



MALPH

Communications Training

Surviving crisis



May 7, 2021

Goals today

- Examine what a crisis is really about
- Discuss your role & goals
- Share YOUR crisis experiences
- Learn how to use each event to be more effective in the next one
- Learn to use social media in a crisis
- What else?

What's a crisis, anyway?

Dictionary says:

noun, plural cri·ses [krah-y-seez].

A stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined; ***turning point***.

a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change.

Wurfel says:

Crisis in government is the moment when events cause leaders to acknowledge lost control of a situation. The duration of the crisis is the time span until order (and public confidence) is restored.

Crisis has many forms

- Public health emergencies
- Weather events - tornadoes, floods, wildfires
- Leadership events - Governors caught in scandals, leaders assassinated or incapacitated
- Government systems failure - Unemployment computer system snafu
- Major oil spill - Environmental crisis
- Government shutdowns - partisan gridlock
- Nuclear plant mishap
- Domestic terrorism

Is it a crisis yet?

Universal elements of a crisis

- Something has diverged from the normal
- Control of a situation is lost
- **People are affected**
- Leadership and systems are unable to function
- Situation is intense; people revert to panic behaviors
- Often, some portion or aspect of the situation is ***unknown***, hidden, or not understood

Peloton CEO admits mistake, recalls treadmills after child's death and 72 injuries

Updated 11:26 AM; Today 11:23 AM



(Photo courtesy of Peloton) Peloton

Hell rarely breaks loose. It more often walks in.

Take steps today to be ready tomorrow

- Are you participating in training drills?
- Have you met emergency partners?
- Have you got your office on a thumb drive?
- Have you SWOT-audited your operation?

The first 48 hours

By the time you smell smoke, the fire has probably been going for a bit.

- Determine the knowns & unknowns
- Assemble the team
- Create the plan & assign roles
- Communicate the situation internal and external
- Set the path for restoring 'normal'
- Set the expectation for communicating changes
- Monitor press and social. Rumor control is top priority

How / when to update

- Updates to the public should have a regular cadence. Train your followers / audiences.
- Vet all shared info, but don't sit on updates for large info “dumps.”
- Don't prolong Q&A sessions. They'll get off topic.
- Engage the conversation where it's happening (social v. mainstream v. live events)
- Use social media to update in real time (FB live and YouTube live for example)

Who speaks?

- Determine messenger early and be consistent.
- Avoid choosing by **title size**. Reserve leadership for major announcements.
- Comms people can be interchanged, leadership cannot.
- The messenger's job is delivery. Amassing, vetting and clearing information should be a team effort.

Communicating around a crisis

Each event is a thread creating the history of the event, and every communication colors that thread.



Social media and crisis

With Ronda VanBuren, owner of Bella V Marketing



What is a social media crisis?

A social media crisis is an online situation that has, or risks having, a negative and long-term impact on your organization's reputation and/or bottom line.

Social media crises usually involve strong, negative emotions that are relatable and can easily:

- Outweigh common sense
- Get clients, fans, staff stakeholders and others riled up
- Provoke viral behavior



CartoonStock.com

Social media crisis plan

How to plan and react

Plan for a social media crisis

- Create a plan
- Listening tools
- Definitions: Is it a problem or a crisis?
- Shares, likes, comments and reactions
- Best times to post, based on your insight

Social media crisis plan

Create a plan

Assemble your team

- Legal, PR, Marketing, Social

Proactively identify potential crises

- Listening tools

Review past crisis - What worked?

- Response blueprints

Test your system

Social media crisis plan

Listening tools

A listening tool queries the web for keywords, mentions and conversations.

Suggested items to listen for:

- Your department name
- The names of your team (front facing)
- Keywords related to your department

Tools

- Google alerts
- Buffer
- falcon.io
- Awario

Social media crisis plans

Based on reactions

Is it a problem or crisis?



Share

This information is so important, I want it on my newsfeed.
Their friends and family can comment and share



Comment

May show up as a notification for you based on your searches & interactions



Like

Rarely shows up



What are your thresholds?

