

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

# CREATICON

NEWSLETTER



## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

### WHAT'S INSIDE

CRISIS ANTICIPATION

STRATEGIC SHIELDING

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

COMMAND IN CHAOS

REBUILDING TRUST & LEARNING

# DISCLAIMER

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

This edition of Creaticon explores the important theme of crisis communication- a critical yet often overlooked facet of public relations. In a world where unexpected disruptions can shake brands, understanding how to navigate crises has never been more vital. From managing reputations to restoring trust, we aim to shed light on the intricate stages of crisis communication—anticipation, strategic shielding, early warning systems, commanding chaos, rebuilding trust, and learning.

Why this theme, you ask? In a time when a single tweet can spark a wildfire of outrage and a viral video can turn a brand's reputation upside down, understanding the nuances of crisis communication has never been more critical.

Our efforts stand at the forefront of navigating the intricate waters of crisis communication, carving pathways for future editions to delve deeper into this critical public relations aspect. We hope this edition serves as a beacon, illuminating the reader's journey through the multifaceted stages of crisis management and showcasing how effective communication can transform challenges into opportunities for growth. Let's embrace the chaos, learn from it, and emerge stronger together!

We hope you enjoy immersing in this newsletter as much as we enjoyed creating it!

Love and hope for managed crises,

*Muskan Pradhan & Stuti Kapoor*

**EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**

# CREATICON

NEWSLETTER



# MEET THE TEAM



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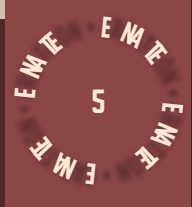
RESEARCH



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RESEARCH

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# CRISIS ANTICIPATION

## IDENTIFYING THE HIGH AND VULNERABLE

By M. Prerana

In today's changing world, many organisations encounter countless risks, ranging from technological disruptions and geopolitical tensions to epidemics, which are provoking firms to anticipate crises. So, crisis anticipation is no longer a luxury but a basic survival necessity. This is primarily done through a recognition of risks and vulnerabilities. While the initial process enables businesses, governments, and individuals to take appropriate preemptive actions that help minimise damage and ensure resilience, analytical frameworks and strategies offer reasonable critical anticipation.



Image Source: Alterna International

### Understanding Crisis Anticipation

Crisis anticipation refers to the pre-crisis identification and analysis of threats and weaknesses before they mature into significant crises. It involves continuously tracking trends, threat appraisal, and planning for worst-case scenarios. This process depends on the strength of foresight, analytical skills, and adaptability. For example: Toyota's Supply Chain Resilience After the 2011 tsunami had uprooted its supply, Toyota changed its way of managing risks. Toyota spread its sources and used predictive analytics to reduce future risks and establish itself as the world standard for supply chain resilience.

A few critical elements of Crisis Anticipation are:

1. **Risk Identification:** There are risks from both inside and outside. Such threats might be:

- Operational Risks: Process inefficiencies, supply chain disruptions, or equipment failures.
- Strategic Risks: Changes in market demand, innovations by competitors, or any regulatory changes.
- External Threats: Political instability, cyberattacks or natural disasters.

2. **Vulnerability Analysis:** Vulnerabilities are the weaknesses that enhance the impact of the risks. Analysis of such vulnerabilities involves reviewing the organisational processes and systems to spot areas of weakness, checking interdependencies to consider factors like dependence on single suppliers or critical technologies, and finding cultural and structural blind spots impeding the speed of decision-making.

3. **Scenario Planning:** It is preparedness about how the risks would evolve in a given situation. Scenario planning can be achieved by identifying major risk factors that cause vulnerabilities, creating plausible futures, and developing strategies for each scenario.

4. **Risk and Vulnerability Identification Analytical Tools:** Several tools and methodologies have their application proven successful in identifying risks and vulnerabilities:

- **SWOT Analysis:** It is a simple yet handy framework. It can identify weaknesses and areas of potential risks (threats) and help provide the targeted interventions.
- **Risk Heat Maps:** Risk heat maps are graphical representations of risk likelihood and impact. Organisations can categorise the currently identified risks into low, medium, and high severity; thus, it enables a prioritised approach for their mitigation.
- **Stress Testing:** Stress tests are experiments about adverse conditions to test how the system would react in an actual situation. An example that can demonstrate this is when banks undertake a stress test to check how well they can withhold in case of recession and market volatility.

**Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Analytics:** AI-based tools can scan through extensive data and capture early warning signs about an impending crisis. With these algorithms, the human brain may not pick on or identify patterns, anomalies, and correlations.

## Crisis Anticipation Challenges

Anticipating a crisis presents some difficulties.

- 1. Data Overload:** It might be challenging to separate useful information from excessive amounts of data. Thus, data overload can be challenging for organisations, especially when the tasks need to be completed under time constraints.
- 2. Quickly Changing Emerging Risks:** Some risks may occur during business operations, and being able to mitigate these risks can become challenging. Cyberattacks and climate change are two examples that make risk projections difficult.
- 3. Complacency:** Businesses prioritise short-term risks over long-term ones. It is essential as they become indicators of your business progression and performance.
- 4. Resource Barriers:** Smaller businesses often cannot pay for costly equipment and specialised knowledge. This barrier makes it harder for micro-enterprises to sustain themselves in the market. The difference in resources among businesses comes with the privilege for macro firms to recover from crises at a faster rate.

## Actionable Steps for Crisis Prevention

- 1. Designate a Risk Management: Team** Crisis planning entities require teams of specialists for their preparedness. So that it will be possible to give the integrated picture, teams must have members representing several departments: finance, operations, IT, and public relations.
- 2. Continuous monitoring through investment:** With modern technological advancements, it has become possible to monitor in real time. Trackers for geopolitical risks, social media analysis, and IoT sensors can be used as good predictive tools for future crises.
- 3. Create a proactive culture:** Organizations that promote this thinking are better at predicting crises. When employees are given the opportunity to learn to recognise warning signals and then empowered to give a voice, a vigilant culture is produced.
- 4. Engage Stakeholders:** To predict crises, one requires feedback from stakeholders, including suppliers, consumers, regulators, and local communities. Collaboration enhances the accuracy of risk assessments, and Collaborative efforts help improve the accuracy of risk assessments and the feasibility of mitigation plans.

