

Crisis Communication

Thinking Before We Speak

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Agenda

- ◉ Stages of Crisis Communication
- ◉ Truths
- ◉ Components of a Crisis Communication Plan

6 Stages of Crisis Communication

- Dr. Robert Chandler – internationally renowned crisis communication expert

1. Warning
2. Risk Assessment
3. Response
4. Management
5. Resolution
6. Recovery

Emotional Responses to Grief & the communication phases...

- Shock/denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Despair
- Acceptance

1. Warning
2. Risk Assessment
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Chandler's phases of the communication life-cycle and the human response to crisis and grief

Truth #1 – Stress negatively affects the cognitive process

- Thinking of what to say and how to say it in the middle of a crisis leads to the possibility of mixed or erroneous messages
- Messages may be too long, too short or not address relevant content
- Wrong message can contribute to existing panic and confusion

Truth #2 – Stress negatively affects comprehension

- ◉ During a crisis, average reading levels decrease four grade levels
- ◉ Negative dominance also occurs
 - > During times of stress, it takes four positive statements to balance one negative

Truth #3 – Varied demographics cannot be forgotten

- ◉ Workforce may vary in geographic location, languages and economic resources
- ◉ Message effectiveness will be hampered if written in a language or manner unfamiliar to the audience

Truth #4 – Key personnel may not be available

- Key personnel may be unavailable due to scheduled absences or illnesses
 - > Who makes decisions if the CEO is unavailable?
 - > What happens to payroll if half of the Accounting team falls ill during a pandemic outbreak?

Truth #5 – Business reputations may suffer

- You will be under a microscope
- Poorly articulated or worded answers to questions can affect an organization's survival post-crisis
- Perception that an organization behaved competently during a crisis is key to recovery

Key Point

Due to stress and related factors caused by an emergency, communication during a crisis is much more complex than routine communication

The Need for a Crisis Communications Plan is evident...

Identity Theft

REACT!

Weather Events



Fraud



Data Breach

PANIC!

Insider Threat

FEAR!

Problem Identification

- The biggest threat in a crisis is the desire to “do nothing”
 - > “We shouldn’t run off half-cocked” followed by a series of memos, plans and presentations that make people feel like something is being done

A Well Developed Crisis Communications Plan

- Builds member confidence
- Reduces staff and stakeholder concerns
- Is prepared in advance
- Allows you to tell your story first before someone else does
- Reduces the amount of erroneous information
- Puts the breaks on the “rumor mill”

Establishing Your Crisis Communications Plan

- Create emphasis by dedicating a section in your BCP for communications
- Develop holistically (input from all levels of the organization)
- Education staff on plan components
 - > Who is the dedicated spokesperson?
 - > What should they say if approached?
 - > What is the policy on social media posting?
- Exercise your plan!

