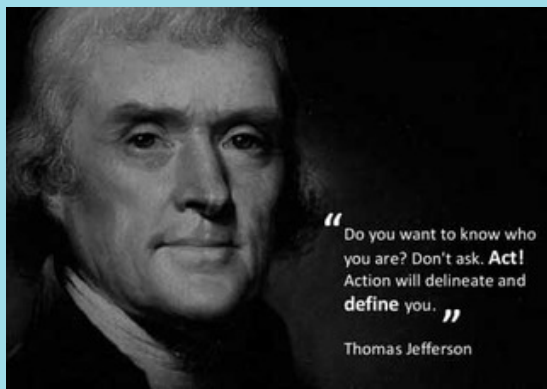


Crisis Communications: 3 Actions You Can Take Now

Each day we see examples of organizations or individuals struggling to respond under the intense spotlight of public scrutiny. At times, we can almost feel the discomfort that comes with struggling and failing to mitigate the negative impacts of a reputational challenge or disaster.



But Thomas Jefferson said it best: **"Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you."**

The pathway to preparedness is paved with good intentions, but most importantly, it is paved with action.

Why should a Chief Communications Officer (CCO) develop a plan of action?

Any competent leader realizes he/she does not have all the answers. And, importantly, despite having responsibility for the actions of many, the leader cannot do the work of everyone in the organization. Great leaders plan for success and rely on tried and tested methods for getting the team the foundational grounding to do great work.

In a survey conducted by Register Larkin by Deloitte:

- 30% of respondents said: "I am confident we would manage a crisis well;
- 54% said: "I think we would manage a crisis reasonably well";
- 16% said: "I am concerned about whether we would manage a crisis well."

When asked "What makes an organization confident in its crisis capability,"

- Of those who were confident, 77% provide crisis training.
- Not surprisingly, those that were concerned about their preparedness, only 44% provide annual crisis training. Makes sense. Preparedness builds confidence.



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What is needed to become and remain a valued strategic counselor and advisor?

The quickest way to become irrelevant is to fail in providing the professional support that an organization depends upon. The iconic basketball coach John Wooden said that “Confidence comes from being prepared.” Team members within the organization will respect you and your team if you deliver the goods. Developing a process to manage risk, and to communicate effectively is a powerful contributor to company success. It’s also a guarantee that you have a seat at the table when managing a crisis.

Here are Tantalus’ top 3 recommended actions to conduct effective crisis communications

Good crisis preparedness is being ready to deal with the broad range of events that could affect the organization. Whether it is something that is routine, to that which is new and emerging as a crisis opportunity, like cyber-hacking and cyber-security.

Action 1: Establish a foundational approach to handling crisis events and develop a set of tools to deploy when communicating during a crisis.

Create a manual (of sorts) to catalogue basic requirements:

- Trained spokespeople, policies and procedures, phone trees, prepared statements, news release templates, stakeholder maps and key audience identifiers and needs, company background information, how to handle media interviews, and other components should be catalogued.

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Action 2: Provide the specific training needed to prepare for handling a crisis

A) Provide spokesperson training for handling media queries, in a rigorous way. This will help set expectations for performance.

B) Get your junior and senior communicators involved in teams dedicated to dealing with a crisis. Even if a junior teammate may not have responsibility during a specific crisis, get them involved in a learning/development opportunity so they can see how other teammates deal with situations and events.

C) Create and deploy workshops to help improve writing and messaging skills so that when needed, those skills will be tuned and ready to go.

Surveys suggest that employees today view training as the most important learning opportunity for job satisfaction. In fact, many employees cite the lack of skills training and development as the principal reason for moving on. And, for those employees on the firing line, facing CNN, the BBC and others, where critical skills are needed to manage a crisis, training is not really optional.

A leader’s reputation and the function as a whole is on the line during a crisis, and having skilled teammates across the board will bolster competency.

Action 3: Invest in conducting rigorous crisis exercises to test the resilience and mettle of the organization and team.

Creating a process to conduct in-depth and rigorous training for new and existing employees, in a formal way, will help hone the skills needed to respond appropriately. Simulating an airplane crash, an environmental catastrophe or a natural disaster like a hurricane or earthquake that damages operations – something specific to your industry or purview – will help the team actualize the crisis experience.



Mark Hooper
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About Tantalus Crisis Communications expert Mark Hooper

Mark Hooper, a skilled corporate leader in Corporate Communications and Brand Marketing, is a Senior Advisor at The Tantalus Group with considerable experience managing crisis communications and issues management. He was a long-time senior executive for The Boeing Company, with responsibility for Media Relations, Brand Advertising, Public Relations, Labor Relations, Executive Communications and other areas. He's also a broadcaster, producing and hosting a public affairs program in Asia, Hong Kong 360, which is a talk/interview program covering public affairs and the arts.

Mark holds a B.A. in Communications, and an M.A. in International Politics from Washington State University in the USA. He is currently based in Hong Kong.

Put the talented team of Tantalus management and communications consultants to work for you.

Our unique networked structure provides our clients access to the latest strategies from around the world and the ability to leverage experience in wide-ranging industries and markets.

Contact us for an introductory conversation. Email info@thetantalusgroup.com