

YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

A Model Management Presentation Outline

Revised 4.11.13

The Lukaszewski Group

A Division of 

America's Crisis Guru®
Crisis Management, Leadership
and Organizational Recovery

Table of Contents

Before You Begin

- Crisis Defined • Page 2
- Readiness: The Readiness Equation • Page 2
- Crucial Areas of Concern That the Plan Should Address • Page 2
- First Response Issues to Keep in Mind • Page 3

Crisis Communication Management Response Plan Components


- Crisis Venues • Page 4
 - Types of Crises
 - Unethical Behaviors to Avoid
- Readiness Planning Cycle • Page 6
 - The Cycle: Preemption, Preparation, Planning, Response, Recovery
 - Scenario Development Plus Worksheets & Examples • Page 7
- Communication: Set the Tone • Page 10
 - Communication Intentions
- Response Priorities: The Grand Strategy • Page 11
- The Eight Steps in the Crisis Communication Plan Development Process • Page 13

Related Information to Help Your Plan Succeed

- Key Ingredients in a Successful Planning Process • Page 13
- Typical Organization Barriers • Page 13
- Nine Steps for Rebuilding Trust, Seeking Forgiveness • Page 14
- Profiles in Failure: Seven Corrosive Management Behaviors to Avoid & Plan Against • Page 15
- Tools and Techniques to Effective Plan Installation & Maintenance • Page 16
- Implementation, Installation, and Testing • Page 16
- Keeping Plans Current • Page 17
- Crisis Communication Response Template • Page 18



The Lukaszewski Group

A Division of 

America's Crisis Guru®
Crisis Management, Leadership
and Organizational Recovery

YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS: A MODEL MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION OUTLINE ©

James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, Fellow IABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, BEPS Emeritus*
New Brighton, MN, U.S.A.

Published by The Lukaszewski Group Division, RisDall Public Relations, 550 Main Street, Suite 100, New Brighton MN 55112.
Copyright © 2016, James E. Lukaszewski. All rights reserved. ISBN 978-1-883291-71-6

INTRODUCTION

Effective crisis response plans tend to fulfill five powerful objectives. They: produce decisions that reflect fundamentally sound thinking and behavior; manage the first few minutes, few hours of a crisis; reduce media coverage and public interest is reduced from the start; involve management meaningfully in the process of crisis planning, management, response and recovery; and work against the known patterns of mistakes and problems management tends to cause themselves when crises occur.

Effective planning answers many crucial questions. These are among the most important:

- Has the boss approved/participated?
- Has the entire process been tested?
- How do we know we've won or lost?
- How do you assess collateral damage?
- What are the messages going to be?
- What do we do first?
- What if the boss refuses to participate?
- What will the victims do?
- What will the victims say?
- What's the plan?
- When do we put the boss out front?
- When does it stop being a crisis?
- Who says it's a crisis?
- Who's in charge?
- Who's on the back-up team?

Crisis communication management planning (now much more commonly referred to as readiness planning) is a process with identifiable steps, elements, parts, and phases. To increase management buy-in, organizational acceptance, and a fundamental understanding of what needs to be accomplished as you design a crisis communication management response process, it's helpful to touch on a predictable but reasonably complete checklist of bases. Begin with your definition of crisis. Following that, using this checklist, develop language of your own to explain each of these relatively obvious action steps or decision points.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Crisis Defined

What’s needed first is an appropriate and understandable working definition of crisis. Here is mine:

Crises are show-stopping, people-stopping, product-stopping, reputation-defining situations that create victims and/or explosive visibility. Anything less falls more into the category of a problem or issue that, while disruptive, has far less potential to create explosive, unplanned visibility.

Readiness

Use the term “readiness” because it more accurately reflects what crisis preparation is all about. It’s a more management-oriented term, and has really become a key response concept since the attack on the United States in September 2001. Using this approach begins to raise a better question, “How ready are we to deal with the most serious problems we expect to face?”

The heart and soul of a successful crisis response is a process that can be activated immediately and continues building until the situation either reaches some level of control or the momentum of the crisis has abated. Then, established corporate functions can be imposed and resumption, as well as business activity recovery, can take place. Practically speaking, crisis planning takes months, while execution of the crisis response must take place in only a few minutes to a few hours.

The faster you can capably respond in meaningful ways, the sooner both the crisis and victim generation subside. The organization can then begin to return to some semblance of normalcy.