## To Summarise

In a pacing time of rapid change where situations have become increasingly complex, organisations must develop a clear approach to crisis anticipation and management. The path to resilience will be multifaceted, drawing on technological innovation, inter-organisational collaboration, and foresighted risk assessment.

Such organisational capabilities can be refined by embracing emerging technologies, including real-time analytics, blockchain, and AI. These means would ensure a higher level of thorough observation that would further assist with responding quicker and thereby catch signs of hidden disruptions beforehand.

Equally as important, nevertheless, is the agreement to break the traditional mold of organisational silos. Organisations can harness a vast pool of judgement, shared demanding insights, and all-encompassing risk mitigation by fostering collaborations across distinct sectors and industries. This can transform an otherwise unbeatable challenge into an opportunity for growth, learning, and modernisation in solving problems.

The foundation of effective crisis management remains a proactive mindset. This involves dynamic analytical frameworks, maintaining a continuous commitment to organisational learning, and elevating a culture that views uncertainty not as a threat but as a catalyst for critical evolution and transformative growth.



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# THE CRISIS FIRE DRILL

## WHY EVERY ORGANIZATION NEEDS A TOA BSSN

By Sanya Tailor

An Interview with Mr. Vishwajit Solanki (Senior Editor and Content curator at Tell Me Digi)



### Implementation of Crisis Simulations

Organizations should practice annual crisis drills. This gives employees a feel of their role in case of a crisis. Mr Solanki suggested a few essential elements that should be prioritized in case a crisis simulation playbook is created: response time, efficiency of decision-making (speed of decision-making), protocols are followed and, above all, team dynamics and coordination. These factors help to give a structured landscape that can guide the workforce in an emergency.

These activities are ideal for team building and synergy. The frequency at which they are conducted and the structure of these simulations impacts their effectiveness highly. As far as the human psyche goes, regular practice helps reinforce roles and responsibilities, which is critical in high-stress situations, especially in providing employees with clarity on their roles and responsibilities, which significantly influence the outcomes.

### Challenges and Best Practices

Even though crisis drills form a central part of an organization's crisis management playbook, they still experience several challenges while running a crisis simulation. Mr Solanki discussed how one common issue that usually arises when managing large groups of employees during drills is varying reactions and solutions to a simulated crisis, which then cause chaos if not handled properly. He also remembered a drill during his time at Times Of India, where he was part of a crowd that was difficult to manage because it was too big.

Organizations should set leadership positions during the simulation process. The employees will be assessed on their performance in simulated drills. The appointment of crisis response managers and crowd controllers will make things more streamlined, thereby eliminating confusion among employees. Moreover, with new tools like Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence, it is possible to increase the intensity of simulations to provide real life scenarios, enabling participants to simulate responses in the same manner.

Crisis simulations can be termed the most crucial exercise and an extremely essential tool these days for preparation by any organisation for any likely emergencies and curbing them immediately. This article shares some valuable input from a candid conversation with Mr. Vishwajit Solanki, senior editor and curator of content at Tell Me Digi. Mr Solanki has a varied career in the media industry from advertising work to the current experimentation of Artificial intelligence and Virtual Reality in a tech-based company. In addition to views from the interview, this article will also discuss structured crisis simulation exercises and its importance.

### Understanding Crisis Simulations

Crisis simulation exercises are organized events that train an organization on its preparedness to respond to real-life crisis scenarios. They aid in evaluating organizations' response times, plans, communication procedures, and fast response decisions under closely monitored and controlled conditions. According to Mr. Solanki, crisis drills recreate high-stakes situations that make the organization judge their performances and improve responses in a situation with no actual consequences. Simulations offer a safer space to organizations for learning and adaptation, which is usually absent during actual crises. That is an important difference. Actually, research shows that good crisis management is predicated on understanding crisis dynamics and building in readiness. A document in the vein titled Draft Containing a Systemic Crisis: Is There a Playbook? by Masahiro Kawai and Michael Pomerleano revealed that the bulk of crises usually derives from accumulated policy mistakes, structural vulnerabilities, thus implying that anticipatory measures, such as crisis simulations help in identifying weaknesses in real-time before a crisis develops





## Employee and Stakeholder Involvement

Mr. Solanki, when questioned about employee engagement, stated that it is vital for all the employees to be aware of what they should be doing in the event of a crisis. According to him, effective ways for this include rigorous training programs and frequent participation in crisis simulation programs. Organizations need to give well-defined crisis management plans that describe exactly what their individual roles and responsibilities are.

External stakeholders, such as public relations (PR) agencies, also play a very important role in crisis drills. They assist in conducting such drills, managing communication strategies, and simulating scenarios such as interacting with the media during a crisis. Their expertise ensures that public perception aligns with organisational goals during emergencies.

## Evaluation and Learning

The assessment of a crisis simulation's efficacy fundamentally gauges performance against established objectives, which encompass reaction speed and decision-making efficiency. Mr. Solanki disclosed that the standard key performance indicators monitored pre- and post-drill include enhancements in team collaboration and communication strategies.

These exercises are essential for learning. They assist firms in optimizing stress management strategies, enhancing team relationships, and delineating responsibilities within the organization, since deriving insights from past experiences is the most effective method to bolster organizational resilience.

## Trends and Innovations

Current innovations in simulation methodologies for crisis phenomena encompass technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality. Mr. Solanki demonstrated the application of virtual reality for realistic phenomena, enabling participants to feel their answers dynamically shaped by their activities. AI may further optimize this process by tailoring personalized tasks depending on the data gathered on participant behavior during simulations.

