Crisis Communications Strategy and Plan Template

Introduction

The crisis communications strategy, a crucial document for community organisations, is designed to help manage and mitigate the impact of any crisis. This guide serves as a powerful tool for creating a comprehensive plan that outlines the roles and responsibilities necessary to handle the situation effectively across all forms of media, including social media. A template plan is provided at the end of this strategy.

1. Pre-Crisis Preparation

1. **Risk Assessment**

   - Identify potential crises.
   - Evaluate the impact and likelihood of each scenario.

2. **Crisis Team Formation**

   - Designate critical members and their roles.
   - Ensure team members are trained and have the necessary resources.

3. **Communication Channels**

   - Establish and verify all communication channels (traditional media, social media, internal communications).
   - Ensure access to these channels is secure and controlled.

4. **Stakeholder Identification**

   - Identify all internal and external stakeholders.
   - Maintain an updated contact list.

2. Crisis Identification and Response

1. **Monitoring and Detection**

   - Implement monitoring tools to detect early signs of a crisis (media monitoring services, social listening tools).
   - Set up alerts for potential crisis indicators.

2. **Activation of Crisis Team**

   - Notify the crisis team immediately upon detection of a crisis.

   - Convene an emergency meeting to assess the situation and determine the response.

3. **Initial Response**

   - Acknowledge the situation publicly as soon as possible.

   - Ensure the message is consistent across all platforms.

3. Crisis Communication Plan

1. **Message Development**

   - Develop clear, concise, and factual messages.

   - Create different versions of the message tailored to various stakeholders.

2. **Media Strategy**

   - **Traditional Media**:

     - Press releases: Prepare and distribute to relevant media outlets.

     - Press conferences: Organize and designate spokespersons.

   - **Social Media**:

     - Post updates on official social media accounts.

     - Monitor and respond to social media comments and inquiries.

   - **Internal Communications**:

     - Inform staff and volunteers via internal communication channels (emails, meetings, intranet).

3. **Spokesperson Management**

   - Designate trained spokespersons for media interactions.

   - Ensure spokespersons are briefed and have updated information.

4. Post-Crisis Evaluation

1. **Review and Debrief**

   - Conduct a post-crisis review with the crisis team.

   - Analyse the effectiveness of the response and identify areas for improvement.

2. **Documentation**

   - Document all actions taken and communications released.

   - Maintain a crisis log for future reference.

3. **Stakeholder Feedback**

   - Collect feedback from stakeholders to assess their perception of the crisis management.

4. **Update Crisis Plan**

   - Revise the crisis communications plan based on lessons learned.

   - Conduct regular training and drills.

Roles Needed (adjust to resources available)

KEY ROLES (minimum)

1. **Crisis Communications Coordinator**

   - Overall coordination of the crisis communications plan.

   - Ensures all team members are informed, and actions are executed.

2. **Spokespersons**

   - Serve as the face of the organisation during the crisis.

   - Communicate critical messages to the media and public.

OPTIONAL

3. **Media Relations Specialist**

   - Handles all interactions with traditional media.

   - Prepares press releases and coordinates press conferences.

4. **Social Media Manager**

   - Monitors social media channels.

- Posts updates and responds to comments and inquiries.

5. **Internal Communications Coordinator**

   - Manages communication with staff and volunteers.

   - Ensures internal stakeholders are informed and aligned.

6. **Monitoring and Analytics Team**

   - Monitors media coverage and social media activity.

   - Provides real-time updates and analysis to the crisis team.

Conclusion

A well-structured crisis communications strategy and plan is not just important; it's a vital tool for community organisations. By preparing in advance, assigning clear roles, and maintaining consistent and transparent communication, organisations can effectively manage crises and protect their reputation, instilling confidence in their stakeholders and the public.

Crisis Communications Plan Template

[Organization Name] Crisis Communications Plan

Date Created: [DD/MM/YYYY]

Last Updated: [DD/MM/YYYY]

This template provides a structured approach to developing a crisis communications plan tailored to your organisation's needs. By following these guidelines and customising the templates, your organisation can effectively manage and communicate during a crisis.

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1. Introduction

- **Purpose**: Outline the purpose of the crisis communications plan.

- **Objectives**: Define the key objectives, such as protecting the organisation's reputation, ensuring public safety, and maintaining stakeholder trust.

2. Crisis Team

- **Team Members and Roles**:

  - **Crisis Communications Lead**: [Name, Contact Information]

  - **Media Relations Specialist**: [Name, Contact Information]

  - **Social Media Lead**: [Name, Contact Information]

  - **Internal Communications Coordinator**: [Name, Contact Information]

  - **Spokespersons**: [Names, Contact Information]

  - **Monitoring and Analytics Lead**: [Names, Contact Information]

3. Pre-Crisis Preparation

- **Risk Assessment**:

  - Identify Potential Crises: [List of potential crises]

  - Impact and Likelihood: [Evaluation of each potential crisis]

- **Communication Channels**:

  - Traditional Media Contacts: [List of media outlets and contacts]

  - Social Media Accounts: [List of official social media accounts and access credentials]

- Internal Communications Channels: [List of internal communication tools and platforms]

- **Stakeholder Identification**:

  - Internal Stakeholders: [List of staff, volunteers, board members, etc.]

  - External Stakeholders: [List of donors, partners, community members, etc.]

  - Updated Contact List: [Link to or location of the contact list]

4. Crisis Identification and Response

- **Monitoring and Detection**:

  - Tools and Services: [List of media monitoring services and social listening tools]

  - Alert System: [Description of how alerts will be received and managed]

- **Activation of Crisis Team**:

  - Notification Process: [Detailed process for notifying crisis team members]

  - Emergency Meeting Protocol: [Steps to convene an emergency meeting]

- **Initial Response**:

  - Acknowledgment Template: [Template for initial public acknowledgement]

  - Consistency Check: [Process for ensuring message consistency across all platforms]

5. Crisis Communication Plan

- **Message Development**:

  - Core Message: [Template for core crisis message]

  - Stakeholder-Specific Messages: [Templates for different stakeholder groups]

- **Media Strategy**:

  - **Traditional Media**:

    - Press Release Template: [Template for press releases]

- Press Conference Checklist: [Checklist for organising press conferences]
- **Social Media**:
  - Social Media Update Template: [Template for social media updates]
  - Response Protocol: [Guidelines for responding to comments and inquiries]
- **Internal Communications**:
  - Internal Memo Template: [Template for internal communications]
  - Staff Meeting Agenda: [Template for crisis-related staff meetings]
- **Spokesperson Management**:
  - Spokesperson Briefing Template: [Template for briefing spokespersons]
  - Media Training Schedule: [Schedule for media training sessions]

6. Post-Crisis Evaluation

- **Review and Debrief**:
  - Post-Crisis Review Template: [Template for conducting post-crisis reviews]
  - Improvement Plan: [Template for documenting lessons learned and improvements]
- **Documentation**:
  - Crisis Log Template: [Template for maintaining a crisis log]
  - Incident Report Template: [Template for detailed incident reports]
- **Stakeholder Feedback**:
  - Feedback Collection Methods: [Methods for collecting stakeholder feedback]
  - Feedback Analysis Report: [Template for analysing feedback]
- **Update Crisis Plan**:
  - Revision Log: [Log for documenting plan revisions]
  - Training and Drill Schedule: [Schedule for regular training and drills]

Appendices

- **Contact List**: [Appendix A - Detailed contact list]

- **Templates and Checklists**: [Appendix B - Collection of templates and checklists]

- **Resources and Tools**: [Appendix C - List of resources and tools used in crisis communications]