



PLANNING
COMMUNICATIONS
FOR A CRISIS

YOU'RE THE PR EXPERTS - HOW DO WE SAY "UNMITIGATED DISASTER" IN A WAY THAT SOUNDS LIKE "NO BIG DEAL"?



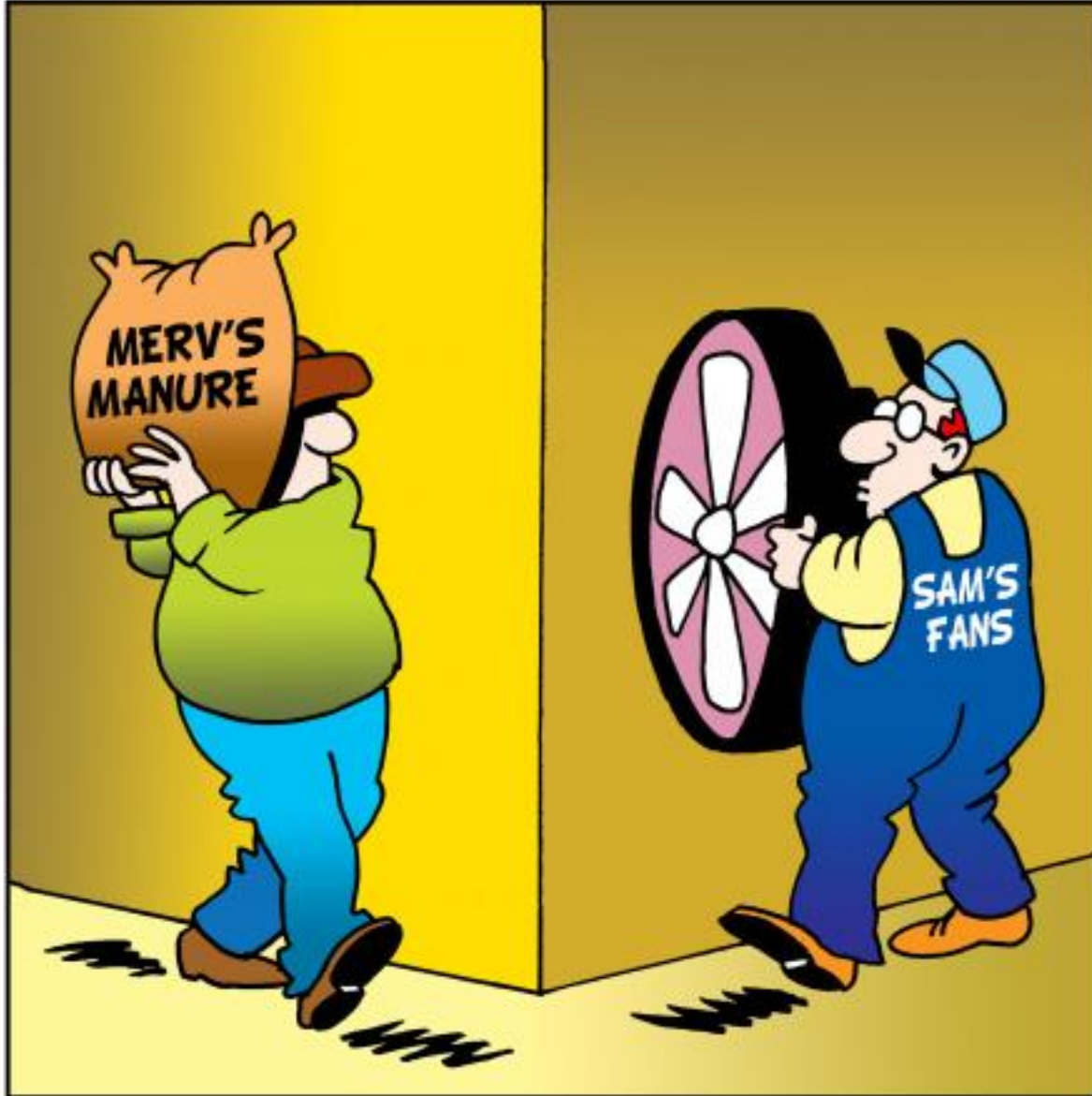
TOM FISH BURNE

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A dramatic landscape featuring a large, dark, stormy sky. A bright, jagged lightning bolt strikes a large, leafy tree in the center-left of the frame. The ground is a field of dry, brownish grass. The overall mood is intense and urgent.