These advancements enhance training by making it more engaging and personalized, while also improving the analytical dimensions of crisis management through deeper insights into participant performance.

**Did You Know?**

### Legal Navigation:

Here, a well crafted crisis communication master plan is valuable for organisations navigate all legal challenges during a crisis and ensures compliance with regulations and minimising lawsuits.

## To Summarise

Crisis simulations are essential for organizational readiness in today's unpredictable environment when information is readily available online. Periodic execution of such exercises will enhance organizational resilience to future crises, therefore improving their capacity to mitigate these events when they arise, while simultaneously fostering a culture of proactive risk management. Mr. Solanki's vision and extensive expertise in media and technology underscore that effective implementation requires clear explanation of responsibilities, frequent performance evaluations, and the integration of novel technologies to provide authentic training settings.

Adopting best practices in crisis simulation may markedly enhance an organization's capacity to respond adeptly during actual crises, so converting prospective obstacles into opportunities for development and education.

# THE GOLDEN HOUR OF CRISIS

## AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE GOLDEN HOUR OF CRISIS

By Aditi Rai

The term "Golden Hour" was initially developed in emergency medical practices, where speedy action is crucial under crisis circumstances. The first sixty minutes after any traumatic event are referred to as the "Golden Hour" in trauma care. This is when prompt medical intervention can majorly impact the survival rates (Cowley, 1975). This concept, when applied to crisis communication and management, indicates how a timely response will influence the public's perception, the extent of damage, and the organisation's survival. This article explores the roots, importance, and best practices for effective crisis response during this sensitive period.

### Origins of the Golden Hour Concept

The "Golden Hour" concept was first observed in medicine during World War II, when the condition of the patients who were treated later inevitably worsened, mainly due to factors like blood loss (Cowley, 1975). The concept, thus, is built around the fact that trauma victims will have a higher chance of survival if they are treated within the first hour after the incident. When applied to crisis management in PR, the "Golden Hour" concept refers to the window of opportunity that the organisation has immediately after the event, within which it can control the narrative of the incident. Delayed responses here would only allow distortions in information to spread faster and bring reputational damage along with a decline in stakeholder trust.



Image Source: Getty Images

### Importance of Timing in Crisis Response

- **Control of Narrative:** In a crisis, the story of an organisation is often determined by its first response. The risk of misinformation to the stakeholders is significantly reduced with clear and timely communication from the organisation, which acts as a credible source. For instance, Johnson & Johnson set a benchmark for effective crisis response in 1982 when they quickly recalled 31 million Tylenol bottles that had been tampered with cyanide. Their decisive action not only protected public trust but also helped restore their reputation (Heath & O'Hair, 2010). On the other hand, delays may cause an organization to lose control over the narrative. For example, Target and Equifax faced significant damage to their reputation due to the slow response in the case of crises, which made negative perceptions prevail.
- **Mitigation of Damage:** Prompt action helps prevent the crisis from getting out of hand. Consumer complaint redress and product recalls show responsibility to stakeholders. One example is Starbucks. Within days of a racial bias incident in 2018, the company apologised, and it closed locations to engage in racial bias training. The prompt action helped curb the damage and showed that it was dedicated to solving the community's problems (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2018).

**Crisis Management** is not about avoiding mistakes, but how quickly you recover from them.

- **Strategic Decision Making:** The Golden Hour makes a case for prompt but knowledgeable decision-making. Most organisations' decision-making processes take too long in emergencies. Organisations should prepare for emergencies and train the staff to act fast. For instance, companies that respond faster to information in natural disasters tend to have higher safety returns (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2009).

## Strategies for Effective Crisis Management During the Golden Hour

To leverage the opportunities presented by the Golden Hour, organisations should implement several strategic measures:

### 1. Preparation and Planning:

Proper crisis management begins with proper planning. Organisations should define roles, responsibilities, and response procedures in advance for various scenarios. The teams must regularly participate in tabletop drills and simulation training to ensure they are prepared (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

### 2. Quick Communication Tools:

Modern communication tools can expedite the spread of timely updates through various channels. SituationHub enables consistent messaging through corporate communications, public releases and social media—no delay or uncertainty.

### 3. Stakeholder Engagement:

Stakeholder engagement before the crisis takes place is crucial. Organisations must communicate openly with employees, customers, investors, and media houses (Coombes & Holladay, 2012). Organisations earn stakeholders' trust and assert control over the story through the information on developing situations.

### 4. Monitoring and Adaptation:

During a crisis, organisations have to monitor media coverage and public sentiment continuously to gauge the success of their response (Benoit & Drewry, 1997). This real-time feedback enables strategic changes as necessary so communications stay relevant and impactful throughout the crisis. Social listening tools can track mentions across all social media platforms and news outlets; analysis of such data helps identify emerging narratives or concerns that need to be addressed.

## To Summarise

The Golden Hour is a critical point in crisis management where timely actions can determine the success of an organisation in dealing with challenges. Understanding its importance and implementing strategic measures for effective response during this period can help organisations reduce damage and come out of crises with their reputations intact.

"The Golden Hour": This is the conclusive part of the article and it states very loudly that it is the essence of crisis management.

### 1. Prompt Actions Insignia:

The phrase "GoldenHour" refers to the crucially important period immediately following a crisis and is taken from trauma care.

Even the best actions that organisations can take during this time will have quantifiable benefits and drawbacks in terms of causing damage and recovering. Therefore, quick, methodical reactions are expected to reduce harm, stakeholder perception, and market reputation. For instance, it is now the standard by which other businesses evaluate themselves: But during the Tylenol cyanide disaster in 1982, Johnson & Johnson took swift action. The corporation maintained its reputation while regaining the public's trust by being transparent and announcing the recall of millions of bottles.

