



8-STEP GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Overcome a Social Media Crisis in 8 Steps

Communication crises can happen anywhere, but they have a special volatility online. Brands know this, according to "[Crisis Communications 2014: Social Media and Notification Systems](#)." The Continuity Insight study shows brands view social media as a source of limitless reputation risk.

Within minutes, if not seconds, an errant tweet or fiery Facebook post can spread. All the work invested in building your brand and its reputation can go up in smoke just like that.

How can you extinguish the flames before they do irreparable damage?

Don't avoid social media. Instead, leverage it and other communication tools to resolve your crisis. Here are eight steps that will help you do just that.

1. Develop a plan

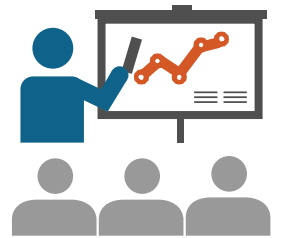
Successfully managing a social media crisis is a matter of planning and preparation. Fire fighters don't just show up at the scene of a fire and hope to put out the flames. They have plans and procedures. [Click to Tweet!](#)

The same goes for brands. Develop a [crisis communication plan](#). Simulate a crisis and test the plan. Analyse how the brand fares. Burnt to a crisp or slightly singed? Use the data from the simulation to finesse the plan further.



2. Train regularly

Plans are good; putting them into practice is better. Use the plan in day-to-day community management. Learn to respond to breaking news and trends. If you develop the necessary skills now, you'll automatically shift into the right frame of mind when the crisis alarm sounds.



3. Hit pause

It is important to respond quickly. Silence is not golden when a crisis forms. However, it's also important to pause for a few seconds. When a social media crisis develops, the first instinct usually is to jump to the defensive. Don't! Count to 10 or walk around the block. Do whatever it takes to ensure mindful communication.



4. Revisit the plan

Revisiting the plan is the best way to take control of the crisis and your response.

Let your plan guide actions, not emotions.



5. Pull out the checklist

“When a crisis hits,” says Breeanna Straessle, director of corporate communication at Cision,² “make sure to have a checklist.”

That checklist should contain action items and responsible team members.

“For instance,” Straessle continues, “assign one person to search engines and another to Twitter. Get really granular.”



6. Release a statement

Always release a holding statement. These are prepared responses that can be used in a variety of situations and issued as soon as a crisis breaks.

Holding statements should be short and to the point. State you’re aware of the issue, are looking into it and will provide another update at a specific time. Refer to that statement and create variations of it for each communication channel.



7. Keep your word

If you say you’re going to release an additional statement at a specific time, share it at that time even if it is to say that there are no new details. Stay committed to reassure people and show them you are sincere and doing everything you can to resolve the situation.



8. Follow words with actions

A crisis is a threat, but, like all threats, it can be turned into an opportunity. [Click to Tweet!](#)

“Want to turn an angry customer into a dedicated one?” asks [Christopher Jones](#), contributor at Technori. “Fix their problem! A negative experience can spread through social circles pretty quickly. But one that becomes positive? That travels well, too.”

You can extinguish a social media crisis, but it requires taking action now. Develop a plan. Train regularly. When a crisis starts to develop, you’ll have the muscle memory and checklists in place and be ready to go.

