Crisis Communication Resources for the CV Professional

Communication is a powerful tool. It is also the mechanism in which trust is built or broken. Trust is your primary currency as a leader always, and most notably during times of crisis. Leverage your communication efforts to establish consistency, clarity and trust. During times of uncertainty, it is often difficult to process rapidly deployed information. Crisis creates fear and stress, thus leading to increased anxiety and decreased ability to digest critical information.

*When people are concerned, stressed, or upset they often have difficulty hearing, understanding and remembering information*¹

In order to facilitate effective communication consumption, it is wise to focus on being concise, consistent & clear. When in doubt, consider what you would like to hear during a time of crisis, as such perspective serves as a helpful guide to stay focused on the most critical matters at hand.

*Perceptions of trust and credibility are dependent on three factors: perceptions of knowledge and expertise; perceptions of openness and honesty; and perceptions of concern and care*¹

As you design communication to your team and/or key stakeholders, focusing on the **four trust pillars** below will greatly aid in establishing trust as you communicate:

1. **Caring and empathy**: At start of communication, recognize these are unprecedented times. Allow others to voice worry and/or concern.
2. **Dedication and commitment**: Show dedication to your audience by addressing and confirming their needs and/or concerns.
3. **Competence and expertise**: Share expertise, but also solicit and cite input from trusted resources.
4. **Honesty and openness**: Be transparent about facts and how you feel. This leads to obtaining and maintaining trust, both of which are critical.

In planning crisis communication, whether online or in-person, the following structure will help guide:

1. **Anticipation**: Anticipate needs/fears of your audience.
2. **Preparation**: Prepare around needs/fears of your audience.
3. **Practice**: Practice communication in advance of delivering your message.
4. **Solicit Input**: Encourage your listeners/readers an opportunity to share their concerns.

**Key Take-Away(s)...**

1. Initiate with **empathy** and compassion.
2. Focus on what you **communicate first and last**, with a repetitive statement regarding most critical information.
3. Adhere to the “**primacy/recency**” principle (*information presented at beginning and end of communication tends to be retained more effectively than the information presented in the middle*).
4. Limit number of **key messages** to maximum of 3-5, using as few words as possible.
5. Construct messaging that may be *easily digested*. Reminder that graphics, visual aids, analogies and narratives increase messaging recollection.
6. Be sure to **cite sources** to ensure consistency and validity of messaging.
7. **Reiterate key topic(s)** to ensure focus.
8. Solicit input and/or concerns in order to **grow trust** and ensure open communication beyond the messaging.

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¹ Dr. V. Covello, Center for Risk Communication