Social media crisis plan

Things to do in a crisis

- Respond quickly with written message
- Use the same message on all platforms
- Pause all scheduled posts
- Try to take it offline by providing contact info
- Keep everyone informed

Social media crisis plan

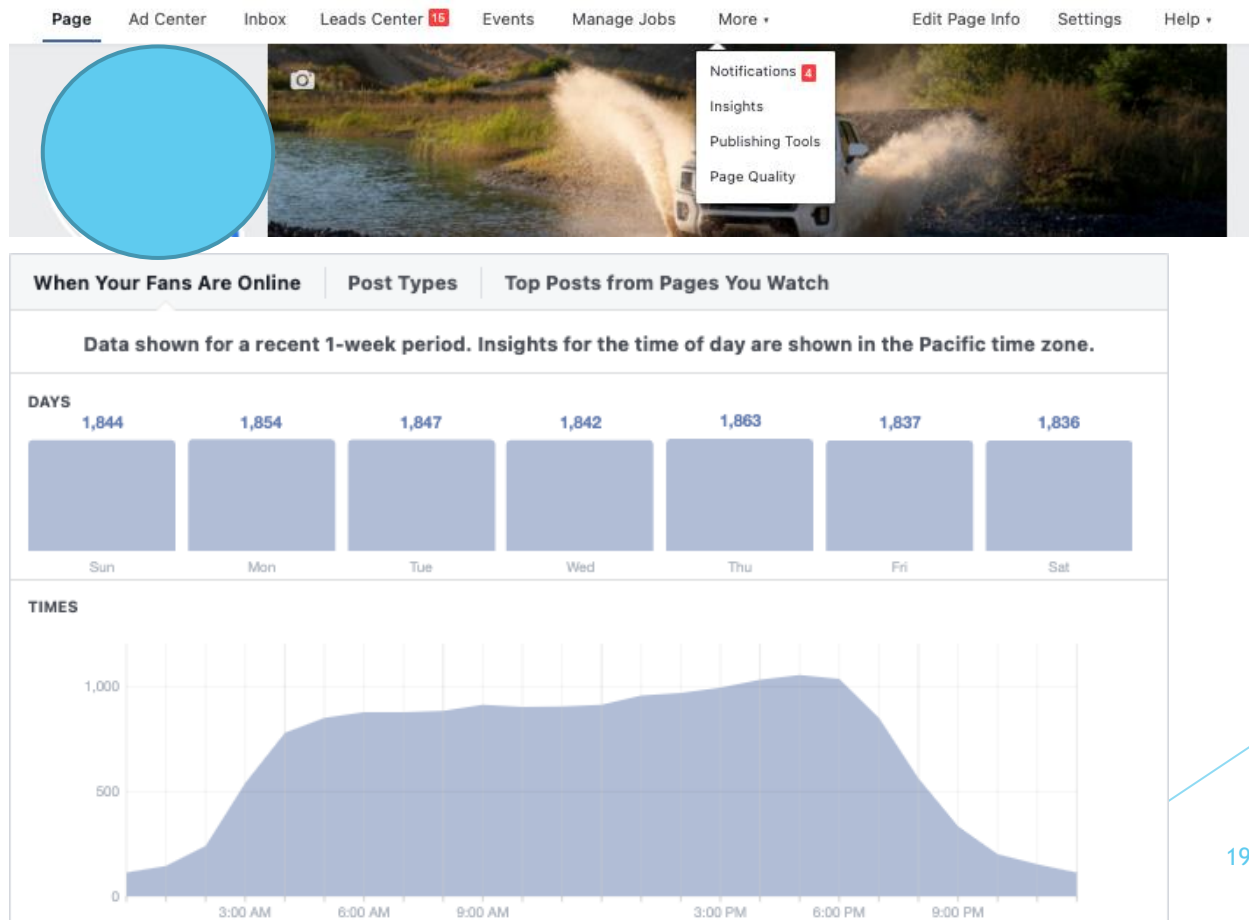
Things to not do in a crisis

- Don't delete or hide comments
- Avoid blocking people when possible
- Don't argue with people

“Just because you’re invited to an argument does not mean you have to attend.”

Social Media Crisis Plan

Best times to post updates



When the crisis drags on

- Reporters and social platforms will poke the situation until there's something new to tell. Lead the conversation to maintain your position.
- If you go quiet, it does not mean the story goes quiet.
- People can normalize nearly any living condition; but crisis fatigue is real.
- Crises are rarely ever political, but response activities almost inevitably are. Avoid politics but be aware of your surroundings.

Manage people to manage crisis

Refer to handout on managing people

On fatigue and empathy...

The BP Gulf oil spill of 2010

- 200 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico
- Spill lasted **87 days**
- **16,000 miles** of coast affected: Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida
- **11 people dead**. 17 seriously injured.
- **\$40 billion** cleanup and fines to BP.
- **\$20 billion** response fund from federal government.



