KOM5327: CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Unit 1: Introduction to Crisis Communication

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First Semester, 2017/2018

SZO - SEM 1, 2017/2018
Background of Crisis Communication

1. Introduction
   - Communication Revolution

2. Crisis alleviated or prevented by relatively new technology
   - Blogs
   - Cell Phones
   - Internet/Website

3. Crisis started with relatively new technology
   - E-mail
   - Hackings
   - Websites and Blogs
4. **What is crisis and what is crisis communication**

   i) **Definition**
      - Crisis
      - Crisis Management
      - Crisis Communications

   ii) **Examples of Corporate Public**

   iii) **Five stages of crisis**

   iv) **Public Opinion**
COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION

Oral Communication
Print Broadcast
Television
Digital Information Age
• Concerned with the transferring of information to significant persons (Publics) to either help avoid or prevent crisis (or negative occurrence), recover from crisis, and maintain or enhance reputation.
CRISIS ALLEVIATED OR PREVENTED BY RELATIVELY NEW TECHNOLOGY - BLOG

1. Updates to an issues or crisis
2. Help information seekers locate
3. Provides a record of response to a subject or issue
4. Spark public concern in express opinions and prediction:
   • **Before**
     • Public demonstration
     • TV man-on-the street interview session
     • Radio call-in-show
   • **Now**
     • E-mails
WHAT IS CRISIS?

Crisis:

A major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organization, company, or industry, as well as its public, products, services or good name (Fearn-Banks, 2002).

A crisis interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization.
Definition of Crisis

- A crisis can be a strike, terrorism, fire, a boycott, a product tampering, product failure, or numerous other events. The size of the organization is irrelevant. It can be Multinational corporation, a one person business, or even an individual.

- A turning point for better or worse (Fink, 1986)
A crisis is any prodromal situation that runs the risk of:

1. Escalating in intensity
2. Falling under close media or government scrutiny
3. Interfering with the normal operations of business
4. Jeopardizing the positive public image presently enjoyed
5. Damaging a company’s bottom line in any way
Crises Management:

Process of strategic planning for a crisis or negative turning point, a process that removes some of the risks and uncertainty from the negative occurrence and thereby allows the organization to be in greater control of its own destiny (Fearn-Banks, 2007).
CM seeks to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and/or industry from damage (Coombs, 1999).

CM is a process of preventing, preparing for, performing, and learning from crises (Coombs, 1999).
Importance of crisis management

Stakeholder activism:
- angry stakeholders
- stakeholders becoming more vocal when dealing with organizations
- Customers awareness about consumer issues and willing to speak out
Characteristics/nature of crisis

- Unpredictable, elements of surprise
- Loss of control
- Inadequate and conflicting information
- Require fast decision
- Threaten the survival of organizations
- Potential negative effects
- Escalating risks
Types of crisis

- Product tampering
- Hostile takeover attempt
- Challenges to propriety data
- Embezzlement
- Environmental accidents
- Unexpected resignation or termination
- Recall of product
Crisis Communications

The dialog between the organization and its public prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence. The dialog details Strategies and tactics are designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization (Fearn-Banks, 2007).
Crisis communication strategies represent actual responses the organization uses to address the crisis. Crisis communication strategies involve the words and actions the organization directs toward the crisis (Coombs, 1999).
5 STAGES OF A CRISIS

1. Detection
2. Prevention/preparation
3. Containment
4. Recovery
5. Learning
DETECTION

1. Prodromes or the prodromal stages – noting warning
2. Some crises have no noticeable prodromes, but many do.
3. When an organization in the same business as yours suffers crisis, it is a warning to your organization –
   - Tylenol tampering case
     - Little warning – Received call from a journalist from Chicago Tribune
     - Drugs manufacture now use tamper-proof container
   - Exxon Valdez oil spill
     - Prodromes to other companies as well as Exxon itself
     - Oil companies now know better how to prevent spills, how to clean up spills, and how to react to the public after spills
4. An organization should watch for prodromes and make attempts to stop crisis at this stage before it develops into a full-blown crisis.

5. To detect early signs, organization from employee committees that function like:
   - Lighthouse keepers watching for vessels at sea
   - Watchdogs
   - Whistle blowers

6. Crisis detection also refers to a system within organization in which key personnel are immediately notified of a crisis;

   Advantage: Give organization time to:
   - Draft a statement
   - Make preparations for news conference
   - Notify the crisis team
   - Call in spokespersons
CONTAINMENT

1. Refers to the effort to limit the duration of the crisis or to keep it from spreading to other areas affecting the organization.