Crisis Communication

The strategic and coordinated process of delivering specific messages to key stakeholder audiences to inform, educate and reassure them during all phases of crisis management and recovery.



Common Characteristics of a Crisis:

- Creates Chaos, Confusion and Collateral Damage
- Can Quickly Get Out of Control
- Undesirable Combination of Events/Activities
- Hard to Predict All the Areas that will be Affected
- Countless Unexpected Consequences
- Every Crisis Also Creates Opportunity



Levels of Crises

- **Issue** – a topic of discussion, a matter in dispute or a sensitive subject within an organization, industry or society
- **Incident** – a minor, localized disruption that has the potential to become a crisis if not properly addressed and resolved
- **Accident** – an unexpected and undesirable event, usually one resulting in damage or injury
- **Emergency** – a serious situation or unexpected occurrence that demands immediate action and communication
- **Disaster** – a serious, large-scale disruption of routines, systems and operations; requiring multiple levels of coordination and intervention to rebuild infrastructure and restore a path to normalcy.
- **Organizational Crisis** – a critical or decisive point at which an organization's response to an issue, accident, emergency or disaster threatens the operations, reputation and/or future standing of the organization.



Crisis Management Process

- **Prevention** – Steps taken to avoid a crisis from occurring or lessen its effects; also referred to as “mitigation.”
- **Preparation** – involves diagnosing vulnerabilities and risks; implementing the Crisis Management Plan.
- **Response** – Effective execution of the CMP and CrisisComm Plan through the post-crisis phase; followed by **Evaluation & Revision.**



Tell the Truth. Tell It Fast. Tell It Frequently.

Communication Priorities

- **INSTRUCTING INFORMATION**
- **ADJUSTING INFORMATION**
- **REPUTATION REPAIR PROCESS**

The goal of Crisis Communication is to effectively inform, educate and reassure stakeholders, while simultaneously reducing or eliminating the potential harm or damage inflicted upon the organization and its stakeholders.

Common CrisisComm Mistakes



Misplaced Priorities

- Brand & Reputation
- Legal Liability vs. Public Safety
- Me and Mine vs. You and Yours



Focus on Fear, Not Facts

- Reactions instead of Responses
- Panic Spreads with Uncertainty
- Rumors and Speculation Fuel Crises



Short-Term vs Long-Term

- Stop the Bleeding
- External Pressures to Act Quickly
- Be First or Be Right – Be Both!



CrisisComm Considerations

- ❑ Is this situation actually a crisis? Why or why not?
- ❑ What are the first steps that need to be taken?
- ❑ What do we know for sure? What don't we know?
- ❑ Who should be notified and why? Identify key stakeholders. Appoint credible spokesperson(s).
- ❑ What are the key vulnerabilities for exposure?
- ❑ What is the internal communication process?
- ❑ What is the external communication process?
- ❑ What are reasonable expectations for a response?
- ❑ What is at stake with no response, or with a response that does not resonate well with stakeholders?



Crisis Communication

“Effective Crisis Communication is a function of management and operations; you cannot communicate your way out of something you behaved your way into.”

Take Action, Tell the Story.

Crisis Communication - Response

Stay on Message!