The Readiness Equation

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Accurate contact information | 75% of readiness |
| Pre-authorization | 15% of readiness |
| Extensive scenario preparation and testing | 8% of readiness |
| | <u>2% Surprise</u> |
| | 100% |

Crucial Areas of Concern

A systematic approach to crisis management and crisis communication management first takes into account eight crucial organizational areas of concern:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Training new hires and shifting workforces | 5. Specific planning process steps |
| 2. Installation and testing | 6. Tools to implement crisis response |
| 3. Institutional needs | 7. Top management fears and concerns |
| 4. Response triggers | 8. Updating, modification, crisis prevention |

First Response Issues

The primary focus of crisis communication management and planning is to ensure the organization’s ability to execute a prompt, conclusive, credible first response usually within one hour, two at the most. It’s this approach that kills the crisis nature of a situation and reduces it to a lower level of reputational threat. There are other important crisis communication planning goals:

- Conclusive first response (the grand strategy)
- Effective and appropriate senior management involvement
- Pre-authorization
- Preparing for victims
- Prevention of collateral damage
- Relentless incremental progress to reduce vulnerability
- Unchallengeable behavior

Best Option Process

Making recommendations to management should follow a prescribed best option format. This worksheet illustrates this concept:

Best Option Process Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to capture the *Three-minute Drill* approach. The total amount of time to present concepts to management, in the order shown below, should be approximately three minutes speaking time, or 450 words or less. Always maximize the value of time spent with executives, from their perspective.

Date: _____

Problem: Describe Clearly, Directly, and Briefly

Urgency: Why Now

Outcome Desired: What’s the Goal

Solution Options: Identify the Alternatives

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Best Option: Recommend the Top Choice Action (Also Indicate the Second Best Option)

Reasons (Consequences): Justify Your Choice; Indicate Consequences Avoided/Achieved

1. _____
2. _____

CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE PLAN COMPONENTS

Crisis Venues

The nature of crisis can be better understood if we recognize the venues in which crisis is likely to occur and the types of crises that may be expected, recognizing that often there are combinations.

The seven venues of crisis are:

- Headquarters
- Top management
- Local
- Regional
- National
- Global
- Virtual

The six types of crisis are:

1. Operating, i.e., directly involving how the business works everyday
2. Non-operating:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| – Berserk employee | – Embezzlement | – Obscene / coercive telephone calls |
| – Bomb threats | – Employee violence | – Sabotage |
| – Business loss | – Ethics problems | – Scandal |
| – Congressional action | – Extortion | – Sexual harassment |
| – Crimes in progress | – Kidnapping | – Stock price drop |
| – Criminal behavior | – Litigation | – Terrorist actions |
| – Decapitation | – Major allegations | – Web attacks |
| – Demonstrations / protests | – Major business decisions | – Whistleblowers |
| – Disgruntled employee | – Major crime | – Workplace violence |
| – Major theft | | |
3. Combinations of the two, or more
4. Disasters:

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| – Earthquake | – Medical emergencies |
| – Evacuation | – News media response |
| – Explosion | – Noxious odors |
| – Fire / flames | – Power outages |
| – Flooding / torrential rain | – Ruptured water pipes |
| – General disruptions / threats | – Smoke / burning odors |
| – Hazardous materials / chemical spills / gas leaks / toxic fumes | – Tornado |
| – Major storms | – Winter storms |
5. Insidious unethical behaviors

Besides the more obvious mistakes that lead to unethical behaviors, there are other, less apparent, more insidious kinds of unethical behaviors that can lead to problems.

Sometimes these less obvious behaviors are the precursors to illegal behavior. When you can identify these behaviors in your vicinity, there is trouble ahead. Act promptly to correctly these situations.

