

Coronavirus Communicating through crisis



COVID-19

#keepbusinessworking

This is a difficult time for all of us and whilst not all businesses are in crisis (and hopefully will remain that way) we've outlined below eight key things to consider when planning your communications:

1 Timely, accurate information is the lifeblood for managing a crisis

This is true even if you are not in crisis. Everyone in your organisation will be feeling differently about their situation. What they need is truthful, timely information so they know where they stand and can plan for tomorrow.

2 Respond in a manner that is 100% consistent with your brand

Now is the most testing time for your brand. In a rapidly changing situation where every day brings a new challenge, staying true to your brand values takes courage and commitment by the whole team. It also means you have to keep your brand out there.

A common mistake during crisis is to batten down the hatches and wait for everything to go away. But could you really do that for 3, 12 or 18 months? The evidence shows that businesses that do this will pay twice to get back to their position at the beginning of the crisis while their competitors who have remained visible will be far ahead. Remain front and centre in the minds of your stakeholders and you will be rewarded later.

3 Rapid response is essential, but media pressure must not influence decisions

Regular, consistent updates are the key. Choose the regularity that suits you – it doesn't have to be daily if it doesn't need to be. Speak when you have something to say and find other ways to keep people connected in the meantime. If anything appears in social or traditional media which creates a false image that may affect morale, deal with it quickly and decisively. The media and armchair commentators don't know your business as well as you do.



4 People revise their image of an organisation after it experiences a crisis

Your staff will judge how you handled this, and primarily how safe and secure you made them feel. This is a very personal crisis rather than a technological or environmental one. So how you deal with your people now will be what you have to answer for later. If you get it right, your people will come back stronger and more committed to your business. Your customers will remember how you performed and made them feel. Your suppliers will be thankful that you were true to your values.

Continued overleaf...



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5 It is not enough to be legally or scientifically correct

This means you DO have to be legally and scientifically correct but you also need to have and show empathy. Understand that even if you are confident everything will be OK, your staff may not be feeling that. They have families, mortgages, rents and other commitments. Reinforce government and scientific messaging with your own company news. It's about reassurance but it must be founded on trust and truth.

of Marketing can speak about what you are doing to let people know you are still open for business. Only use the CEO for the most important announcements and for the biggy: when you are finally through it to thank all your staff for their efforts.

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Information kindly provided by Orchid Communications

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6 People are forgiving, but they won't tolerate arrogance, lying or gross incompetence

You have their lives and livelihoods in your hands. We all know the virus will impact our lives in some way – either physically or financially – or the life of someone close to us. If you get a decision wrong, people will understand as long as you can show you have acted in good faith, having taken all the known factors into consideration.

7 Government and the media will expand their roles in a crisis if there is a public perception that the organisation is not doing all it should

This is particularly true of the media in this instance. There is so much that is unknown, so much that is unpredictable about this crisis that the media is trying to fill in the gaps but not always from an informed position.

Be totally clear and proactive with your comms to staff and customers so that if something does appear in the media about your business or your industry, your truth is already out there.

8 The magnitude of the crisis dictates the level of the executive who responds

It doesn't always have to be the top bod who delivers updates. Use your senior people well, depending on the message you want to give out. So your Head of HR can speak about employment issues and your Head

Please contact us at
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for help and support.

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