Crisis Communications and Your School
How quality school leadership successfully turns racist behavior of a few of their own into a teachable moment to build a better community.
What You Might Face

Accreditation issues  | Lawsuits
Active shooters       | Legal malpractice
Arrests of teachers  | Mass casualty events
Cheating scandals     | OSHA citations
Chemical spills       | Outraged parents
Criminal accusations  | Sexual misconduct
Data loss             | Structural failures
Discrimination complaints | Student suicides
Embezzlement         | Teacher strikes
Fiscal mismanagement | Terrorist incidents
Food poisonings       | Thefts
Hacker attacks        | Union grievances
Hazing complaints     |
Inappropriate social media posts |
Crisis Communications

> When social media lights up.

> When traditional media turns the cameras on you.

> Who we are.

> What we do.
Legal controversies today are tried in the Court of Public Opinion – as often as in the Court of Law.
The Damage Control Playbook

Rule #1: Tell the truth
Rule #2: Tell it first
Rule #3: Tell it all
Rule #4: Tell it fast
Rule #5: Tell it to the people who matter most
What you mean, what it says

Let’s eat, Grandma.

Let’s eat Grandma
The Three Vs

Villain

Victim

Vindicator
No Comment = Guilty
Framing Issues

What happens when you ARE the Villain?
A Crisis Made Worse

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines
How to say, ‘I’m sorry’

• Candor
• Remorse
• Commitment to change
• Sincerity
• Reflection of organization’s values
Sorry works

• Research on hospitals: Litigation reduced after apologies

• NY Times: At VA in Kentucky, malpractice suits decreased after full-disclosure and apology policy

• Leading healthcare law firm: “…transparency in the healthcare system has become a fixed concept and appears to be here to stay.”
Sorryworks.net

• Not admission of liability; effort to empathize with wronged party.

• Effective apologies address the recipients’ feelings. They don’t prove a point.

• Vow to find out what went wrong

• Promise to fix it

• Promise customer service assistance

• Do NOT prematurely admit fault or assign blame

• Do NOT use weasel words: “Well, I’m sorry people were offended.” “Well, I’m sorry people feel that way.”
Control Tools

1. **Key Messages**
   a) Memorable
   b) Most important
   c) Core values

2. **Questions**
   a) Company history
   b) What’s on website?
   c) On social media?

3. **Answers**
   a) True
   b) Short
   c) Don’t speculate

4. **Bridging phrases**
   a) Back to key messages
   b) Signal what’s important

5. **Examples**
   a) Illustrate and reinforce messages
   b) Provide factual fodder
   c) Make more likely key messages used
Why Social Media Matters

• Because that’s where the news is.

Brandon Wolf
@bjoewolf

Omg. Shooting at pulse. We hid in the bathroom. And we can't find our friends.

2:17 AM - 12 Jun 2016
Why Social Media Matters During A Crisis

> Because that’s where the newsmakers are.

Orlando Police
@OrlandoPolice

Pulse Shooting: The shooter inside the club is dead.

RETWEETS 5,249 LIKES 5,586
2:53 AM - 12 Jun 2016
Orlando, FL
> 310 million monthly active users

> 500 million tweets per day – 6,000 per second.

> 6-in-10 Twitter users get news there. (Pew – 2016)

> 54 percent of Twitter news consumers went there looking for it (highest of popular social media; FB only 38 percent)

> Journalists make up 24.6 percent of verified accounts.

> 60% of consumers expect brands to respond to a Twitter query within the hour.
> Largest social network

> 1.13 billion daily active users worldwide, including 67 percent of U.S. adults

> Two-thirds of users get news on the site (Pew – 2016)

> How we tell friends about stuff: 81 percent of all content shared in U.S. is shared on Facebook.

> Great for distributing & receiving info during a crisis - if your following is established.
Before the Crisis: Be Social

- Know where your audience lives
- Secure your accounts
- Establish terms of use
- Establish social media guidelines
- Build a following, promote interaction
- Post a variety of content regularly
Evaluating the Social Media Threat

• Where did the threat originate?
• Who’s the source?
• Is it catching fire online?
• Are conventional media involved?
Anti-Trump protestors in Austin today are not as organic as they seem. Here are the busses they came in. #fakeprotests #trump2016 #austin
They found the buses! Dozens lined up just blocks away from the Austin protests.

Anti-Trump protestors in Austin today are not as organic as they seem. Here are the busses they came in. #fakeprotests #trump2016 #austin

Nov 10, 2016 · www.freerepublic.com
FALSE

Anti-Trump protestors in Austin today are not as organic as they seem. Here are the busses they came in. #fakeprotests #trump2016 #austin
Winning on Social Media: Approach

• Transparency
• Responsiveness
• Speed - Beware “confirmation bias”
• Words + Action
• Professional – and human
A Crisis In The Making

American Red Cross
@RedCross

Ryan found two more 4 bottle packs of Dogfish Head's Midas Touch beer.... when we drink we do it right #getngslizzerd

HootSuite • 2/15/11 11:24 PM
A Crisis Averted

We've deleted the rogue tweet but rest assured the Red Cross is sober and we've confiscated the keys.

about 11 hours ago via ÜberTwitter
Retweeted by 86 people
Tower Hamlets MPS Verified account @MPSTowerHam

Follow @MPSTowerHam

Please do not contact us about the #KFCCrisis - it is not a police matter if your favourite eatery is not serving the menu that you desire.

6:10 AM - 20 Feb 2018

11,864 Retweets

19,969 Likes
A masterclass in PR crisis management.

#KFCCrisis
WE’RE SORRY.

A chicken restaurant without any chicken. It’s not ideal. Huge apologies to our customers, especially those who travelled out of their way to find we were closed. And endless thanks to our KFC team members and our franchise partners for working tirelessly to improve the situation. It’s been a hell of a week, but we’re making progress, and every day more and more fresh chicken is being delivered to our restaurants. Thank you for bearing with us.
## Response Decision Tool

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<td><strong>DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA</strong></td>
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<td>You want to reinforce the company’s purpose and values</td>
<td>You want to communicate “just the facts”</td>
<td>You want to redirect the conversation to the entity most responsible for information on a breaking issue (e.g. first responders, police)</td>
<td>You want to respond personally, supporting company messages</td>
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<td>You want to correct misinformation or disinformation</td>
<td>You want to correct misinformation or disinformation</td>
<td>While specific posts do not call out or tag your company name, they require factual clarification about one of your products</td>
<td>Personal social media connections, friends and or community partners expect the family to respond on an issue</td>
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<td>You want to respond in tandem with a partner, supplier, vendor, etc.</td>
<td>You want to make sure controversial posts “do no harm” to the company brand</td>
<td>You want to redirect the conversation to an issue that is positive, unifying and beyond reproach, but an issue that everyone agrees on (e.g. success, fulfillment, wellness)</td>
<td>You want to respond personally, though the company has elected not to respond</td>
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<td>You want to advance a cause (e.g. a cause consistent with your company’s values)</td>
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<td>You are tagged in social media posts and want to respond.</td>
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Winning on Social Media: Action Steps

• Monitor and be prepared to respond
• Don’t let mistakes live on
• Don’t arm wrestle with trolls
• Pause before hitting “delete”
• Go offline to get back on track
• Know who’s running the site
• Remember your audience
Winning on Social Media: Action Steps

• Don’t forget your traditional audiences
  ✓ Inform your traditional key internal and external audiences of the issue so they are not surprised by media coverage or their own social media feeds.
Crisis Management Today
The Hennes Communications Newsletter

Twice a month, best practices for crisis communicators.

For a free subscription, send your email address to
hennes@crisiscommunications.com