2. Pepsi used advertisement to end its crisis

3. Jack-in-the box communicated to consumers that:
   - It was contained to the pacific North-West and did not affect all outlets of the chain
   - Other food products in the restaurants were not contaminated.
1. Involves efforts to return the company to business as usual

2. Recovery may also mean restoring the confidence of key publics, which means communicating a return to normal business.
   - Example: Fast-food restaurant in Fort Pierce, Florida
     - To implement recovery, health department officials participated in a news conference telling the public that all managers had been tested, that none had the AIDS virus, and that virus could not be transmitted through hamburgers.
   - Example: Exxon attempted to recover from the Valdez oil spill by efforts to persuade tourists that Alaska was still a beautiful place to visit.
LEARNING

1. The learning phase is a process of examining the crisis and determining what was lost, what was gained, and how the organization performed in the crisis.

2. It is an evaluative procedure designed to make the crisis a prodrome for the future

- Example: Johnson & Johnson – use tamper proof container
- Example: US Airlines – set-up metal detectors at airports
MINI-CASE: WHITE STAR LINES’S TITANIC SINKS

1. The grand largest Moving Object in the world
2. Designed to be unsinkable
3. Personal are celebrity
4. Crisis management plan and crisis communications were believes to be unnecessary
   - Ship couldn't sink
   - There were medical facilities on board
   - The ship had state-of-the art communications equipment
Learning Point
WHITE STAR LINES’S TITANIC SINKS

1. It always possible, anything can happened
2. Ship couldn’t sink but it could burn. In fact, a fire out of control on a ship could have been a worse disaster
3. A crisis management plan would have detailed what would be done in the event of fire and other tragedies.
   ▪ How evacuation would take place
   ▪ How to conduct practice drills for the crew and possible for passengers
   ▪ Who would lower the lifeboats
   ▪ Who would ensure that passengers were guided safely to the closest lifeboats and ships
   ▪ Who would contact persons ashore by radio
4. A crisis communication plan would also include details about who would be spokesperson
1. Prodomes – were ships that sank previously
2. Prevention and Preparation – making sure there were enough lifeboats and the development of crisis management and crisis communications plans
3. Containment – recognizing the danger as soon as the iceberg was sighted and putting into effect the crisis management and crisis communication plans
4. Total Recovery – was not likely in this crisis. The reputation of White star remained damaged after nearly a century had passed.
Unit 2: Organizational Crisis Management

MANAGING THE CRISIS
MANAGING THE CRISIS

1) Communicating with the NEWS MEDIA
2) Communicating with LAWYERS
3) Communicating with INTERNAL PUBLICS
4) Communicating with EXTERNAL PUBLICS
5) Communicating directly with the MASSES
1) Communicating with the NEWS MEDIA

1.1) PREVENTION

- Warning signs called *prodromes* (crucial) – prevention is the best cure for a crisis.

- Before a crisis/at the onset of crisis:
  - Anticipate what the news media need and want
  - Media want to sell newspaper & win rating stars
  - Media give the public what it want to know rather than what it needs to know
Never say ,”no comment!” to the public, refusing to comment appears to be an admission of hiding information or even guilt.

Explain to the public as much as possible and promise to reveal the information at the specific time.

Do not assume that the crisis story will go away.

Cover-ups make a crisis persist.
WHAT THE NEWS MEDIA WANT TO KNOW

- What happened?
- Were there any deaths or injuries?
- What is the extent of the damage?
- Is there a danger of future injuries and damage?
- Why did it happen?
- Who or what is responsible?
- What is being done about it?
- When will it be over?
- Has it happened before?
- Were there any warning signs of the problem?
The organization:
1) Is put out of business, **ruined**, possibly sued, and key executive possibly charged with crimes.
2) Continues to **exist, but it has lost some image** and respect in its publics’ eyes and perhaps a great deal of financial position.
3) In a hard-fought battle, has **won a war** of public opinion and is seen as favorably as before or perhaps more favorably.
1) Communicating with the NEWS MEDIA

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3 TYPES OF RESPONSE TO A MEDIA REQUEST:

1) We know and here’s all the information
2) We don’t know everything at this time. Here’s what we know. We’ll find out more and let you know.
3) We have no idea, but we’ll find out and tell you.

