



GMA Government Communicators Conference

PLANNING FOR THE INEVITABLE

*What to do when, or better yet,
before, “IT” happens to you*

About Jackson Spalding



160+ EMPLOYEES



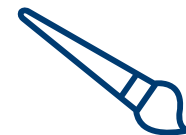
3 OFFICES



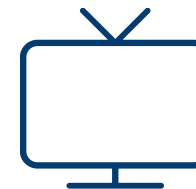
8 OUTPOSTS



7 EMPLOYEE OWNERS



20+ DESIGNERS



30+ FORMER
JOURNALISTS



TOP MIDSIZE AGENCY
TO WORK FOR IN
NORTH AMERICA



35+ CRISIS TEAM
MEMBERS



20% HAVE BEEN AT
JS FOR 10+ YEARS



JSERS SERVE ON
70+ NOT-FOR-PROFIT
BOARDS



90+ MEDIA RELATIONS
PUBLIC RELATIONS
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
FOLKS



YEARS IN BUSINESS

About Jackson Spalding



GeorgiaTransmission



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA



Gwinnett



GEORGIA FORESTRY
FOUNDATION





Dwight Eisenhower

“In battle, plans
are useless but
planning is
essential.”





WHAT IS A CRISIS?

- What about a recent crisis in the news?
- Who reacted well ... and who didn't?
- Does anyone have a personal example to share?



ICE APPROACH



Is it a challenge or a crisis?



What is the threat level?



What is the appropriate response?



A CRISIS IS...

*an emergency situation that **escalates quickly and poses a significant threat** to the reputation, credibility, operations or even the viability of your company.*



CHECKLIST: CRISIS OR CHALLENGE

Does the issue...

Involve a loss in moral authority at the leadership level that will damage the overall credibility of the organization internally & externally?

Involve multiple stakeholders?

Have social media scalability?

Have national news relevance?

Foster emotional repercussions both inside & outside the business?

Demonstrate repetitive failure?



CRISIS OR CHALLENGE?

Everything feels like a crisis when it happens to you.

Challenge

Major road floods due to heavy rain

Injury of a child at local park

Crisis

Major road floods due to water main break and lapse in maintenance

Serious injury of a child attributed to faulty playground equipment



ICE APPROACH

STEP

1
IDENTIFY

Is it a challenge or a
crisis?

STEP

2
CATEGORIZE

What is the threat
level?

STEP

3
ENGAGE

What is the appropriate
response?



ICE APPROACH

CATEGORIZE

High Threat: Issues in this category require C-level executive involvement

Moderate Threat: Assess, upgrade or downgrade based on gravity of issue

Low Threat: Watch and see; monitor and work with relevant departments and leadership



Is it a challenge or a crisis?



What is the threat level?



What is the appropriate response?



SPEED
of Response

STRENGTH
of Spokesperson

SUBSTANCE
of Message



CRISIS MESSAGE EQUATION

Message = Emotion + Situation + Action

$$M = E + S + A$$

EMOTION

How do you feel about this?

SITUATION

What is the latest update?

ACTION

What are the steps you're taking for improvement?



RECENT CRISIS STATEMENT EXAMPLE

PDQ Chicken Restaurants credit-card breach

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Caring for our customers is a top priority, and once we suspected a possible breach, we acted immediately to address the situation and stop the breach. We initiated an investigation and engaged a cybersecurity firm that conducted a comprehensive forensic review of the attack. We reported the breach to law enforcement and continue to work with authorities and state regulators. We have taken steps to further strengthen the security of our systems to help prevent this type of incident from happening again.



HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

I continue to be heartbroken as more employees have come forward to share what they've been going through. Our aim is to know the whole truth. To that end, I am continuing to conduct an internal investigation and to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials. My door is open to anyone who has information we should know.



The good news about bad news is that people are paying attention.

Despite your best consistent communications efforts, people may not be paying attention when all is well.

Crisis response is organizational before it is communication.

A crisis is an opportunity to demonstrate your organization's values.

- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Responsiveness
- ✓ Preparation



CRISIS COMMUNICATION BASICS

Before, during and after a crisis, you must be **active**.

Before – vulnerability assessment, crisis response team

During – vigilance and communication

After – assessment and alignment



PREPARATION

- Conduct a risk assessment
 - What keeps you up at night?
- Consider the worst
- What areas do you have less control over?
- What are the industry concerns?
 - What has gone wrong for others?
- Action steps
- Communication steps



CRISIS COMMUNICATION BASICS

Convene the crisis response team

Determine known facts

Draft holding statement

Monitor social media and respond per existing policy

Prepare for traditional media interest

Reflect your values in what you say and do



AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

“Every successful organization creates an emotional connection.”

- ✓ Apologize sincerely
- ✓ Fix what needs to be rectified
- ✓ Humbly move forward
- ✓ Report on progress as needed



SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS MANAGEMENT

What is a social media crisis?

The public knows more than you

- ✓ You learn about the issue from a social media post

Public sentiment has shifted to the negative

- ✓ It's not a crisis when your regular critics post
- ✓ It can be a crisis when others begin posting

The issue could damage the organization's reputation



SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Post ASAP – even if just a vague acknowledgement

Keep the updates coming

- ✓ This is a real-time environment
- ✓ Perfection is paralysis

It's important to be fast – it's more important to be right

Have a plan and an escalation model

- ✓ Escalation is the ramping up of negative comments online

You never win against an angry mob

- ✓ Don't argue
- ✓ Don't let emotions rule



SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Response Plan

- ✓ Acknowledge the issue
- ✓ Respond in a timely manner
- ✓ Uniformity and personalization
- ✓ Know when to go offline
- ✓ What can be hidden
 - Profanity and obscenity
 - Indecent, sexually explicit or pornographic posts
 - Threats, personal attacks, abuse, defamatory or inflammatory language
 - Discriminatory posts of any kind



KEY REMINDERS

- DEVELOP A SMALL RAPID RESPONSE TEAM WITH ROLE CLARITY
- PRACTICE YOUR PLAN
- KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SIMPLE
- SHOW APPROPRIATE EMOTION
- KEEP YOUR BUSINESS FOCUS
- REMEMBER, NOTHING MOVES FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF TRUST



Questions?