- Lax control: A manager's careless enforcement, education about, and monitoring of ethical standards.
- Lack of tough, appropriate centralized compliance within each area of the company.
- No one charged with responsibility of teaching, enforcing, and disciplining in cases where ethical breaches occur.
- Leadership that allows supervisors to overlook bad behavior.
- Leadership that allows employees to experiment with methods and tactics outside established guidelines.
- Emphasis on "doing whatever it takes" to achieve appropriate business and financial goals.
- Managers and supervisors who minimize the importance of oversight and compliance processes.
- Structuring incentives in such a way that they can compromise the ethical behavior of people, the quality of the products and services we deliver, and allow shortcuts to be taken for a variety of obviously questionable reasons.
- Avoiding confrontation with managers who chronically misbehave or chronically overlook misbehavior.
- The tendency to operate "on the edge," always pushing for more than is appropriate.
- Management that ignores the signs of and doesn't question rogue behavior.
- Management tolerating the inappropriate behavior or management by individuals who are "critical to the organization's mission." These are the folks who are the super sales people, the high achievers who are allowed to break the rules to maintain the altitude of their performance.
- Belittling or humiliating those who suggest or seek ethical standards.
- Dismissing or destroying the careers of employees who report bad or outright wrong behavior.
- Demeaning the internal or external credibility of those who blow the whistle, those who report or bring management's attention to lapses in ethics.

6. Virtual:

- Anti-corporate activism
- Anti-corporate blogs
- Boycotts
- Bullying
- Imposter sites
- Personal attacks
- Pornography links
- Rumors
- Short selling
- Web attacks/Web sites

Readiness Planning Cycle

Readiness preparation and planning processes to manage crisis communication can each be divided into important subcategories.

- Preemption:
 - Codes of conduct
 - Compliance
 - Integrity

- Preparation:
 - Business resumption
 - Dark sites:
 - Typical Web content:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| – Advertising | – Dear So and So | – Our purpose |
| – Applications and filings | – In the news | – Overview |
| – Comparisons with other sites | – Issues and policies index | – Presentations |
| – Contrast analysis | – Letters | – Publications |
| – Corrections and clarifications | – Links | – Q&A |
| | – News and views | – Who we are |
 - Disaster recovery
 - Crisis communication
 - Incident response triggers
 - Senior management team
 - Corporate management team
 - Crisis czar
 - Special response unit
 - Incident command
 - Call centers

- Planning:
 - Corporate
 - Leadership team
 - Division / branch / field
 - International or non-domestic
 - Combinations of the above
 - Web

- Response:
 - Corporate leadership
 - Corporate headquarters
 - Branch / division / field
 - International
 - Virtual

- Recovery:
 - Scenario driven
 - Collateral damage assessment and remediation

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

Drug raid on a branch plant

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- **Feds and state authorities raided the second shift.**
- **Twenty-six employees were taken into custody.**
- **Media were tipped and went in with police.**
- **Story is all over the television and radio.**
- **Employees believe that we knew about the drug problem, but didn't do anything about it.**

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- **We looked like we were afraid or reluctant to act.**
- **Everyone who worked there seemed to know more about the situation than we did.**
- **Drugs are manufactured in an old part of the plant.**
- **There may be some who weren't caught (ringleaders).**
- **There's fear among employees that it's not over.**

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you've presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- **Reveal that we worked with cops to set up raid.**
- **Provide counseling for innocent employees.**
- **Try to save those who are victims.**
- **Make sure ringleaders get punished.**
- **Let the cops handle it.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss' shoes and why.

- **Work to reduce tension in the facility.**
- **Keep police collaboration confidential since we need to catch everyone.**
- **Establish employee committee to set rules to prevent future occurrences.**

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you've suggested or by doing nothing.

- **Get more bad press.**
- **Good employees leave.**
- **Become known as a “gang” place.**
- **Lose customers.**

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

Employee violence

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- Former co-worker got past security with a gun.
- Former employee shoots former girlfriend in the lunchroom.
- Former employee holds other employees hostage.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- Employees are rattled.
- Police have taken over scene.
- News reporters call all over the place.
- We are all paralyzed.
- People don’t know what to do or where to go.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- Let police handle most of it (it is a crime scene).
- Focus on employee shock and discomfort.
- Help families of the afflicted, as well as those who are bystanders.
- Find a way to assess impact on co-workers.
- Find a way to assess impact on company.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.

- One, two, and three . . . and try to bring in counselors to help people by talking through what they’ve experienced and what they feel.
- There must be an empathetic, positive response by top management to employees to set emotions down.
- Should there be a memorial or remembrance services?

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.

- Lack of action could adversely affect employee moral.
- Lack of action could trigger similar events.
- Lack of action sends message that we don’t care.

Communication

Successful corporate crisis communication management planning and execution are based on fundamental principles as well as common sense response priorities. Ignoring these principles and priorities is what often turns a relatively minor incident or situation into a major, long-term, reputation-defining series of events.

