

Seven Tips to Communicating More Effectively During a Crisis

1. Listen

- Increase senior management visibility.
- Listen to stakeholders concerns.
- Give attention to those affected.
- Don't let a state of denial get in the way of hearing what people are saying.
- Use active listening and nonverbal skills such as tilting your head slightly, nodding and leaning into the speaker.

2. Develop Messages

- A message is a theme – in a crisis, it should relate directly to the concerns of your stakeholders.
- Most likely stakeholder concerns:
 - What happened?
 - How did it happen?
 - How will it affect me?
 - What can we expect?
 - What should we do?
 - When will normalcy return?

3. Deliver the Messages

- For maximum effect, remember the six Cs of great communication: Clear, concise, correct, concrete, complete and courteous.
- Acknowledge people's fears.
- Don't over reassure or spin the facts to make you look better.
- Explain your actions at every stage.
- Test for understanding.
- Where possible, use short stories, anecdotes, images and metaphors to enhance delivery.

4. Be the First and Most Credible Source of Information

- Provide factual information to your stakeholders before it reaches them through other less reliable sources.
- Be honest and transparent.
- Avoid speculation, impromptu and off-the-cuff comments.
- Reinforce the message through personal communication, blogs and social media.

5. Be Empathetic

- Show empathy in your communications and include it as part of your primary message.
- Talk from the heart – people will remember how you made them feel more than your exact words.
- Keep this in mind: “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” – Teddy Roosevelt

6. Use Nonverbal Communication to Reinforce the Message

- Engage with eye contact.
- Open your body and uncross your arms.
- Use palms up to show openness, receptiveness and honesty.
- Your body language should be consistent with your message.
- For a more detailed handout on the topic of nonverbal communication, visit www.thelanzagroup.com/handouts

7. Provide a Path to the Future

- Have the ability to see opportunity in every difficulty.
- Be committed to a plan for recovery.
- Challenge people to succeed together.
- Show confidence and optimism.
- Most importantly – be passionate about your devotion to the future.

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