

Managing Crisis in the New World Order: Terrorism and Tolerance



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As the world grieves over the horrific terrorist acts in Paris, there's a period of uncertainty – and an opportunity for companies to help ease their employees' fears. It's also a time for companies, particularly those doing business abroad, to send a message that promotes tolerance for racial, ethnic and religious differences. The dangerous aftermath with this incident is that there are too many facts that get lost in hyperbole. At the same time, some people base their racial and [ethnic intolerance](#) on myths and hateful information spread virally via social media. This is where there's an opportunity for companies to take the lead within their own walls and with their customers.

Show empathy. The dramatic scenes that played out in real-time, and have been repeated in the media take their toll on everyone – whether they want to admit it or not. Here's a chance for companies to send a message to their employees, encouraging them to keep these incidents in perspective and to find comfort and strength with their co-workers, friends and family. It's an opportunity for an executive to issue a statement that its company and its employees stand together against the abhorrent acts of a few.

Promote tolerance. Xenophobia is alive and well around the world. Since so many companies are global brands now, there has to be a conscious effort to dispel the stereotypes perpetuated about certain groups of people. There's an anti-Syrian refugee movement based on the fears that they some of them may be terrorists. Here's yet another teaching moment to diffuse the perceptions that all Muslims are terrorists. America's history is rife with an unfortunate pattern of behavior that embraced racial and religious hatemongering. Ask Native Americans. Ask Jewish Americans. Ask Irish Americans. Ask German Americans. Ask Hispanic Americans or African-Americans. From a leadership perspective, tolerance only works when there's buy-in from the top that's instilled throughout all facets of the company, a community and a culture.

Create a forum for dialogue. Company executives should find a way to create forums for honest, civil and open discussions about their fears, their concerns about racial and ethnic diversity. These no-judgment-made "forums" can take place over brown bag lunches or at various times throughout the week in break rooms. Let's face it: America's workforce is rapidly becoming more diverse, which means there will be more people hired who are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. What a better way to encourage civil engagement even in the light of dissenting opinions. What a practical way to send a message that the company values its employees wherever they come from, whatever their backgrounds. These conversations could lay the groundwork for us diffuse intolerance, and instill acceptance.

About the Author: Neil Foote, a veteran journalist and media executive, is a media and political junky, keeping abreast of the latest trends impacting the business of journalism, media, politics and public relations. He draws from his experience at the Miami Herald, Washington Post, Belo Corporation and Tom Joyner's Reach Media. He also teaches

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