

## Defining Your Crisis Communications Strategy

Written by PR Etc., Inc.

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A crisis within or about your organization presents unanticipated and unwanted publicity for you. Establishing a crisis communication strategy and developing problem simulations can help your business better prepare for a crisis and ensure communication to key audiences is swift and effective.

Each organization has completely different scenarios which it defines as a crisis – from a product recall to endangerment of life to a public company's negative earnings report. While most crises are unexpected, senior management and trusted communications advisors can outline potential negative situations and communication strategies to deal with them.

Each strategy should:

- Prioritize audiences for communications. In some situations, the general public should be informed immediately; in other cases, vendors or customers should be the first to know.
- Define a response strategy. Will you be proactive? Reactive? Preemptive?
- Identify an internal management team – and one leader – for each scenario. Obviously, when a crisis occurs, present business must continue so not everyone can take his/her eye off the daily activities.
- Create an informational form to ensure members of the crisis team have the ability to track activities and avoid doubling resources on efforts.
- Perform a crisis simulation walk-through to determine where communications problems may arise and/or more organization is necessary.

Keep in mind that these initial strategy measures won't meet all the needs of your crisis, but they can help you more effectively manage the business through it.