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November 2022

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change, and  
mobilize  
public opinion.**



# **Duck, Cover, Run – NO!**

## **Managing your Message**

**2022 NSFM November Conference**



# Agenda

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**Developing crisis response capabilities**

# A global presence with operations in 8 cities, 80+ employees and 17 years in business.

Our team members have worked in leadership roles in communications, politics, government, and the private sector. We have run campaigns, served Prime Ministers, Premiers and Mayors, managed crisis, and advised large and high-profile companies and brands on existential threats and major value creating events.



**Robyn McIsaac**  
Vice President

Robyn is an award-winning communications strategist specializing in issues management, reputation management, crisis communications, employee communications, stakeholder engagement, and corporate social responsibility.

**Kelsie Chiasson**  
Consultant

Kelsie has extensive experience in strategic communications, crisis communications and media relations having spent a dozen years on Parliament Hill advising federal Cabinet Ministers, Opposition Leaders, and Members of Parliament.



We've been working with you and for some of the best companies around the world.



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**All municipalities have  
Emergency Management Plans.  
But do you have a crisis  
communications plan?**

# Crisis Management 101

Make sure it's really a crisis you're dealing with

Is it adversely impacting your ability to conduct business as usual and to serve your residents?

Does it have the potential to tarnish the municipality's image, reputation, or brand?

Could it threaten the safety of employees or residents?



# Target audiences

In the event of a crisis, who do you need to reach?

**Residents**

**Local  
Businesses**

**Media**

**Council  
Members**

**Municipal  
Employees**

**Other  
Levels of  
Government**

What type of information will they be looking for?

What platforms are you (and they) currently using to communicate?

Do you have a plan to manage the crisis effectively and provide clear, timely information?

# Fundamentals of a Crisis Communications Plan

**1**

## Detailed Plan

Explain why the plan is needed.

Identify who can activate the plan and under what circumstances.

Outline the steps that need to be taken regarding internal and external communication, include who is responsible for what and what tools

(e-mail, voicemail, news release, social media, media interviews, letter to residents, etc.) will be used to carry out the plan.

**2**

## Crisis Communication Team

Who will act as spokesperson?

Who will field media calls?

Who will handle internal communications?

Include contact information for all team members.

**3**

## Key Messages

A brief description of what has happened.

What is being done to address it?

Lead with compassion and always be honest.

# Fundamentals of a Crisis Communications Plan

**4**

## Internal Communications Procedures

How will you notify employees?

Who will receive key messages?

What are your expectations regarding their comments to media and/or on social media?

**5**

## Contacts and Media Lists

Gather contact information for anyone you may need to communicate with during a crisis.

Include contact information for local / regional print, radio and broadcast journalists, as well as local community forums you may need to reach.

**6**

## Appendices

Include guidelines, checklists and templates (media advisory, news release, social media posts, etc.) for various scenarios to support and facilitate crisis communication.

# Fundamentals of a Crisis Communications Plan

7

## Website / Social Media

Provide timely, up-to-date information to the public and the media.

Doing so can significantly reduce the number of phone calls you receive and can save you from having to repeat information multiple times.

Assign someone to monitor social media throughout the crisis.

Don't let the crisis spiral out of control through misinformation or a lack of awareness of what's being done.

8

## Media Training

Identify and provide ongoing training to anyone who may be responsible for speaking with the media in the event of a crisis.

9

## Employee Training

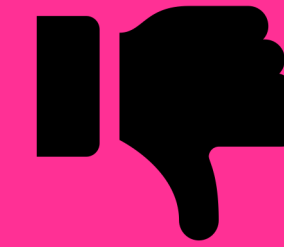
Ensure everyone on your team is familiar with the plan and their roles and responsibilities.

Regularly review your plan with your team and keep it up to date.

# Recap: Protocols



- Have a plan
- Contain the situation and minimize speculation
- Provide accurate, timely information
- Demonstrate credibility through words and actions
- Communicate through a trained spokesperson
- Demonstrate genuine concern for those affected
- Monitor traditional and social media



- Adopt a siege mentality
- Forget to communicate with / alleviate employee concerns
- Speculate
- Publicly share disagreements
- Let falsehoods go unchallenged

# Leadership in times of crisis

Managing a crisis can be exhausting, stressful, and in some cases overwhelming.

Residents will be looking for clear and consistent information.

Honest, factual and regular updates are key.



# Cancel Culture

## Handling crisis communications in the cancel culture era

### What is cancel culture?

Merriam-Webster defines getting cancelled as “removing of support for public figures in response to their objectionable behaviour or opinions.”

The consequences for mismanaging communications in a crisis can cost careers and erode public trust.

### Rise of social media

Social media’s ability to rapidly issue information and spur groups and movements with shared beliefs or actions, has both positive and negative intentions and impacts, including:

Boycotting or ‘cancelling’ a person or organization

Misinformation & disinformation campaigns being circulated and/or escalated.

### What can you do?

Organizations need to respond in a timely and meaningful way.

Silence sends a “we don’t care” message and opens the door to misinformation and misperception.

Have a plan. Respond quickly. Be honest and compassionate.

# Developing your crisis response capabilities

1

## Prepare your crisis communications plan

Feel overwhelmed? Don't be! We'd be happy to work with you to ensure you are prepared and have the tools you need.

2

## Establish yourself as a trusted source of information

Pick your platforms. Ensure you are updating them regularly. Establish yourself as a trusted source, so people look to you for information in a crisis, not others.

3

## Social Media Participant Use Policy

Be upfront about your participant use policy and what happens to inappropriate posts and when you reserve the right to block a user.

4

## Challenge Falsehoods with Facts

Or they will become their own version of the truth. But that doesn't mean you need to engage with trolls or seek to appease chronically unhappy residents.

# Avoid a crisis. Think before you post.

It takes two seconds to respond in frustration to a negative comment or share your 'hot take' on an issue.

But remember that you'll never be able to take it back. Even if you later decide to delete your comment, in today's day and age a screen shot will already exist.

If you aren't comfortable seeing your words circulating on the internet, keep them to yourself!

## Angry resident:

The people who run this town are all F\*&^%#!

## Town:

Well you should just move then you ungrateful \*S\*%!

**“The crisis you have to  
worry about most is the  
one you don’t see  
coming.”**

– Mike Mansfield

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# Questions?

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