

What Should Crisis Communications Mean to You?

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CRISIS

In almost every industry today, within businesses of all shapes and sizes, crisis communications have emerged as a hot topic of discussion. As the world becomes more digitally connected, and social, a growing number of companies are investing more time and resources into their emergency communication methods and disaster planning. In fact, according to some studies, [around 84% of today's organizations](#) have their own crisis communications plan in place.

So, what is crisis communications? Crisis communication is a term used to describe the systems, technologies, and methodologies that allow organizations to communicate effectively during an emergency. It's a special wing of the [PR](#) strategy which involves mitigating impending damage to a brand's reputation. Additionally, some people describe crisis communications as the reverse of "standard public relations" wherein you're attempting to get the attention of third parties for positive reasons. During a crisis communications

strategy, PR firms work at dealing with negative media as quickly and effectively as possible.

Putting Out Fires in the PR World

Essentially, crisis communications are about putting out fires that might have been set in a number of different places throughout a business. One example of a fire that a business might be facing is a problem caused by another company when they claim that an organization did something improper, or unjust. Sometimes, fires in a firm come from internal issues, such as problems with messaging strategies, or the poor behavior of an employee. Like a fire, a public relations nightmare needs heat, fuel, and a catalyst. If something has gone wrong and your brand is on fire, you have the fuel – the thing that’s causing damage to your brand reputation, the energy, which is the tide of opinion that occurs after the problem takes place, and the way people respond to the event and the catalyst – how quickly you respond to the issue at hand. If you deny the fire any of these sources, you can break the chain reaction of reputation issues, and the problem can effectively burn itself out.

How PR Companies Offer Crisis Management

PR agencies use a careful combination of speed, ownership, and knowledge, to handle fires around a business reputation. For instance, by offering correct knowledge and information about an event, a PR firm can remove word of mouth rumors that might add fuel to the fire. Sometimes, in a crisis, people can try to fill in what they don’t know with assumptions, the right knowledge can solve this problem. Speed is another important element of proper crisis communications. The faster someone responds to a crisis, the more likely it is that you can stop the issue from spreading or getting out of control. Quick

response times allow PR agencies to turn crisis stories into old news.

Finally, PR companies can give organizations the strategies they need to take ownership of the issue at hand, which helps to preserve that brand's reputation after something negative happens. Being forthcoming and apologetic about an issue can remove some of the heat around a crisis, and make an audience feel better about the future, so they're more likely to move on from the issue.

About the Author: [Ronn Torossian](#) is CEO of 5WPR, a leading [crisis PR agency](#).