



## A crisis communications plan is the First Aid kit for your reputation.

Everyone should have one, and routinely dust it off and review (at least every three months) to ensure it still has everything you need in it.

First Aid kits (of the medical variation) were originally designed by surgeons and a medical supply company (known today as Johnson & Johnson) to fulfil an unmet need: on-site medical supplies for injured railway workers to use until help arrived. The First Aid kit also has an iconic red cross and its existence equates with safety and preparedness. It is not just a box full of do-it-yourself riggings, **it also serves to keep everyone calm and manage a situation** until help arrives.

For a crisis communications plan, the same holds true. **The plan should be developed and designed by professionals** who can tailor the tools to suit the potential crises you may face.

The reality is that any person (without real-world experience in crisis communications) with adrenaline coursing through their veins will be ineffective at managing through a crisis - no matter what their position is, no matter how much training they

have had, no matter how smart they are, and no matter their title in the organization.

Humans revert to using their mid-brain during times of panic and crisis, whereby gross motor skills and survival mechanisms (emotions and reactions) are working, but the finer motor skills, along with rational and strategic thought, are not.

This is why **we need professionals who are good**

**at what they do.** Ones who have been trained under the same realistic and unpredictable stress and panic of crises. It is those with real-world experience that are going to **get you through tough times** – whether it is a few bumps and scrapes, or a major collision.

Likewise in business, crisis communications professionals with real-world experience, a high count of repetitions, and who have been successful enough to come out the

other side **can support, help and train others.**

A crisis is never too great, nor too small, to destroy a reputation or organization. In a world where **reputation is the key to operations**, remember that a crisis potential includes everything from building evacuation procedures, to information leaks, safety threats, product recalls, social media fumbles and misquotes in the media. Be ready.

# THE SEVEN KEYS TO MANAGING THROUGH A CRISIS



## 1 HAVE A PLAN

Ensure you have a professional-grade crisis communications plan – and use it. Practice it often, ensure it is up-to-date. Ensure your spokespersons are media trained and you are able to reach them during a crisis.

## 2 SET UP A COMMAND CENTRE

Provide a central location and communications mechanism for everyone involved in resolving an issue/crisis (can include, but not limited to operations, employee, legal, executive, reputation, stakeholder relations, media, and public engagement perspective).

## 3 BE HONEST

The old adage “mess up, dress up, fess up” is the key to maintaining public trust. Lose trust, and you’ve lost everything.

## 4 THINK OF THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN

Always play out a worst case scenario, and plan your actions backwards from there.

## 5 FEED THE BEAST

The media will be hungry for a story, and an angle. The less you say, the more they will fill the gaps with other sources. Be honest with

the media, and issue a holding statement while you gather your bearings – but do not ignore the media, they are not going away.

## 6 COMMUNICATE WITH EVERYONE

Remember all stakeholders and ensure they know what they need to know, when they need to know it. Ensure you have a feedback mechanism for your audiences as well.

## 7 CALL FOR HELP

Know your limits, and enlist the help of trained professionals when you have reached them. Your organization’s fate is on the line.