

1. Objective:

The purpose of this plan is to provide a clear framework for responding to a crisis, ensuring timely and accurate communication to protect the nonprofit's reputation, support its mission, and maintain stakeholder trust.

2. Key Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Crisis Communications Team Leader (Executive Director or designated crisis lead):** Oversees the response and makes final decisions.
- **Communications Officer:** Manages all messaging and media inquiries.
- **Social Media Manager:** Monitors social platforms and provides timely responses.
- **Board of Directors:** Advises on strategy and policy.

3. Types of Potential Crises:

- **Operational Crisis:** Issues that affect day-to-day operations (e.g., data breach, funding shortages).
- **Reputation Crisis:** Negative media coverage or public scrutiny (e.g., controversies, leadership issues).
- **Natural or External Crisis:** Environmental events, such as a natural disaster impacting programs.

4. Crisis Communication Strategy:

- **Assess the Situation:** Quickly understand the scope and impact of the crisis, consult internal team, and gather all facts.
- **Develop Key Messages:** Craft clear, concise, and empathetic messages. Address the issue, what is being done to fix it, and what stakeholders can expect.
- **Internal Communication:** Inform all staff, board members, and key stakeholders internally before going public.
- **External Communication:** Prepare a public statement, press release, and social media posts. Address both the facts and emotions of the situation, demonstrating commitment to resolving the issue.
- **Monitor Media and Social Media:** Track the response to your messaging, adjusting as needed based on public perception.
- **Provide Ongoing Updates:** Keep stakeholders informed regularly until the crisis is resolved.

5. Communication Channels:

- **Press Releases:** For formal statements to the media.
- **Website/Blog:** A designated section for crisis updates and FAQs.
- **Social Media:** Real-time updates on platforms like LinkedIn, BlueSky, Facebook, and Instagram.
- **Emails:** Direct communication with key stakeholders (donors, partners, clients).
- **Personal Phone Calls:** To VIPs such as board of directors, major donors, foundations.
- **Hotline:** Provide a phone number for urgent inquiries or concerns.



Crisis Communications Planning for a Nonprofits: A Template

6. Crisis Communication Guidelines:

- **Transparency:** Be honest, even if the situation is difficult. Admit mistakes and share steps taken to rectify them.
- **Consistency:** Ensure messaging is consistent across all channels and spokespeople
- **Empathy:** Acknowledge the impact on affected parties, showing compassion and understanding.
- **Timeliness:** Respond quickly to mitigate rumors and misinformation.

7. Post-Crisis Evaluation:

- After the crisis, evaluate the effectiveness of the communications plan and identify areas for improvement.
- Document lessons learned and revise the plan for future preparedness.

By staying prepared and transparent, your nonprofit can navigate crises while protecting its reputation and fostering long-term trust with stakeholders.

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