### 2. Strategies:

During the Golden Hour, organisations must concentrate on the following:

- **Planning and Preparation:** Establish roles and run crisis readiness exercises.
- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Making appropriate adjustments to strategies by using instruments to gauge public sentiment. As an illustration, incorporate modern communication techniques like SituationHub, which enable constant real-time public communication across several platforms.

# WEATHER FORECASTING IN PR

## STAYING AHEAD OF THE STORM

By Noumaan Sayed

In the world of PR, a storm is always looming. Hence, for any organisation, it is important to have tools and techniques that help mitigate these crises when the inevitable happens. This article will discuss some of the important tools and techniques used in today's modern PR which help predict upcoming crisis storms and mitigate them promptly.

### Social Media Monitoring

In this modern age of social media and influencers, the most effective way to find out if a storm is brewing is to turn to social media. This is where most issues stem from and it is important to focus on identifying the issue before it goes viral.

Let's say you are the head of public relations at a major chocolate company, and the PR team, it becomes your responsibility to find out about the incident in which a consumer has posted about how he was sold a bar of expired chocolate. As the head of question, mitigate the crisis before it boils over to become a bigger issue slicing through the reputation of your brand. Dealing with such situations as quickly and efficiently as possible, and finding a way that mutually benefits the brand and the consumers alike becomes your priority.

But looking for a small social media post like such out of a million others can be a real task, and many may wonder how to make it easier and more efficient. The answer is easy:

1. By setting alerts that mention your company.
2. By having your team monitor those alerts vigilantly.

This easy and efficient practice will ensure that even the most obscure social media posts will not slip through the cracks and help deal with any potential issues timely and effective. Softwares like Brandwatch, Hootsuite Insights and Sprout Social monitor online conversations about a brand, product, or industry, and are imperative in Social Media Monitoring.



Image Source: Field Sense

### Media Monitoring

Like social media monitoring, media monitoring is another efficient technique to help mitigate PR crisis storms, which refers to keeping in check all the talks about your brand in the media industry through news outlets, magazines etc. Mentions of your brand in news sources hold significantly more importance than mentions on social media since news sources are more trusted by the general audience. Therefore, it becomes more important to monitor these mentions to help look for potential crises, such as negative press or investigative reporting. Think of media monitoring as a satellite weather monitoring system which can alert authorities well in advance and give them enough time to prepare for disasters.

For instance, it is imperative for the public relations team at an electronics company to know what kind of opinions news outlets are publishing about them, whether positive or negative reviews of their products. In case of facing news about products failing in the market, the PR team must act promptly and be proactive about the situation. This will allow them to provide an explanation promptly, contain the situation effectively, and be answerable to the consumers. Software such as Meltwater, Cision, or Google Alerts track mentions of the brand in news outlets and blogs.

## Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment Analysis is an emerging tool in modern PR that is being quickly accepted in the industry to help identify and mitigate crises effectively. Essentially, with the rise of artificial intelligence, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs), software and services which can analyse the customers' perception of a brand or a campaign are growing in popularity. To understand sentiment analysis, we must first understand LLMs.

LLMs are essentially A.I programs that can generate, analyse, and perform other natural language processing tasks, allowing to smoothly conduct sentiment analysis and provide PR practitioners insights about the general perception and sentiments surrounding the brand. Sentiment Analysis is particularly useful in tracking the success of a campaign, as it can quickly give a general overview of its public reception.

However, as with all A.I programs, there are limitations, chief among which are A.I hallucinations. If you have ever used any A.I programs, particularly LLMs (Chat GPT, Google Gemini), you must have experienced A.I hallucinations. In a nutshell, it is when LLMs give incorrect information, which stems from either satire articles or from the program making up information by confusing sources. Therefore, it becomes compulsory for PR practitioners to double-check the information given by LLMs regarding sentiment analysis, or otherwise as well.

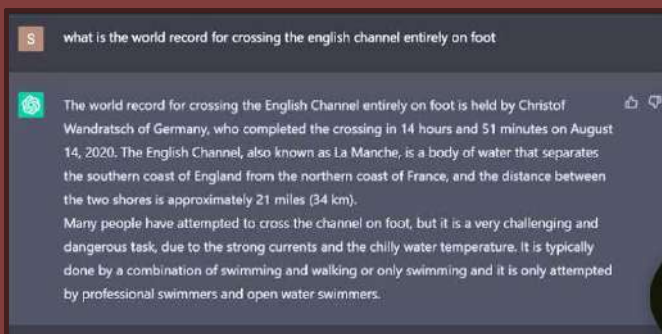


Image Source: Satyen K Bordoloi

An example of A.I hallucinations is shown here. The program is confused, providing misinformation about Christof Wandratsch's record held for swimming across the English Channel, not for crossing it on foot.

## Crisis Simulations and Risk Assessments



Image Source: Rough House Media

Similar to how fire departments and other rescue departments hold simulations and training sessions, a lot of PR departments also hold crisis simulations and risk assessment sessions. This helps them to identify potential risks more efficiently and be well-prepared when the time comes to address them. Crisis simulations deal with what actions are to be taken when a crisis storm arrives: testing processes in place and exploiting potential backdoor means in a controlled environment.

Risk Assessments often involve assessing the risks tied to a new campaign or the brand, exploiting the potential risks and allowing the PR department of a brand to carefully set up contingencies specific to the crisis, in turn streamlining the process of crisis mitigation.

Crisis Simulations and Risk Assessments in PR are akin to what the Weather and Meteorological Department also practice to prepare for storms. Ultimately, these processes allow for a more organized, efficient and coherent response to crises when they occur.

## To Summarise

While this list of tools and techniques used in the industry to help identify and mitigate storms is comprehensive, it is not exclusive. Some organizations make use of systems and processes that are unique to their public relations needs and are built on their own experiences when it comes to dealing with crises. That being said, these tools are perhaps the most primitive ones and every PR practitioner must be familiar with them. However, each comes with its caveats which must be understood thoroughly before they can be put to use in the real world. Once they are understood correctly, these tools and processes can go a long way in mitigating crises for organizations and businesses.