Geologist / CEO Tony Hayward

"The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean. The amount of volume of oil and dispersant we are putting into it is tiny in relation to the total water volume."

"I think the environmental impact of this disaster is likely to be very, very modest."

"The first thing to say is I'm sorry. We're sorry for the massive disruption it's caused their lives. There's no one who wants this over more than I do. I would like my life back."

When the crisis is over

- When is the crisis over?
- Risk of announcing
- Cost of silence
- How to announce



After the crisis -- External



Storytelling can help the public recognize your efforts and results.

After the crisis - internal

- Leadership should communicate to staff directly
- Employees need to know the story of what they just went through
- Department culture has its own tapestry
- Efforts and results need to be recognized
- Caution: Pretend the public is watching

Three easy steps to recover damaged reputation

1. Buy 'Men In Black' neuralyzer (\$49.99 on Amazon)
2. Hire Ralph to break Internet / wipe history
3. Buy local news outlets; control narrative



Reputation recovery is a process

- Own your mistakes
- Learn from your experiences
- Do not stop doing your job
- Keep engaging
- Public service sometimes means public scrutiny

Business

Tony Hayward Will Leave Glencore by 2022 After One More Term

By [Thomas Biesheuvel](#)

March 11, 2021, 7:16 AM EST

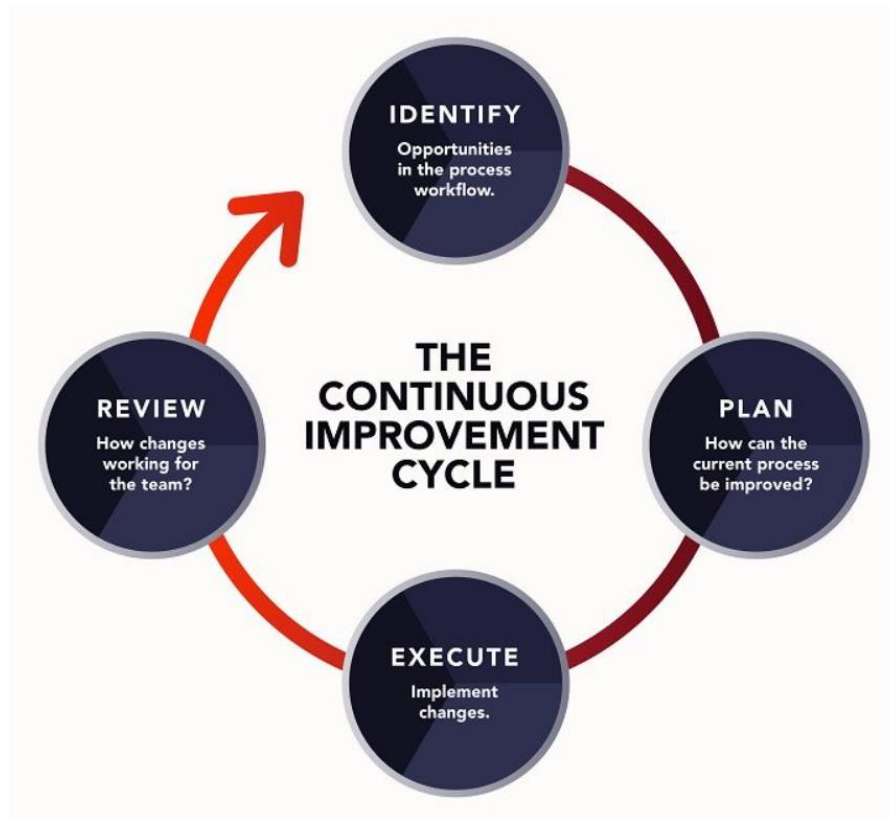
Updated on March 11, 2021, 10:47 AM EST

- ▶ Chairman to stay another year to oversee CEO change, probes
- ▶ Hayward's exit to be latest change at top of commodities giant



Keys to a great hot wash

It's about continuous improvement



Four questions

- What were our best moments / decision / highlights?
- What made them good?
- What went poorly / could have been better?
- What can we do not to repeat those things?

- Participants must be comfortable responding frankly.
- Often, tough to get the group together after prolonged crisis.

10 keys to surviving a crisis

See handout on “10 Rs in every crisis”

Discussion