Communication Intentions

1. *Candor*

- Disclose, announce early.
- Discuss options, alternatives considered.
- Explain reasoning and reasons.
- Provide unsolicited helpful information.

2. *Openness, accessibility*

- Be available.
- Be willing to respond.

3. *Truthfulness*

- Point of reference matters more than facts.
- Unconditional honesty, from the start.
- Fifteen percent fact, 85 % emotion and perception

4. *Apology*

- Verbalize or write a statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow.
- Acknowledge personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed, or wronged another.
- Humbly ask for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.

5. *Responsiveness*

- Every concern or question, regardless of the source, is legitimate and must be addressed.
- Answer every question; avoid judging the questioner.
- Avoid taking any question personally.
- Build followers and be nice, even in the face of anger or aggressive negativity. Anger and arrogance create plaintiffs.
- Reduce the production of critics, enemies, and victims.

6. *Empathy*

- Action always speaks louder than words.
- Action illustrates concern, sensitivity, and compassion.
- Act as though it was happening to you or someone you care about.

7. *Transparency*

- Our behavior, our attitude, our plans, even our strategic discussions are unchallengeable, positive, and explainable.
- Our families would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, and discussions on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper.
- No secrets (because important things and stupid stuff always come out).

8. *Engagement*

- Face-to-face is the communications approach desired by just about everyone.
- Those who challenge us most will require aggressive positive interaction.
- Our base and those who give us permission to operate expect us to deal with unconvincibles and victims.
- Direct interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator.

9. *Clarification and Correction*

- Relentlessly correct and clarify the record.
- Prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts preempts critics and empowers employees and supporters.
- Manage your own destiny, or someone else surely will.

Response Priorities: The Grand Strategy1. *Problem Identification and Response Prioritization*

Stop the production of victims. Resolve the problem promptly; begin addressing key issues. If it's leaking, foaming, smoking, burning, creating victims, deal with the underlying problem first.

2. *Manage the Victim Dimension*

It is victims and others who are directly affected that cause incidents to become crises. Be prepared to understand the dynamics of victims and anticipate those dynamics as the response process proceeds.

Victims Are:

- People
- Animals
- Living systems

Victimization Is:

- Self-designating
- Self-maintaining
- Self-terminating

Victimization Is Caused by:

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • Abuse | • Commission | • Disparagement | • Minimization |
| • Arrogance | • Confrontation | • Embarrassment | • Negligence |
| • Bullying | • Deception | • Fear | • Omission |
| • Blame shifting | • Denial | • Ignorance | • Sarcasm |
| • Callousness | • Discrediting | • Insensitivity | • Shame |
| • Carelessness | • Dismissiveness | • Lies | • Surprise |

Victims Feel:

- Anger
 - Betrayal, disbelief, dread, and fear
- Frustration
 - Powerlessness, helplessness
- Inadequate
 - Walking but wounded, agonized, alone

Victims Suffer:

- Intellectual deafness
- 24/7 internal and external monologue
- Everything is a question

Victims Need:

- Validation
 - Preferably by the perpetrator
- Visibility
 - To describe their pain and warn others
- Vindication
 - Resolution that prevents the victimization of others
- Apology
 - The single most powerful litigation stopping act

3. *Employee Communications*

Every employee is a communicator when something happens. Whether there are 10 employees or 10,000 employees, when questionable activity or crisis occurs, everyone affected becomes a communicator. Inform, educate, and script employees promptly. Non-communication is a toxic strategy.

4. *Contact Those Indirectly Affected*

(neighbors, regulators, governments, friends, allies, families, relatives)

Every crisis causes damage, injury, or fear in a large number of individuals who are indirectly affected: your Agency infringes on another Agency or your problems taint your relationship with an ally, allied organization or interest group. Inform them.

5. *Deal With the Self-Appointed, Self-Anointed, and the Media*

Almost every crisis brings out individuals and organizations with their own agendas. Your crisis presents the opportunity to activate those agendas. Then there is the news media that can bring substantial attention to your crisis and you, usually focusing on or speculating about what went wrong, who's responsible, who the victims are, how bad it could possibly be. . . and even worse.

The Golden Hour

The key concept to remember here is that each of these five steps must be activated in the first hour, or first two hours, of any crisis. Failure to activate all of these priorities will cause additional victims, questions, misunderstandings, and collateral damage, which the perpetrator will have to deal with as the crisis is resolved.