# COMMAND AND CHAOS

## CULTURE RATE AT A K D L Y M D K I N D S I A T A L G S G T

By Suhani Kataria

Crisis is the framework within which the fortitude of an organisation's critical components is defined, compelling the leader to navigate that unhallowed trail between command and chaos. Commanding leadership provides the framework in which direction can flow, but high levels of command often make the response unresponsive to changing situations.

Flexibility allows conditions or adaptations to occur but steadily ushers in other pitfalls of drift and chaos if not managed. Thus, the challenge lies in fast-walking just that fine line of decisive commands without putting a chokehold on creativity or responsiveness. This is a glimpse into the fine and very subtle balance between control and flexibility, along with a few guiding insights and shards of wisdom from various industry heads on mastering this thin line.

- Key takeaway: Empower teams to make decisions within a clear framework to enable responsiveness without losing control.

### Decisiveness and Adaptability Go Hand in Hand



Image Source: Marketing 91

### Two Commanding Guidelines for Crisis Management: Bridge Arrangement between Command and Flexibility

#### 1. Build an Eminent Command Structure:

- An excellent tragedy is the foundation of a crisis management plan. Organisations must assign decision-makers and unit responsibilities, and such actions must be taken before any crisis.
- A classic case is seen with Amazon, which ran a centralised Crisis Management Team to issue directions to all its global operations but permitted regional managers to modify protocols according to the circumstances in their own districts.
- Key Takeaway: Command structure allows clarity and is an antidote to confusion, which will enable teams to concentrate on implementation.

#### 2. Allow Teams Some Flexibility in Decision-Making:

- Dogged adherence to a set plan may end in disaster in a crisis where the only constant is constant change. Dr. Amy Edmondson, a professor of leadership at Harvard Business School, says simply, "Organizations should create a climate of psychological safety so that teams can express their concerns and make shifts in their approaches on short notice."
- The case in point is Johnson & Johnson during that infamous Tylenol tampering crisis of 1982. Allowing their teams to choose customer safety first put the leadership in place for that innovation in tamper-proof packaging.

#### Step 1: Build Strong Structure for Crisis Management

Although no two organisational crises are alike, a rigid, organised plan to handle situations would restrain command decisions in a workable framework. Such a plan would include defining communication channels, decision-making hierarchy, and contingencies for common scenarios.

Example: Coca-Cola maintains a live crisis management playbook that they continue to adjust through scenario planning and simulation drills. This was how they were effectively able to respond to supply chain disruptions through the pandemic.

Tip: Do not develop a plan that is too rigid; be flexible in applying multiple response tracks.

#### Step 2: Communication is Everything

Certainly, on a regular basis, any negligence of information communication during a crisis will call for assumptions and increased fear amongst stakeholders. Thus, all decisions are to be made based on constant communication with them about the scenario, and the steps being taken so as to address every question and meet the stakeholders' expectations.

- Example: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern received worldwide applause for her sincere and transparent communication during COVID-19. Her steady press briefings and willingness to make decisions on the fly to adapt to the ever-changing situation put the public at ease and kept them in the loop.
- Tip: Mix some traditional with digital channels to ensure that communication goes out to all affected parties with appropriate efficiency.

### Step 3: Test the Scenarios-Raise-Simulate Often

- One would expect these organisations to conduct simulations and form drills as regular tests of their crisis methods rather than merely dissecting the technicalities of their approach. Thus, they should seek assistance in completing this exercise.
- Example: Singapore Airlines conducts two drills per year. Nail-biting scenarios can be terrorism or aviation disaster-based. The staff is trained to respond calmly, efficiently, and at a particular level of balance between strict governmental order and adaptability.
- Tip: During the drill, build cross-departmental collaboration to establish collective accountability and quick decision-making.

### Step 4: Incorporate Technology and Data

- Such innovations as real-time data analytics and AI-driven assistance may offer actionable guidance in crucial moments to help built-up and drawn-out decision-making.
- Tip: Use technology that offers situational awareness to avoid drowning teams in mounting irrelevant information.

### Step 5: Nurture Trust

- Effective teams must be bound under these circumstances through the existence of their trust. Leaders must maintain faith, consistent communication, and known accessibility to the people's needs.
- Example: After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, BP's initial lack of transparency had already ruined its reputation, while a crisis of racial bias in 2018 was handled transparently by Kevin Johnson of Starbucks and helped to rebuild trust.
- Tip: The creation of trust begins with disaster and causes no risk when the crisis arises; constant engagement drives things positively when treated reasonably by employees and stakeholders.

## Everyday Life Wisdom:

### Crisis Management from Industry Giants

Satya Nadella, chief executive officer of Microsoft, talks about the importance of empathy in crises in a Harvard Business Review interview: "Empathy does not mean a lack of control; it means understanding different perspectives to make better decisions."

Mary Barra, chairwoman and chief executive officer of General Motors, talked about the empowerment of a team by having clarity of thought; "During the semiconductor shortage, we prioritised transparent communication with suppliers and empowered our teams to find innovative solutions," in an interview with Forbes.

Indra Nooyi, former chief executive officer of PepsiCo, talked about the organisational foresight of an organisation during her talk at Stanford Business School; "Anticipating the unexpected and preparing accordingly gives you the freedom to be flexible when things don't go as planned."

### To Summarise

Organizational agility and resilience depend on the balancing act between order and disorder. Hence, it is possible for teams to vary their approach quickly. A combination of transparency and compassion in leadership ensures that there is a higher level of trust amongst the developers, which then ensures loyalty towards the projects undertaken. This trust, however, is particularly crucial because it enables the teams to successfully overcome the challenges they face. Aspects of flexibility and the ability to anticipate the crises of tomorrow are the key ingredients for an organization that is effective over the long-term.

