

Strategic Crisis Planning

If you haven't considered the implications, here are some tips.

- 1) Have a crisis plan ready to go. Start by determining what can happen (Map out the potential hazards or scenarios) assume they will happen. Crises fall into two groups (a) Uncontrolled crises (fire, injury, death) (b) Controlled crises (redundancies, takeovers, and product changes) assess what action you will need to take should that crisis hit.
- 2) Prepare a crisis support system. Assign authority and responsibility to team members. Prepare materials (Use clear document names for these files, its no good trying to find items in a crisis, if they were named Doc353.Bak. When a crisis hits staff need to be able to find documents and literature quickly) Determine in advance who will front the communications issues, determine what information the media might need and your list of actions. In short be prepared!
- 3) Your first priority is to get in touch with the people affected by the crisis. Worry about them first, and deal with those issues before talking to the media. Your attention should be employee's first, families of employees, second and customers and the media last.
- 4) Ensure your organisation is seen to be speaking with one voice. Identify in advance who your spokesperson will be. Ensure they are at a level within the company to command support and trust. Make sure they are able, and sensitive enough to communicate with authority and understanding. Also ensure they will be available should a crisis occur.
- 5) Invest the time now, prepare, and anticipate key questions and issues. Know the details of an event should it happen. Understand in advance what you can and cannot say. Deal honestly with the public; don't get caught only divulging what is needed. Only confirm facts and don't volunteer possibly damaging information.
- 6) When a crisis strikes, be there.... Be at the scene. Be visible be available. Do not allow speculation to create confusion. Deals with rumours quickly don't allow speculation to grow.
- 7) Take Responsibility; nothing damages a companies reputation more than deceit. Express concern, acknowledge the problem and express a sincere desire to others to solve the problem.
- 8) Bang the drum; get public credit for past and present actions. Monitor everything that is said and written. Have a plan and system in place to correct misinformation, correct and address the facts don't allow erroneous information to build up, this only allows for confusion to grow.
- 9) If the crisis and the events keep growing keep measuring the changes. Modify your crisis plan, have strategy meetings. Keep records of events and manage a communication structure to deal with any questions, which may arise.
- 10) Don't go silent. After a crisis subsides, don't fall off the face of the earth. Continue to maintain good relations with the public. Keep offering updates; be seen to be active and interested in solving the problem, above all else keep information flowing.