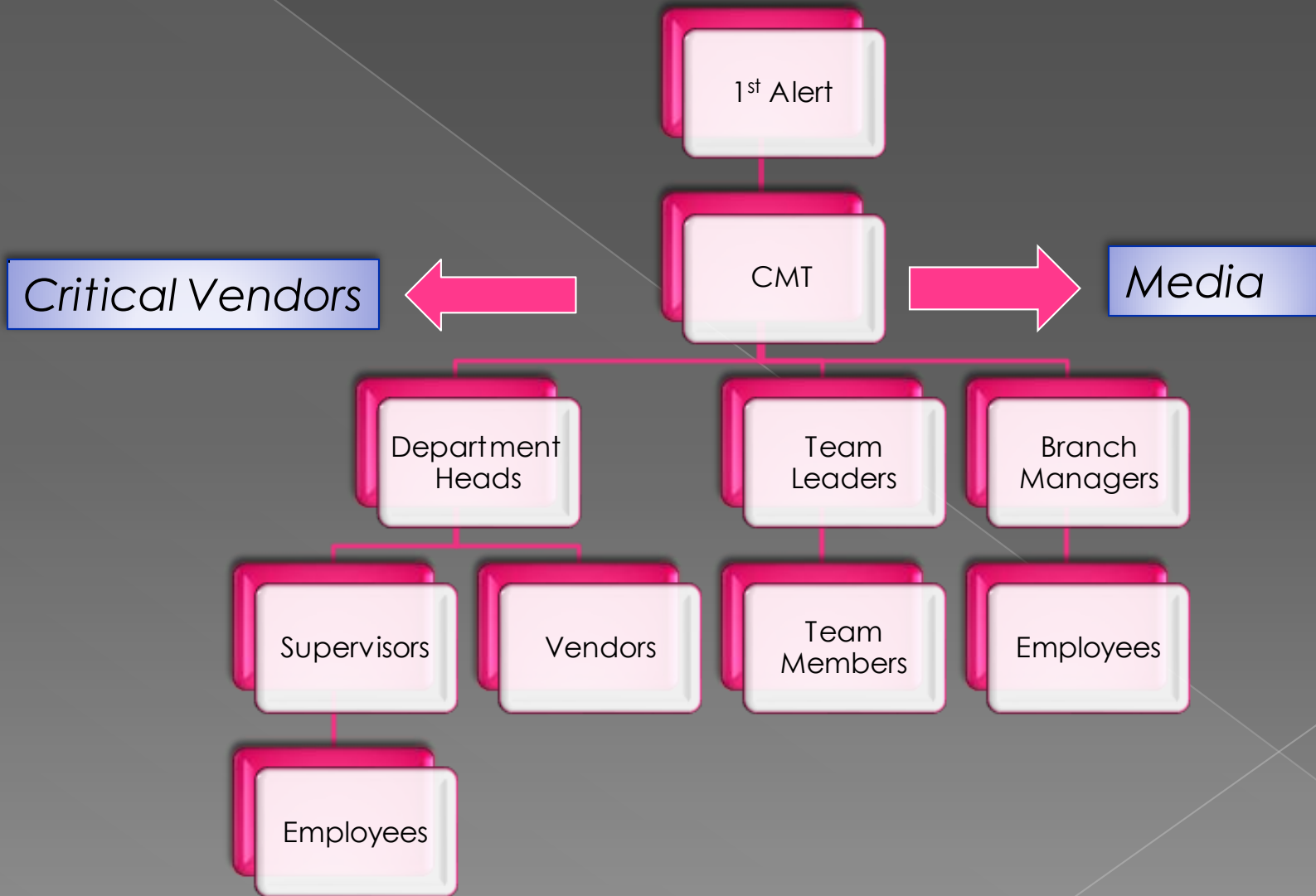
Communication Plan Elements

- **Leadership** – trained on how to use the plan during a crisis
- Policies and procedures
- Clearly defined communication channel(s) listing and when/how to use
- The designated spokesperson(s)
- Scripts based on risk assessment
- Preprinted signage
- The call and emergency contact lists
- A media directory
- Critical Contact list and log

Notification: The Beginning

- Most critical part of the whole recovery process
- Hardest to control
- Proper sequence is vital
- Can't rely on just procedures; must conduct drills
- Needs tools to be effective (call trees, scripts, response sheets, etc.)

A Typical Call Tree



The Command Center

- Multiple locations are needed
 - > Board Room
 - > Local – hotel or branch
 - > Remote – hotel or branch
- Easy access
- Communication needs
 - > Multiple phones
 - > White boards
 - > Separate rooms
 - > Internet connectivity

Five needs for Leaders

- Take a moment
- Act promptly, not hurriedly
- Manage expectations
- Exhibit control
- Stay loose, be flexible

Establish Spokesperson(s)

- ◉ Identify spokesperson (and alternate)
- ◉ One versus many
- ◉ Most senior manager may **NOT** be the best suited for the role
- ◉ Obtain media training – practice makes perfect

Spokesperson(s)

- CEO ONLY speaks when there is something good to say!
- Media interviews:
 - > There is no “off the record”
 - > The camera never stops rolling
 - > Look at the reporter, not the camera
 - > You can take the lead rather than waiting for the next question
 - > Rephrase the question (it gives you a couple seconds to think about the answer and makes a good sound bite)
 - > Stick to your key points regardless of reporter questions
 - > Local news is usually your friend, national news agencies are much less so.