Crisis management has its own philosophy that involves a delicate balance of order and disorder with the leader being competent for strictness, but also for the able's management. For effective management of the balance it is recommended that an authority or team structure is encouraged to ensure free flowing communication whilst the technology operates as a guiding tool for encrypting the muddled waters of Information Technology.

Organizations today are under threat from uncertain dangers and those organizations that can master this balance will survive and prosper even in turbulent times.





**BIUSTING THE MYTHS**

**Myth: Repeated Apologies Build Credibility.**

Reality: Frequent apologies can dilute their impact. Overusing the apologies may lead stakeholders to perceive them as insincere or as a tactic to deflect accountability.

A closer look at cases of failed apologies all over the world can tell us that the gap between words and meaningful change can prove to be one of the most detrimental factors in times of a crisis. The Sesame Place discrimination case in 2022 went from a manageable incident into a full-blown crisis. The reason? Superficial apology without substantive action. It all started how it usually does- with a viral video, showing a costumed character allegedly ignoring black children while interacting with other kids. When backlash seemed to persist, Sesame Place's initial statement justified the performer's action saying that the costume made it "difficult to see at lower levels" and specified that the snub was unintentional.

Their statement failed to curb the crisis. Now cornered, Sesame Place released a follow-up statement wherein they apologised for harm and promised better diversity training. However, this belated and vague response seemed to be driven by external pressure rather than genuine reflection and failed to convince stakeholders of authentic remorse. The affected family subsequently filed a \$25 million racial discrimination lawsuit. Sesame Place's initial approach of a defensive stance lacked crucial elements of responsibility and commitment to change. It battered the company with financial losses and an impaired reputation.

The element of 'Who's apologising?' also underlines the credibility of the apology. The weight of the apology was felt when the Chairman of Tata Sons apologised for the Air India urination incident in 2023. His detailed recognition of service failures and passenger trauma was perceived as promising because of his position. Leadership-level involvement in addressing the issues exhibited an organisational commitment. Consequently, the revelation in front of us concludes that the apologist's authority can validate the apology's sincerity.

The rise of different media channels, especially social media, has fundamentally transformed how organisations approach crisis apologies, with real-time public reactions demanding swiftness and authenticity. However, it also gives companies a chance to adopt a more personal approach towards the act of regret. If the media can aggravate a situation out of proportion, it can also help companies reach the affected audience so that their apology does not go unseen.



Image Source: Vox

This is what makes the delivery of an apology equally important. It gives corporations a chance to communicate broadly through rich media channels such as social media, television, newspapers or a company's website. When Skittles took away its Lime flavour, it upset a lot of Skittles fans. What the brand decided to do next was relaunch Lime Skittles with the most personal corporate apology ever. They individually apologised to all 138,880 people who complained. They went ahead and utilised its social media platform Twitch for personal apologies, Times Square, and a post listing every single person it had wronged, which took over ten hours to read. The brand sent everyone free Skittles as an added touch and successfully managed to amplify its message and sincerity coupled with product relaunch.



Image source - Muse by Clios

**To Summarise**

Companies must realise that people demand authenticity, integrity, and immediacy over polished press releases. To make an apology work, a company has to stand on all feet when it comes to speed, cultural awareness, honest admission, effective delivery and demonstrable commitment to change. The difference between a restorative apology and a damaging one often comes down to a simple truth - actions speak louder than words.



- **Stakeholder Engagement:**

During a crisis, having active engagement with stakeholders can yield a sense of community and ownership. Organisations can seek feedback from clients and employees to demonstrate that their concerns are valued and looked after. Engagement could be through surveys, open forums, or direct outreach.

Example : In the year 2019, AGL, following the explosion of horrendous wildfires in Australia, the energy firm associated its avenues with the local communities and employees to respond to their unending complaints about power outages and its environmental impact. AGL conducted open forums in different affected locations, regularly updated the affected communities with real-time development reports concerning the restoration of electricity, and engaged in an open call for new and better ways that the company could assist with recovery activities. Such an engagement proved that the company was not only interested in listening to the concerns of its stakeholders but was also willing to act on them, hence fostering a sense of trust and responsibility in trying times.

- **Spotlight Positive Actions:**

While addressing the crisis directly is essential, organisations should also communicate to stakeholders about the positive steps taken to tackle the situation. Highlighting community support initiatives or internal reforms to prevent future crises can help shift the narrative from damage control to growth and improvement.

Example : In 2010, amidst the outcry following the BP oil spill, the company demonstrated goodwill by launching outreach initiatives, primarily aimed at addressing the damage caused to communities and restoring devastated ecosystems. Various communication strategies were employed to highlight these efforts, shifting the focus from liability and damages to responsibilities and recovery.

- **Regularly Update Stakeholders:**

Keeping stakeholders abreast of setbacks and advances is vital to establishing and sustaining trust over time. Regular updates demonstrate transparency and commitment to resolving the issue at hand.

Example : Back in the year 2022, when the US faced an infant formula drought, Abbott Nutrition kept stakeholders informed about its steps to combat the challenge routinely. Frequent updates were released over the progress of production ramp-up, safety inspections, and timelines for resumption of supply to keep the company informed. It's clear communication with the regulators, healthcare providers, and the public reflected the appropriate transparency and commitment to fixing the issue, restoring faith during the ongoing crisis.

## **Challenges in the Digital**

### **Communication Era:**

Digital communication channels have transformed how organisations interact with their stakeholders during times of crisis. The repercussions of mishaps can be purely amplified by one wrong message, resulting in widespread backlashes. Hence, response messages for crisis communication should be thoughtfully crafted. In this digital era, empathetic communication approaches require both dexterity and sensitivity, as organisations must be quick to respond to unfolding stories but at the same time stick to the crux of their core message. It is very important to reach that equilibrium since putting across too much only makes it chaotic and confusing for the audiences, further harming reputation and the image of the organisation.