The Crisis Communication Plan Development Process

There are eight clear-cut and direct steps in the crisis plan development process:

- Visibility analysis
- Prioritize exposures, i.e., likelihood, impact, and probable collateral damage
- Scenario development
- Message development
- Crucial contact list development
- Emergency media relations instructions
- Installation, testing, drills, table tops
- Continuous updating and internal education

RELATED INFORMATION TO HELP YOUR PLAN SUCCEED

Key Ingredients in a Successful Planning Process

To avoid response failure, certain key ingredients must become part of the crisis communication planning process:

- Top management buy-in
- Strategies by scenario
- Activation procedures (see triggers above)
 - Corporate management team
 - Senior management response team
 - Special response unit
 - Crisis czar
 - Incident command
 - Call center
- Call Headquarters If, process
- Corporate level buy-in
- Division / branch / field buy-in
- Follow up and updating procedures
- Installation, testing, and effectiveness programs
- Web site readiness

Typical Organization Barriers

An audit of potential organizational or process disruptions needs to be completed early in the process. Look for:

- Resistance to automatically trigger corporate notification, i.e., a *Call Headquarters If* list
- Competing response priorities between divisions, functions, and product lines
- Other existing plans, e.g., plans developed by others or required by government regulations
- Relationship between corporate and division/branch/field operations
- Response confusion and turf issues
- Existing management response plans

Nine Steps for Rebuilding Trust, Seeking Forgiveness

Obtaining forgiveness involves completing the nine steps below. To achieve success in the shortest possible time, these steps must be completed in the order presented, as quickly as possible. Seeking forgiveness is society's requirement for relationship, trust, and credibility restoration. Adverse situations remediate faster, cost a lot less, are controversial for much shorter periods of time, suffer less litigation, and help the victims come to closure more quickly.

- Step #1 *Candor:*** Outward recognition, through promptly verbalized public acknowledgement, that a problem exists; that people or groups of people, the environment, or the public trust are affected; and that something will be done to remediate the situation.
- Step #2 *Apology:*** Verbalized or written statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow, acknowledging personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed or wronged another, humbly asking for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.
- Step #3 *Explanation*** (no matter how silly, stupid, or embarrassing the problem-causing error was): Promptly and briefly explain why the problem occurred and the known underlying reasons or behaviors that led to the situation (even if we have only partial early information).
- Step #4 *Affirmation:*** Talk about what you've learned from the situation and how it will influence your future behavior. Unconditionally commit to regularly report additional information until it is all out or until no public interest remains.
- Step #5 *Declaration:*** A public commitment and discussion of specific, positive steps to be taken to conclusively address the issues and resolve the situation.
- Step #6 *Contrition:*** The continuing verbalization of regret, empathy, sympathy, even embarrassment. Take appropriate responsibility for having allowed the situation to occur in the first place, whether by omission, commission, accident, or negligence.
- Step #7 *Consultation:*** Promptly ask for help and counsel from "victims," government, the community of origin, independent observers, and even from your opponents. Directly involve and request the participation of those most directly affected to help develop more permanent solutions, more acceptable behaviors, and to design principles and approaches that will preclude similar problems from re-occurring.

Step #8 Commitment: Publicly set your goals at zero. Zero errors, zero defects, zero dumb decisions, and zero problems. Publicly promise that to the best of your ability situations like this will never occur again.

Step #9 Restitution: Find a way to quickly pay the price. Make or require restitution. Go beyond community and victim expectations, and what would be required under normal circumstances to remediate the problem.

Profiles in Failure

When bad things happen there are seven corrosive behaviors organizations in trouble must plan against. Otherwise, they will quickly multitask themselves into long-term difficulty.

1. **Denial:** Refusal to accept that something bad has happened; that there may be victims or other direct effects that require prompt public acknowledgement. There is denial that it's really serious; denial that the media or public have any real stake or interest in whatever the problem happens to be; denial that it should take anyone's time in the organization except those in top management specifically tasked to deal with it; denial that the problem is of any particular consequence to the organization provided no one talks about it except those directly involved. "Let's not over-react." "Let's keep it to ourselves." "We don't need to tell the people in public affairs and public relations just yet. They'll just blab it all over." "If we don't talk, no one will know."
2. **Victim Confusion:** Irritable reaction to reporters, employees, angry neighbors, and victims' families when they call asking for help, information, explanation, or apology. "Hey! We're victims too."

