

#Disney – The Invincible Brand

✘ *By David E. Johnson, CEO, [Strategic Vision PR Group](#)*

[Walt Disney World](#) conjures images of family fun, Mickey Mouse, and an escape from the world and its worries. [Disney](#) is an iconic American institution. Sadly over the past week it has become embroiled in tragedy and controversy.

Last week, two-year old Lane Graves was dragged off the beach at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa by an alligator. A massive search recovered the child's body. During the search five alligators were killed in the waters near the resort. What brought attention and media scrutiny to this tragedy is that though there are signs posted at the beach where the boy was attacked saying no swimming there were no alligator warning signs. This despite the fact that Disney was aware that there were alligators in the waters and that the alligators have posed a safety issue.

Disney to its credit handled the tragedy in a compassionate way. Walt Disney Company Chairman and CEO Bob Iger and George A. Kalogridis, President of Walt Disney World Resort both issued heartfelt expressions of sympathy to the Graves family. The two Disney executives also personalized their expressions by relating as they understood as fathers and grandfathers how the family must feel. Disney temporarily closed all of its resort beaches. It posted alligator warning signs. The company came out strong with its crisis response.

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is the news has been filled with reports of previous alligator incidents, stories of visitors to Disney resorts wondering if the same tragedy that struck the Graves family might not have struck them save for some luck, and criticism of Disney for not having done more about the alligator issue prior to the tragedy.

Many are wondering how much damage has been done to the Disney brand. The answer is minimal damage. Disney has built its brand and a reservoir of good will with the public over the decades. This will allow the brand to survive and flourish. The negative publicity that Disney is garnering now is largely due to the time of the year we are in – the summer. Summer is traditionally a slow news time and as a result of this, Disney and the tragedy are getting more coverage than this incident normally would warrant. Next Disney is handling the crisis in a smart proactive way.

Having said that, Disney still has a few things to do that it has not yet done.

1. Explain why there were no alligator warning signs posted.
2. Assure visitors that the resorts are safe and every safety precaution has been taken.

The Disney brand is the stuff of legends. It was built to endure and flourish. Though the past days have been tragic and horrific, the company has responded in a strong way that

will allow the brand to remain unscathed and cause millions to continue to seek out its theme parks and resorts for enjoyment.

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