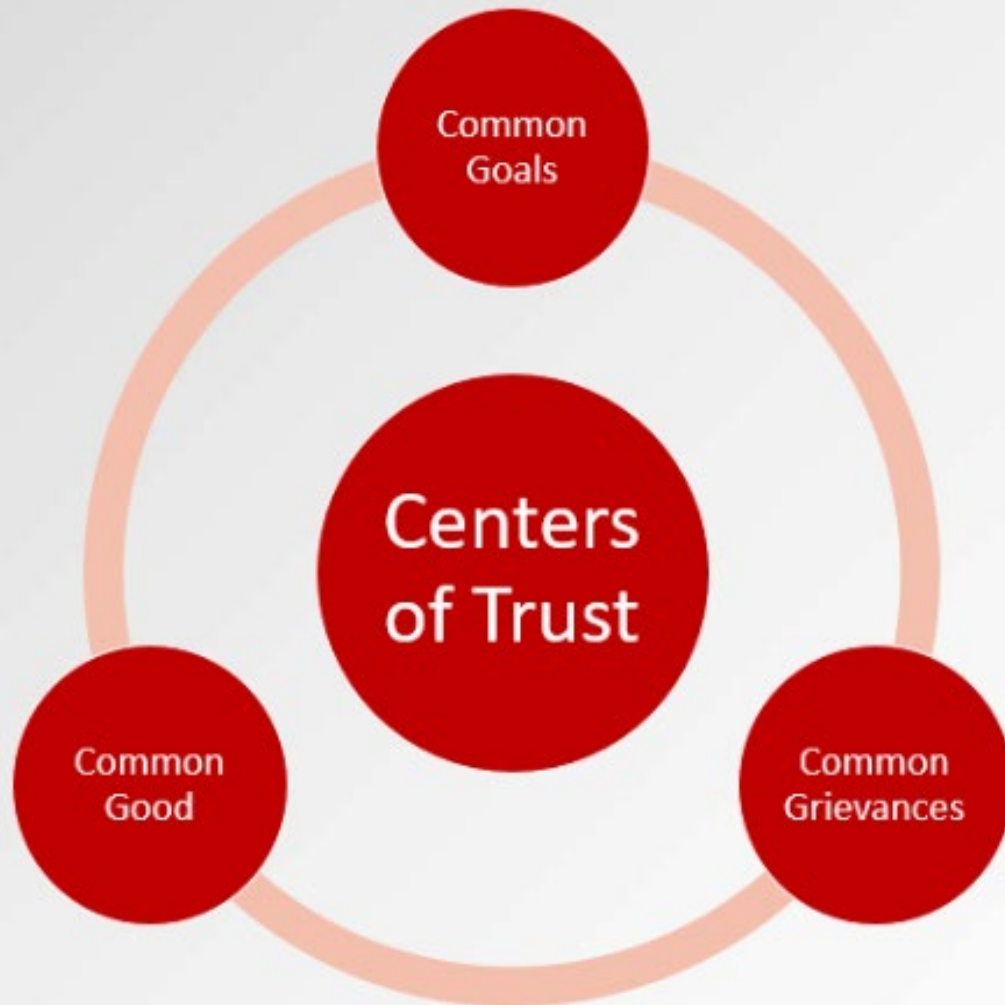
Messaging
Strategy

Talk Track

Talking
Points

Don't forget the role social media can play during a crisis.





Things to Remember:

- Selective framing and language affects audience members
- Actions speak louder than words, posts and tweets
- All news is global news
- Don't believe your lying eyes ... images matter
- Words don't always mean what they say
- Crisis History: How you do anything is how you do everything
- Transparency is crucial
- Trust must be earned

Fire, Ready, Aim... doesn't work!

Process and Procedure matter. It's **Ready, Aim, Fire**. In the same manner... it's Listen, Think, Speak.



LISTEN

THINK

SPEAK

What do we say and do next?

- Communicate about your planning process, new timelines & resources
- “We don’t know” is an acceptable response; share what you do know and when you expect to know more
- Balance “need to know” information with “want to know” good news, reassurance and updates
- Make personal video messages so audiences feel connected; post online



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THANK YOU!

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