Symptoms include time-wasting explanations of how we've been such a good corporate citizen, how we've contributed to the opera, the little league, the shelter program. "We don't deserve to be treated this badly." "Mistakes can happen, even to the best of companies." "We're only human."

When these behaviors don't pass the community, media, or victim straight-face test, or are criticized or laughed at, a stream of defensive threats follows:

- "If the government enforces this regulation, it will destroy our competitiveness."
 - "If we have to close this plant, it's their fault." "It's the only decision we can make."
 - "If this decision stands, many will suffer needlessly."
 - "If we didn't do this, someone else would."
3. **Testosterosis:** Look for ways to hit back rather than to deal with the problem. Refuse to give in; refuse to respect those who may have a difference of opinion or a legitimate issue.

There is extraordinary negative energy inside the executive circle. That's what testosterosis really is. . . an attack of adrenaline. Another definitive indicator, the use of military terminology – tactics, strategy, enemy, beachhead, attack, retreat and truce – builds a macho atmosphere. This command and control mentality sets the stage for predictable errors, omissions, and mistakes.

4. **Arrogance:** Reluctance to apologize, express concern or empathy, or to take appropriate responsibility because, “If we do that, we’ll be liable,” or, “We’ll look like sissies,” or, “We’ll set bad precedents,” or, “There’ll be copycats,” or, “We’ll legitimize bad actions or people.” It’s contempt for adversaries, sometimes even for victims, and almost always for the news media.
5. **Search for the Guilty:** Dig into the organization to look for traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinced to shift the blame to them.
6. **Fear of the Exposure:** As it becomes clear that the problem is at least partly real, the media and the victims begin asking, “What did you know, and when did you know it?” “What have you done, and when did you do it?” along with other humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions.
7. **Management by Whining Around:** When the decision is made to finally move forward, the organization talks only about its own pain, which makes victims, employees, neighbors, government, and the media even angrier.

Use these approaches in any order or quantity, and trouble, serious reputation problems, and brand damage will continue to occur. By the time you recover – if you do – there will be career-defining moments and perhaps a new team to replace you and yours.

Tools and Techniques

Basic tools and techniques are the key to installing the plan effectively and to maintaining response skills and knowledge at appropriate levels within the organization:

- Contact data
- Failure to apologize promptly
- Incident control/crisis communication management process
- Language translation and other operational detail for international activities
- Management review
- Quick response processes
- Response kits for those who respond to incoming telephone calls
- Scenario response outlines
- Specific response procedures and related policies and procedures for division / branch / field operations
- Updating/follow-up schedule
- Willingness to stay in trouble
- Written policy

Implementation, Installation, and Testing

Depending on need, affordability, and practical reality, there are a number of ways crisis communication management plans can be installed and implemented:

- Simulations
- Table-top exercises
- Drills
- Coaching and training
- Updating existing plans

Remember that without competent installation or periodic research or testing, the plan will not work.

Keeping Plans Current

The typical crisis plan has a shelf life of approximately 36 months, even with consistent updating. It's painfully true that the moment a crisis communication plan is developed and installed, it's out-of-date in one respect or another. Thus, continuous but reasonable follow-up activities must be undertaken to ensure the validity of the plan, approaches, and the capacity to respond under its guidance when a crisis or emergency occurs. The most helpful are:

- Developing case studies as a vehicle to share critical crisis communication experiences
- Interpreting useful corporate crisis management situations
- Maintaining an active first response team
- Managing corporate exposures and surveillance
- Ongoing indoctrination of managers and supervisors
- Ongoing preparation and training
- Prevention efforts
- Producing right-way/wrong-way videotapes
- Training for new hires

Having compiled this snapshot of the process, it's time to focus your approach on the process of developing a crisis communication management plan within your organization.



Copyright © 2016, James E. Lukaszewski. All rights reserved.

James E. Lukaszewski owns the copyright to this material under United States and International Copyright Acts. The express written consent of James E. Lukaszewski is required before this document can be reproduced or stored, in whole or part, in any form or by any means. Any copying or storage of this document before written permission is received will be treated as a violation of applicable International, Federal and State laws.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE TEMPLATE

