so you don't have to start from scratch when things get hectic.

TIP: Taking time to get to know your legal team can lead to interesting conversations about questions that marketers sometimes struggle with, such as “What’s the difference between defamation and someone just having an opinion? Give it a try! It’s a great icebreaker, and each team will learn valuable things about each other, especially the perspectives they bring to particular issues that arise.

Communications and marketing sometimes feel that legal would like for them not to say anything — ever. And this might (justifiably) be the case during a lawsuit.

But an experienced lawyer knows that communication’s job is to promote the businesses, and during times of crisis, this means safeguarding its reputation. Working with counsel during a crisis will help you find the best way to ensure that your audience feels heard and that you are taking responsibility without opening yourself up to a lawsuit as a result of your PR and marketing activities.





When Should You Consult Legal?

Here are some guidelines for when to consult legal, whether you're in a time of crisis or just trying to make sure that nothing you say or do will cause one:

Go to legal when:

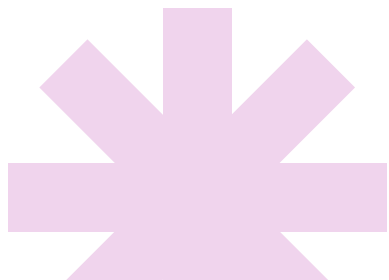
- Your company has been accused of doing something illegal.
- You believe that your company could be accused of doing something illegal very soon.
Remember, any statement you make about events or circumstances relating to this legal action (including internal emails) could be used in a lawsuit.
- Your communications are directly targeting a competitor and shed a negative light on them.
- You are making claims about your product's functionality or the breadth of your services.
For instance, while describing how great your product is would typically be construed as opinion (and therefore not a legal liability), if you're listing product features, counsel may want to cross-reference what you're saying with any contracts customers sign to ensure the lists match.
- You are making factual claims about your product that you know are difficult to prove.

TIP: As tempting as they may be, using certain words can open you up to unwanted scrutiny and even the threat of legal action. Here are some examples of words to avoid: always, guaranteed, unlimited, proven, 100%, and never fails. As communications pros, we can find creative ways of promoting our products without making factual claims we can't actually prove, thus sidestepping a potential crisis.

Conclusion

When a crisis hits, all eyes are on the PR and social media teams. How you handle an emerging issue can be the difference between a small problem that's forgotten in a day or two or a full-blown crisis that costs the company reputation and customers. After reading this guide, you should have a thorough understanding of how to identify and define a crisis, steps to prepare for when one occurs, and how to behave during one.

Although our world is already inundated with nonstop news and opinion being shared on every channel, a crisis situation opens up the floodgates like nothing else. Luckily, by using a comprehensive **media intelligence tool like Meltwater** — one that includes media monitoring, social listening, analytics, and influencer identification and outreach - we can track potential issues and analyze data from social media profiles. This makes us better positioned than ever before to keep a hot issue from becoming a full-blown crisis.





Resources

These are **ready-to-use templates** are available for you to get started on your crisis communication journey:

Contingency Plan: Develop a contingency plan by considering every possible scenario and workshop some solutions.

Crisis Communications Plan: Tailor a step-by-step guide for your organization, so your team has a process to follow during a crisis, and the C-suite knows your plans from the outset.

Crisis Communications Checklist: Now that you have a step-by-step process tailored to your organization's needs and communication style — use the following checklist to stay on track when a crisis breaks.

Crisis Review: Whether your crisis communications activities played out the way you wanted them to or not, it's important to reflect, measure, and report on performance following a major incident.





Prepare for a Crisis

Meltwater is a leading global provider of social and media intelligence. By monitoring millions of posts each day from social media platforms, blogs, and news sites, Meltwater helps teams spot potential crisis scenarios before they occur. Our platform's contextual analysis and advanced analytics allow you to better understand the reach, narrative, and sentiment of the conversation to help determine how much a crisis is impacting your brand.

Get in touch to learn how to monitor the extent of a crisis as it unfolds across news and social media to respond in real-time with Meltwater.



Request a Demo