### **To Summarise**

Amidst the pervading scrutiny and unrelenting challenges, organisations that actively practice empathetic communication with their stakeholders are not only able to weather the storm but also emerge victorious and build stronger, deeper connections with their stakeholders. In this digital age where crises can arise in the blink of an eye, reputation can be built or destroyed in a single instance, hence, empathetic communication is a beacon of hope to survive in trying times. It is clear that once a crisis has taken place, then the destruction has already been done, therefore empathetic communication cannot be viewed as a mere strategy, rather, it is a strong commitment to harness the essence of being human, the essence of understanding.

Empathy transforms crisis into an opportunity for growth and makes the fortitude of trust stand the test of time. In this age of corporate social responsibility, where customers seek the truth and honest answer, being sorry goes above the premium cut; it's imperative and just not ideal. What to recall as the future unfurls is that at the time of turmoil, empathy acts as the glue that binds the organisations with their stakeholders and cements long lasting bonds of faith, respect, and common objectives.

An organisation's strength is not judged by its ability to avert a crisis but by how well it handles one. The modern world is full of high hopes and expectations, and that collective angst translates into a necessity for empathetic and effective communication. Therefore, empathy is, and will always be, a non-negotiable trait, for it is the only virtue that can sustain us through this journey of highs and lows.



## Proactive Crisis Preparedness

Preparedness is integral to reducing the long-term impact of crises. The PR teams should be prepared and equipped with the right contingency plans. It means training spokespersons, holding simulations, and formulating crisis communication protocols that can be quickly initiated. Proactive protection of stakeholder relationships, continued operation, and the ability of organisations to respond constructively under pressure are thus ensured. Organisations can also utilise earned and owned media for recovery. They reinstate their reputation with thought leadership articles, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and consistent messaging regarding audience diversity. Amul proactively prepared for the crisis situation of COVID-19 by maintaining supply chains and assuring customers through social media and TV ads. Their creative campaigns related to social issues strengthen trust and brand reputation, which ensure continuity of operations and stakeholder confidence.

## Leveraging Restorative Justice Principles

Rebuilding trust is not a one-sided process. Organisations have to open avenues for the stakeholders to voice their grievances and listen to them. Public forums, listening sessions, or private dialogues that emphasise fairness and collaboration will make the principles of restorative justice relevant and bring in a sense of mutual accountability, thus turning the story from that of blame to one of resolution and shared progress.

## Institutional Reform & Learning from Mistakes

A critical component of trust repair is demonstrating a commitment to systemic change. Post-crisis evaluations should identify both the immediate and systemic causes of the incident, informing policy updates, training initiatives, and accountability mechanisms. This, after a data breach incident, means not only immediate containment of the breach but also longer-term actions are expected to secure it better. Changes should, therefore, be effective through continued auditing and feedback loops. Third-party verification of the credibility of the organisation's claims would add more credibility. An external audit and partnership with watchdog organisations give objective assurance to stakeholders, so they get a very positive impression that the company does indeed care about transparency and accountability.

## Sustained Effort and Long-Term Commitment

Indeed, it takes a lot of time and effort to establish trust, as it can be described as a marathon and not a sprint. It requires a long period of consistency in both speech and action. The evidence of the commitment of the organisation to improvement should be light, observable, and measurable to the stakeholders. Repairing trust is also a thing of managing expectations, for there will be lapses in the program. Trust repair is also all about managing expectations since setbacks are inevitable. What matters most is the resilience, adaptability, and unwavering focus on the stakeholder welfare of the organisation.

In response to the 2008 attacks on the Taj Hotel, Tata extended relief to the families of the victims, provided free medical treatments, and restored the hotel soon after. This effort towards stakeholders again re-asserted their trust and respect towards him.

## Turning Crisis into Opportunity

Crises often bring devastating effects on the reputation of a brand, but some valuable lessons can be derived. Within an organization, it brings in the redefining of values, proper sharpening of practices, and further strengthens the stakeholder relationship. This kind of change through adversity builds up the firm as a strong one. According to Zig Ziglar, "It takes years to build trust, seconds to break it, and forever to repair it." This journey is exhausting, but it helps create a very well-cemented foundation that waits at the end to help build upon trust.

## To Summarise

From the early spillovers to the very time-consuming process of restoration of trust, PR takes up the middle ground in the crisis recovery process. The labyrinth of communication to be found post-crisis is through empathetic practice, transparency, proactive planning, restorative justice, and institutional reform. Companies can better build back their trust-and thus provide a more solid foundation for the future-by being consistent with stakeholder expectations and, above all, genuinely interested in improving.





Q6. How do you manage communication between different stakeholders, such as customers, employees and media, during a crisis?

“To make sure we’re reaching the right people with the right messages, we create a stakeholder communication plan. For customers, we focus on reassurance and providing clear, actionable steps they can take. For employees, we use internal memos and town halls to address their concerns and keep everyone on the same page about the company’s response. For the media, we share regular updates through press releases, briefings, and Q&A sessions. While the overall message stays consistent, we tailor it to address the specific needs and concerns of each group.”

Q7. What tools or technology do you use to monitor and respond to crises in real-time?

“We use tools like Brandwatch and Hootsuite to keep track of what people are saying and how they feel on social media. For news coverage, we rely on services like Meltwater and Cision to stay updated. In a crisis, we use platforms like Slack and crisis management software such as RiskIQ to coordinate quickly and respond effectively as a team. These tools help us stay on top of the situation, allowing us to communicate clearly and act fast.”

Q8. How do you measure the success of your crisis management strategies?

“We measure the success of our response using a few key factors:

- - Media Sentiment: Checking how public perception changes by analysing media coverage.
- - Stakeholder Feedback: Gathering input from customers, employees, and partners through surveys and direct feedback.
- - Crisis Containment: Evaluating whether we successfully controlled and reduced the impact of the crisis narrative.
- - Social Media Metrics: Looking at engagement, sentiment, and how much people are talking about us before and after the crisis.
- - Business Impact: Tracking changes in things like revenue, customer retention, or stock performance. The goal is to minimise damage and rebuild trust effectively.”