Give the media access to the material they need: background information, statistic, photographs, and spokespersons.
1.2) SPOKESPERSONS

- Ex: CEO, other top executive, experts, or public relations professionals.
- Identify one primary spokesperson to reduce the conflict.
- CEO is a most public relations professionals to be the spokesperson:
  - has the most credibility
  - as a true representative
  - can make decision
- However, alternative spokesperson should be selected in the event the primary spokesperson not available during a crisis.
1.3) NEWS CONFERENCE

- Have a prepared statement read and distributed to the media for the rest of session.
- Spokespersons should have major talking points (key messages & speaking points).
- Be mindful during the crisis
- Spokesperson should rehearse their talking point to be comfortable with the information.
- Do not prolong the crisis by an unnecessary news conference.
10 DO’S FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- Do listen to the whole question before answering.
- Do use everyday language, not the jargon of your business or profession.
- Do maintain an attitude showing you are calm, courteous, responsive, direct, etc.
- Do understand the reporter’s job.
- Do be accessible and pleasant.
- Do try to treat the reporter as a partner, an ally in maintaining or restoring the company’s good image.
- Do tell the truth, the whole truth.
- Do look the reporter in the eye.
- Do use your crisis communication plan.
- Do keep employees informed of the crisis.
10 DO NOT’S FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

❌ Do not be a wimp!
❌ Do not guess or speculate.
❌ Do not get overly upset about being quoted out of context.
❌ Do not play favorites with the media.
❌ Do not pull advertising from a newspaper because the reporter not cooperative.
❌ Do not consider your news release “golden”.
❌ Do not stick to a story if it has changed, just to be consistent.
❌ Do not be trapped into predicting the future.
❌ Do not wear sunglasses or chew gum.
❌ Do not smoke—unless you are in a place such as Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where the economy is based on cigarette sales and smoking is a way of life.
1.4) TRICK QUESTION

Metzler (1994) identified several types of questions that reporters have been known to ask:

- **Speculatif questions** – it begin with ‘if’.
- **Leading questions** – reporter already has the answer, you are merely to verify it.
- **Loaded questions** – design to elicit an emotional response.
- **Naïve question** – the reporter had not done any homework.
- **False questions** – intentionally contain inaccurate details.
- **Silence** – reporter want you to spoil your guts, talks more and more
1.5) REPORTERS

✓ Reporter are sinister creatures whose life goals is to harass public relations practitioners.

✓ Reporters do not hate you or your professions, in fact many of them will seek public relations jobs.

✓ Their task is to bring back an interesting story, a story that will give them a promotion, a rise or similar.
Communicating With External Publics During A Crisis

1) With news media
2) Communicate with loyal customers
3) With community members
4) Labor representatives & government officials
5.0) COMMUNICATING DIRECTLY WITH THE MASSES

- New communication technology
  - Possible to get information out to the masses with the use of the print media/the broadcast media

- Internet
  - Possible to communicate with vast numbers of people
e.g: e-mails, bloggs, web site
Unit 3: Crisis Communication
Theory
Theories applied to crisis communications often are theories in communications including persuasion and rhetoric, sociology and psychology.

It is necessary to change theories regularly. Variables and relationships and conditions change and results are sometimes vastly different in subsequent tests.

Theories also build on previous theories.
Apologia is used when there is a crisis of a misdeed accusation to an organization. It is an effort to defend reputation and protect image. The organization’s effort may deny, explain, or apologize for the action through communication discourse. BUT not necessarily and apology.
This theory builds on apologia theory.

In this theory, the organization determines what is threatening reputation or image and also determines which public must be addressed and persuaded to maintain restore positive image.

Organization should seek bad news as much as they keep positive news clipping and read them carefully.
Decision theory is concerned with counseling management and other leader to make the most effective decision.

Decision theory may be applied to all areas of management but it is useful in public relations management and crisis communications.

The theory is especially applicable to issues management and the effort to prevent crisis.
DIFFUSION THEORY

- Diffusion or innovations theory, examines how new procedures, practices, and objects are adopted and accepted by companies or individual.
- Diffusion theory has a five step process:
  - Awareness (the body is exposed to the idea)
  - Interest (the body develops interest in the idea)
  - Evaluation (pros and cons are determined and considered)
Excellence theory

Developed by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and later expanded by J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992)

Based on types of PR practices called “models”
Marra and the excellence theory

Marra (1992), suggested that theoretically based crisis PR model that would allow practitioners to identify variables that can be adjusted to make CCP work and which would cause it to fail.

Model will enable PR practitioner to identify before crisis what will or will not work.
Marra and the excellence theory

Strategies and techniques identified by the following hypotheses;

An organization having strong and well-developed relationship with key publics prior to a crisis will suffer less financial, emotional or perceptive damage than organizations with weak and poorly developed relationships with its key publics prior to a crisis.
Fearn-banks and the excellence theory

Two additional characteristics are suggested (Fearn-Banks, 1996);

An organization that anticipates, through crisis inventory, the precise type of crisis will suffer less financial, emotional and perceptual damage than the organization that does not.
See you next face-to-face ...