

JULY 2014

The Executive Modern Media Crisis Guide

Like many, you might have to work hard to get any publicity for your business. This may make you wonder, what are the odds that your business could experience a media crisis?

Actually, it is quite high.

Consider this. According to CeBit Social Business Trends (2014), there are 1.6B Facebook users, 540M active Google+ users, 200M active Twitter users. YouTube reaches more 18-24 year olds than any cable channel. WordPress blogs have 25B page views per month and 74% of consumers rely on social networks to influence purchases with 81% influenced by their friend's posts.

Clearly, the media landscape has changed. Consumers have a voice that can affect any business. It is crucial to be prepared for a media crisis threat.

However, the secrets to navigating a crisis are constantly evolving. Every chief executive needs a modern roadmap. One fast track approach is to tap into the hard-earned lessons learned by experts who have been through the ring of fire.

Recently I had a chance to meet with Shelby Barnes, former head of Communications/Marketing for a local tech innovation company, thrashed by the media since its inception. Barnes, now owner of 23Mile Strategies shared practical insights, validated by my own media experience and a CMO group.

The Crisis S.W.A.T.

In this instance, SWAT is short for: Scenario plan, Who's in charge, Audiences and Tracking—four simple ways an executive can be prepared.

Scenario plan

Most crisis' come in one of three flavors—meteoric, failure to perform and predatory. They each share one commonality. Buyers begin questioning your credibility. Define what a crisis is for your business.

Executive Insights



Cheryl Isen

Imagine and dissect the media crisis by using examples from other companies. Scour the internet. Crisis examples live online in infamy. During the dissection, explore and document what could go wrong if this happened to your business. Use 360 integration techniques with your team. If inclined, do a mock crisis drill to validate your team's readiness. The number one objective is to ensure that your team is prepared and does no further harm in the crisis.

Who's in charge?

Next, define who will be in charge. Clarify the difference between decision makers and opinion makers. Spell out who will handle and speak for each type of issue. Then, outline a plan to take charge with the media. Will regular briefings be needed and how often? Also, plan internal briefings. Remember, employees can be advocates or advisors without proper insights.

Audiences

Identify each audience your mock crisis might affect. Prepare responses for each. Make sure that you can back up statements with verifiable facts, which will help shape a new story. Being "audience prepared" requires pinpointing the channels and priority timelines for communicating with each audience.

Think through the pros and cons of using social or traditional channels for each.

Tracking tools

The best way to prepare for a modern media crisis is to be informed. Stay ahead of a crisis by putting tools in place today to listen to your audiences. At minimum set Google alerts, Twitter feeds and track relevant hashtags in addition to traditional media.

Executive's today need to be prepared. Hope is not a strategy. Common folk have real power to affect your business positively or negatively. Consider what could go wrong and think through your SWAT responses with an eye to what you want to be able to tell your customers when it is over. Finally, when you are out of the theoretic and in a real situation, think before you act. Then roll up your sleeves and go with the punches.

Don't forget the basics. Remember to show some energy and be likable, real and relatable. Try to make your audience smile. Capturing a fan in one-minute is hard work, but it is definitely doable. It's also work every company, not just startups, should constantly work on. Putting together a one-minute pitch is the perfect starting point.

Cheryl Isen is president of Isen and Company, a strategic marketing and public relations founded in 2001. Serving as an organization's "CMO to go", Cheryl and her network of talented associates run or supplement a company's Marketing and Public Relations efforts.

Visit IsenandCo.com to learn more.