

How A Leading Children's Hospital Used a 4-Step Issue Management Framework to Gauge the Severity of a Crisis

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When a large nonprofit children's hospital started garnering negative publicity around their executive compensation practices, the organization's issue management team had to spring into action. The most important questions on their minds were:

- Is this a crisis or not?
- How does this coverage compare to other peers in their industry?
- And will this negative coverage upset our target audiences and donors?

PublicRelay helped the communications team formulate a four-part plan to analyze and handle this looming issue.

Step 1: Determine the severity of the coverage spike and who is producing the coverage

First, the nonprofit's communications team referred to their historical data to decide how significant the media spike was. They analyzed where the media coverage was coming from by outlet power as well as the number of stories. The team was able to determine the coverage was not being produced by the high power outlets that typically influence the hospital's donor base. The negative attention was also not as significant in volume compared to other brand crises that the hospital had seen in the past. Therefore, the increased negative coverage about the brand was unlikely to immediately impact donations.



Step 2: Determine if it is spreading

The communications team paired the information with social sharing data to ensure that the coverage wasn't going viral. Millennial donors are a key public for the hospital, so the organization was concerned about the reach of this potential issue on specific channels like Twitter and Facebook. After tracking these articles across various social platforms, the team was able to confirm that they

were not picking up many social media views nor growing in traction.

Step 3: Compare the coverage to others in the industry

As a final precaution, the team wanted to compare this negative coverage about its compensation practices with other peers in the nonprofit realm, to ensure that they were not getting more coverage than their counterparts. The media analysis revealed that out of all the other major research foundations and hospitals of similar size, they had far less

negative coverage than their peers during a similar event.

Step 4: Monitor the topic more closely moving forward

Even once coverage levels returned to normal, the communications team proactively monitored the topic of nonprofit compensation throughout its industry to ensure that they are not blindsided by any sudden negative stories. Furthermore, they can consistently keep their C-Suite informed about coverage trends in this domain and prove that they are appropriately tailoring their responses to negative stories.

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