Q9. How has the rise of mis-information and fake news influenced your approach to handling crises?

“With misinformation on the rise, we need to act quickly and stay alert. Fact-checking is a top priority, and we work with trusted sources to push back against false narratives. Our team keeps a close watch for fake news, flags it, and uses official channels to set the record straight. When needed, we collaborate with platform moderators and explore legal options to address the issue. More than ever, we emphasise the importance of transparency and help our clients build clear crisis communication plans to stay prepared.”

Q10. What post-crisis strategies do you implement to help clients rebuild trust and strengthen their reputation?

“After a crisis, we focus on staying connected with stakeholders. This means sharing detailed reports on how the situation was managed, following through on promised improvements, and launching community or CSR initiatives to rebuild goodwill. We also review the company’s reputation and adjust communication strategies to strengthen trust. By sharing lessons learned, both internally and externally, we show that the company has grown from the experience and is committed to accountability.”

## To Summarise

Both art and science go into crisis management, which calls for prompt action, careful planning, and a dedication to openness. Through his observations, this public relations specialist demonstrates that the key to turning every crisis into an opportunity to build resilience and trust is to be organised, flexible, and sympathetic. According to Mr. Patil, to navigate crises successfully one needs to act not only against perceived threats but also turn them into windows of opportunity and build trust. His findings open the eyes to how preparedness, teamwork, and cautious use of technology save risk. On a broader level, the issues in this interview have underpinned topics common in today’s crisis management: attentive and continual communications, multi-stakeholder approach, and applicability of digital technologies for real-time responsive solutions. Businesses will emerge with more resilience and transformation—they will, once again, change their disadvantages into the real catalysts for meaningful change when they practice accountability, innovation, and transparency.



# BUILDING A CRISIS-READY CULTURE

## VALUABLE LESSONS FROM THE BRANDED

By Yanshita Thakur

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, successful organisations distinguish themselves through strategic crisis management. By developing robust processes and cultivating a proactive organisational culture, leading companies transform potential challenges into opportunities for growth. Let's explore lessons from the most professional brands that seamlessly integrate crisis readiness into their organisational processes and culture.



Image Source: Movie Web



Image Source: NY Times

### NETFLIX: EVOLVE AND ADAPT

Netflix lost some views after the price increase when trying out a rebranding idea known as Qwikster in 2011. Then, the company turned to the thing that made them successful in the first place: stream mastering the industry and allowing them to be the industry leaders.

Key Takeaway: Accept that sometimes you will be wrong and be prepared to adjust based on the provided feedback to progress.

### NIKE: ADVOCATING FOR CORE VALUES

When Nike faced backlash for featuring Colin Kaepernick, an NFL player known for his activism, in their 2018 ad campaign, the company stood firm on its commitment to social justice. While polarising, this decision ultimately resonated with their target audience and reinforced their brand identity.

Key Takeaway: Stand by your values and embrace bold decisions to align with your brand ethos, even in the face of controversy.

### TOYOTA: LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Toyota came out with a public campaign claiming it was committed to its product's safety and quality after recalling millions of cars in 2010. This was accompanied by efforts to overhaul the internal structure to avoid such occurrences in the future.

Key Takeaway: Make mistakes, accept them, but remember to learn from them.

### AIRBNB: CONSUMERS ARE TOP PRIORITY

In the wake of COVID-19, Airbnb reverted to flexible booking terms and extended the duration for return of payments to the hosts. With these measures, the company demonstrated compassion and sustained a customer-oriented image.

Key Takeaway: In times of crisis, the explicit consideration and love for the clients are the right way forward.



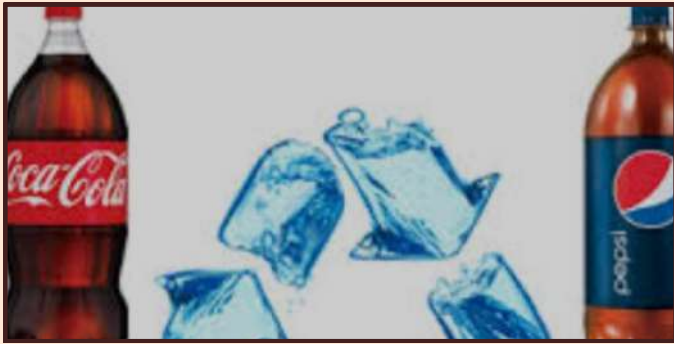


Image Source: Food Business News



Image Source: Lego

## **COCA-COLA: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES**

After receiving criticism in India for water usage, Coca-Cola participated in water conservation and community development. This way, Coca-Cola changed the narrative quite a bit.

Key Takeaway: Giving back to the community helps create a positive image for the company in the long run.

## **LEGO: FAST ON YOUR FEET**

In response to the BoycottLEGO campaign, LEGO terminated one of its partnerships and reaffirmed its role in protecting children, prioritising its core values over business interests.

Key Takeaway: Be prepared to be 'fast on your feet' to keep up with what's happening.



Image Source: India Express



Image Source: Hussein Hesham

## **ZOMATO: COMMUNICATION THAT CONNECTS**

There has never been a shortage of PR challenges for Zomato, from problems in the delivery to strikes by the employees. Their witty and creative usage of social media platforms enabled many crises to become growth opportunities.

Key Takeaway: A good communication strategy that resonates with the people can lower the levels of stress and tension in the business.

## **APPLE: BE PROACTIVE**

Apple is one brand which has solid contingency plans ready in stock. Whether it is dealing with supply chain interruptions or PR challenges, the overall outlook of the brand is such that it rarely gets off balance.

Key Takeaway: Have a proactive stance on any possible crises and devise plans to help reduce the chaos and disorder level.

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# CREATICON

NEWSLETTER

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