



Section 2: Case Study

Crisis Management via New Media Technologies: The UGA's Total Crisis Management

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Year: 2009

Crisis Type: Campus Shooting

Region: Athens, Georgia,

The United States

PR Administration:

UGA Public Affairs, UGA OSEP

Background

This case study focused on how the University of Georgia (the UGA) effectively responded to the UGA marketing professor shooting crisis on April, 25, 2009.

Challenge

This case study examined UGA's crisis management process, which is based on a three-stage crisis management model. The study focused on the UGA's new media communication technology usage in the entire crisis management process. It also addresses UGA's public relations efforts during crisis management. This thesis emphasized the development of UGA's crisis management system previous to, during, and after the incident.

Methodology

The methodology is an in-depth review and analysis of a real crisis situation, the UGA marketing professor shooting incident is a representative case in this study. UGA's crisis prevention, responses, and learning were carefully reviewed and developed based on the three-stage crisis management model.

Results

- The research concluded that UGA's crisis management process represents an ongoing crisis management cycle. This study provides the ongoing crisis management considerations, a diagram (UGA OCMD model, Julia S. Kim, 2010) of new media communication technology supports, and another diagram of public relations efforts in each crisis stage.
- This case study is an overview of crisis management actions and internal and external stakeholder communications emanating from the Zinkhan shooting case. The study also explored how new media technologies and social media networks were used strategically to implement UGA's crisis communication system. The analysis and development of appropriate and effective crisis management strategies is necessary for crises occurring in academic institutions.
- The UGA has learned both from past crises, such as the Virginia Tech. shooting, the 9/11 tragedy, the Katrina crisis, and from lessons of other emergency management agencies including FEMA and GEMA. In regard to the campus shooting, the UGA has received feedback about its response to the crisis and has used that information to enhance crisis prevention in the pre-crisis stage, which includes internal training programs such as classes and simulations, internal studies such as surveys and research, and internal crisis communication plans.
- The communication technologies strategically supported the UGA crisis management system in each stage. The diagram two shows the UGA has different new media supporting strategies, which are crisis information sharing supports in the pre-crisis stage, crisis notifying and news updating supports in crisis event stage, and crisis lessons accumulating supports in the post-crisis stage.

Results

- Effective crisis communications today must acknowledge the impact of having new media technologies. The UGA strategically used the emergency mass notification system as a primary crisis response tool and websites, Facebook, and Twitter as the secondary crisis communication tools. The previous actual crises gave examples allowed the UGA to develop its own social media network system. The UGA has learned from 9/11, Katrina, and the Virginia Tech. shooting and has developed a crisis communication system with the integration of traditional and new media technology.
- The Public Affairs office, as a UGA crisis team member, had conducted multiple public relations roles to keep communicating crisis management issues with the university's people (faculty, students, and staff) and external stakeholders. Diagram three shows the UGA public relations main goals on three crisis model: That is the public relations supports to communicate crisis management information with the stakeholders in the pre-crisis stage, to maintain the safety and reputation of the school in the crisis event stage, and to keep ongoing reputation management in the post-crisis stage.
- Studying the UGA case provides an example of an institution executing crisis management three-stage model in a actual practical situation. The presented table and diagrams in this study guides other universities and organizations, which meets similar crisis environment.
- An organization always need to prevent, respond, solve, and learn all potential crisis under ongoing process, building reputation in the publics. A crisis can be better managed with more scientific ways which includes as planning, practicing, and learning processes. A public relations manager should keep better crisis communication with internal and outer publics of organization and drive everyone to feel part of crisis team members.