Surviving a Nonprofit Nightmare

From Crisis Communication to Post-Disaster Fundraising and Everything in Between
Meet your captains

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Plan for the worst, hope for the best

Agenda

• What are your worst public relations fears?
• How to prepare for them
• How to respond to them
• Natural disaster planning
• Response and recovery fundraising
MISTAKES
It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others.
Worst fears?

Accidentally post inappropriate pictures from your vacation in Cancun to your organization Facebook page

The new Pope excommunicates your executive director

Your controversial remarks about spear fishing are “leaked” to the press
Prepare your plan

89% of for-profit corporate executives said a crisis is inevitable.

50% admit not having a crisis plan in place.

Steven Fink, Crisis Management
Prepare your plan

There’s No Such Thing as the “Typical Crisis” – Are you Prepared to Respond?

• Fatal accident at your organization
• Break-in at your facility
• Employee (and executive) mistakes
• Event drawing unwanted interest
• Workplace violence
• Stakeholder complaint goes public (and viral)
• Loss in funding
• Fires/natural disasters
• Any other incident threatening your organization’s reputation and/or operations

(Depending on the severity, all of the above could qualify as crises/critical issues)
Prepare your plan

You Need a Plan in Place

Do you know...

• Who determines the crisis severity?
• Who would call whom when a crisis first occurs?
• Who would be on-site?
• Who makes the decisions?
• Who would communicate with authorities, employees, donors, community stakeholders, and the media?
As you put together a crisis plan, consider:

Top 10 List for General Response Protocol

1. Initiate notifications (usually through a central hotline) - get senior people engaged immediately
2. Secure the site – and gather the facts (create a command center)
   – immediately accounting for all employees
3. Cooperate with authorities – then get out of the way
Prepare your plan

4. Consolidate key messages and spokesperson(s), and consider how to use the media and multiple communications channels
   – communicate openly and honestly, if you don’t have answers, work to get them
   – show concern for victims, employees and other community stakeholders

5. Commit to action

6. Consider indirect audiences (government agencies, Red Cross, non-governmental organizations, government officials, etc.)
Prepare your plan

7. Continue investigation and verify facts
8. Don’t go alone – secure a crisis management team in your crisis planning
9. Review and critique response
10. Update plans annually
**Prepare your plan**

**Common Errors and Best Practices in Crisis Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Error</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make it up as you go along</td>
<td>Establish systems and protocols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only communicate in a crisis</td>
<td>Build a bank of goodwill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait to see if anyone notices</td>
<td>Quick assessment and response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior leadership manages the response</td>
<td>Senior leadership directs and approves the response</td>
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<td>Management in silos</td>
<td>Team-based approach</td>
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<td>Neglect multiple constituencies</td>
<td>Prioritize audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to “spin” out of it</td>
<td>Use ACTS and COMMUNICATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue a press release and consider it done</td>
<td>Use multiple two-way communications channels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leave it to the PR person or the CEO</td>
<td>Multiple spokespeople, common message</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Execute your plan

Non Profit Crisis Examples

Anti-Event Movement

• Group was against certain values of an organization.
• Used a Facebook page to encourage non-attendance at an event.
  – Part of their messages about proceeds of the event were factually wrong
• Worked to get the facts out – strategic about messages (especially on social media channels and with media) and our tone was one of respect about differences of opinion
  – Don’t want to engage in a negative back and forth on Facebook
    • 1) Assess posting
    • 2) Evaluate the opportunity to fix the facts, restore a situation, or monitor only,
    • 3) Respond
Execute your plan

Non Profit Crisis Examples

Anti-Event Movement Continued

- Made sure accurate information is communicated through the social media channels and through media, and were responsive to stakeholder’s questions
- Had the same message through all communications channels
- Ambassadors became the voice of support
- Balanced social media response, with more direct communication to our prime audiences (employees, our event sponsors/keynote participants, volunteers).
Execute your plan

Non Profit Crisis Examples

Protests and Picketing

• Worked with authorities ahead of time, they should be the public point person with protesters
• Made sure existing policies were in place about leafleting, to reference back to our policy
• Prepared with media response, with a tone of respect
Non Profit Crisis Examples

Negative National Media Story
- Reporter had agenda piece – story was presented from the point of view the reporter wanted
- Some of the interviews were edited out of context and a lot of background facts supporting the other viewpoint were not shared in the piece
- Ambassadors responded in support
- Story didn’t negatively impact the business goals of the organization
- Served as an education opportunity to some legislators and other community leaders of some misconceptions and allowed us to arm them with the facts.
- Used OpEd piece in other national mediums to stress facts missing from TV piece.
Non Profit Crisis Examples

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Natural Disaster Planning

Natural Disasters

• We are Minnesotans – tornados, floods, blizzards, droughts are going to happen.

• Natural Disasters’ responses can be planned for in crisis communications plan.
  – Build the positive community relationships with local authorities, Red Cross, government agencies, legislative and community leaders now.

• Put together a command center and response action plans now:
  – employee and stakeholder notification process (contact lists accessible and updated)
  – operational/business continuity steps
  – template communications - media statements, letters to employees/community leaders
  – practice plan – mock crisis situations
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Get on the same page and be nimble

Make sure that your staff is all kept up to date on your communications plan, and that they have a clear understanding of your messaging.

Consider your timing

Strike while the iron’s hot, but not so soon that it looks like you’re capitalizing on a crisis.

Be specific

Don’t use the crisis as an opportunity to do general fundraising for your organization (unless you have a particularly relevant mission). Instead, create a specific fund or give donors a tangible item or event to donate towards.

Partner up

Reach out to other nonprofits (and GiveMN!), even those you view as ‘competitors’ and see how you can work together, whether through joint fundraising, or supporting each other’s programs on the ground.

Close the loop

Keep your supporters and donors updated on the progress you’re making in real time via email and on social media.

SOURCE: Meghan Teich at Big Duck
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Quick response tools
- Set up a Project Page on GiveMN
- Reach supporters via mobile friendly fundraising tools
  - Text to give
  - GiveMN Mobile
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Quick response tools

• Social media
  – Reach out to key influencers
  – Social fundraising through GiveMN “Fundraising Pages”
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Quick response tools

• Matching grants on GiveMN
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Examples

North Minneapolis Tornado – May
Fundraising for Response & Recovery

Examples

Flooding in Duluth -
Natural Disaster Planning

To Summarize

- You are part of running an organization – bad things will occur!
- Consider which ones you’ll encounter and plan for them.
- Minimize the impact and likelihood
- Train people on the front lines – don’t use a crisis to “make up” your processes
- Build goodwill during quiet times (with authorities and your ambassadors)
- Arm employees with media and social media policies
- Involve experts – Padilla has a 24-hour crisis line – 1-877-PR ER 911
- Learn from others’ mistakes and triumphs
- Remember, how you act and communicate during a crisis directly affects your organization in the aftermath
Questions?