Crisis Communications

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In a business, it is vital to have strong communication for your organization to function properly. In certain circumstances it may also be necessary to use crisis communications when working in the field of Public Relations. The importance given to crisis communication represents an important rationale supporting the assertion that a crisis is first of all “a perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2007, 2). This definition encompasses what to expect when working for an organization that could potentially deal with a crisis—every business is in jeopardy of dealing with some circumstances that are unfavorable that could impact the company negatively. It is important and wise to have a plan in place for any possible situation. Not only having a plan in place, but running through and practicing what to do in certain circumstances is also very important. If the situation should arise, everyone will be ready because they have practiced and prepared.

As such, crisis communication can be described as “the dialog between the organization and its public prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence. The dialog details strategies and tactics that are designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization” (Fearn-Banks, 2007, 9). If a business has no Public Relations input for nothing else, every organization needs to have a crisis communication plan. As said by Popescu, 2002 crisis communication has been viewed as the cornerstone of public relations. When faced with a crisis, it is important that an organization reacts quickly and efficiently. The organization must have smooth communication between the crisis communication team and the members of the organization—especially those who will also have to deal with the crisis directly with the media. The organizations crisis management team must also react in a way that guarantees as less organizational image damage as possible. The team must uphold the reputation of the organization and the credibility it has. Without any mishap in crisis communication you can maintain trust and loyalty of not only your publics but of your own employees. When Public Relations is done correctly, the organization may eventually come out of a crisis with a better reputation than before (Fearn-Banks, 2007, 9-10).

Another important aspect to crisis communication is internal communication. An organization’s crisis communication skills can only be seen as resilient as its internal communication. From a theoretical point of view, the importance of internal communication during crises has been admitted and accepted. However, one is inclined to ignore it in real life because of an exaggerated media attention (Libaert, 2008, 102). An organization should not ignore that the foundation of a crisis communication plan is internal communication. Internal communication is key to the success of the crisis resolution process (George, 2011): if an organization is faced with crisis, they must first be prepared to communicate internal before they can handle the situation in a public manner.

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