Media interview - Key points

- We appreciate your concern
- Human safety and security is our primary focus at this moment
- We have activated our Business Continuity Plan
- We will continue to service our Members (and the community) during this situation
- We are (note something extraordinary you are doing here)
- We will have more information (shortly, in an hour, etc.)

Speed of Response

- Often referred to as the 'golden hour'
- Comparable to the medical golden hour:
 - > If a critically injured person is treated at a center of excellence within one hour, their chances of survival increase significantly.
- If your crisis response is off to a rapid start, your chances for reputation damage decrease..

Communication Scripts

- Easy to understand
- Created and approved PRIOR to a crisis
- Meant to convey confidence and restore order

Example: Robbery Script

“Employee safety is our number one priority. The ABC Branch is currently closed while investigators complete their work. We will continue to give you updates as we have more news. “

Key Messages

- ◉ Keep messages simple and easy to understand
- ◉ Repetition is OK!
- ◉ Be consistent in your message
- ◉ Be up front regarding any confidential information
- ◉ Speak to the specific audiences' concerns

Crisis Communication Checklist

- ✓ Alert the spokesperson
- ✓ Gather the facts (who, what, where, when, and why)
- ✓ Get a press release out within the Golden Hour
- ✓ Notify the stakeholders – staff, members, board, etc
- ✓ Make sure communications include any changes in services (location, e-services)
- ✓ Tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth
- ✓ Never get defensive - however tough things get
- ✓ Be prepared with company information packs
- ✓ Get professional crisis communications support

Ongoing Strategies

- Develop and maintain vision
- Communicate
- Rest and glucose plan
- *“Best decision makers are the ones who know when not to trust themselves”*
Regina Phelps
- Where do we go from here?
- Learn from mistakes

Crisis Response

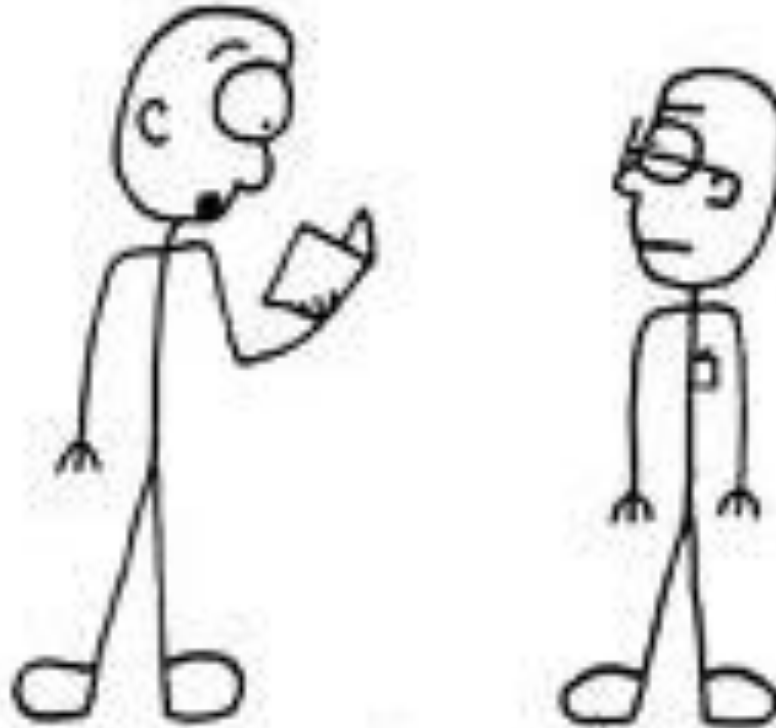
“Take control of what you can control...your business.”

- Martha Stewart

“Nothing succeeds like the appearance of success”

- Christopher Lasch

Crisis Management Center



I'm not sure "everyone dies"
is a great emergency plan.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Do you have a Communication Plan included in your Business Continuity Program?