

Navigating Crises So The Media Doesn't Break Your Brand or Business

David Jahr December 07, 2017



David Jahr writes that CEOs, marketing executives and entrepreneurs should plan ahead for crises so they know "how to be at your best when its needed the most."

Crises awaits every business, so planning ahead helps CEOs and other spokespeople prepare to be at their best, when it's needed the most -- 5 Guidelines

([Newswire.net](https://www.newswire.net) -- December 7, 2017) -- Sexual harassment's recent #MeToo campaign has thrown numerous brands, businesses and personalities into a "crisis" that will either break, shape or benefit them. The difference will be how well the brands were prepared, and how well they responded to internal and external audiences, and especially the traditional and social media.

Today, perhaps more than ever, businesses must plan for crises of all kinds, even for those that appear to "come out of nowhere." However, there are guidelines and public relations strategies that advises CEOs, marketing executives and entrepreneurs how to be at your best when its needed the most.

In my 25 years, I've been pulled into a number of PR crises on behalf of clients, for example:

- Addressing Hurricane Irma's impact on Saw Palmetto crop in Florida
- NFL concussion and drug abuse lawsuits, representing 3,500 athletes and advisors in the case
- Avoiding a financial battle with the 800 lb. gorilla competitor
- Rebuilding from fire that burned down manufacturing plant, inventory and fatalities
- Sexual harassment lawsuit that threatened a community uproar

This experience has taught me to be alert, and ask the difficult questions **before** anyone else does or anything comes up. It can be uncomfortable when addressing questions and finding earnest replies, but it's a critical exercise in today's age of social media where one bad review can ruin a business.

Considering the difficulty of planning for the inevitable and everything imaginable, here are a few guidelines to navigating crises and winning public opinion.

1. **Know the Rules.** We have to agree on a framework for understanding this conversation. Loosely interpreting Walter Lippman's famous "Triangular Relationship" of how public opinion is formed in the media: An **action** causes a public to create a **perception**, which drives their **behavior**.

For example, media reports of the alleged misconduct among noteworthy TV personalities may ultimately undermine their future — example: Netflix recently suspended production of additional House of Cards episodes due to issues involving the show's star Kevin Spacey.

2. **Face the Truth.** The best way to win over media and public perception is with the expeditious delivery of the truth, cooperation and maintaining a value of transparency. Task your resident writer or PR professional with preparing 3-5 "core messages" that will be points to emphasize that support the brand based on the facts. Receive the best media training you can afford, to come across as authentically as your message. And, so your message doesn't get lost

because of poor delivery.

3. Plan for Each Type of Crisis. Although every crisis differs, they come in four categories to plan for:

- Imminent - Threats you can imagine, inevitable
- Immediate - Unexpected, sudden crises
- Emerging - New threats that develop
- Sustained - Persistent cases with modulating public opinion

4. Plan for the Worst. Imagine realistic scenarios for your business handling the following types of crises:

- Natural
- Technological
- Accidental
- Crimes of malevolence
- Management control, succession
- Management judgement
- Confrontational

5. Avoid these Traps.

- Hesitation — Perceptions develop while waiting to respond.
- Obfuscation — Confusing matters further only leads to a negative perception.
- Retaliation — Increasing tensions can add weight to negative perceptions.
- Equivocation — Ambiguous language comes across as dishonest.
- Pontification — Creates vulnerability should facts tell different story.
- Confrontation — Can give power to the alternative position.
- Litigation — Costly to maintain positive perception through lengthy lawsuits.

Lastly, surround yourself with quality people you can trust. Crises tend to bring out all kinds behaviors and responses, so even if you aren't ready for the next crisis, you know who you can call for help.

In my practice, I work with very talented experts in crisis communications, like Amy Hesser of Hesser Communications based in Chicago, who was named as one of "The Top 25 Most Powerful Women in the New Economy," by *i-Street Magazine*, and *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

"It's important for companies of all sizes to recognize how critical and permanent everything that appears about them in the public realm really is today. Whether it's a positive article or a negative one, it's going to come up via search for the foreseeable future and impact a given brand's ability to do business very directly. That's why we recommend media coaching for company spokespersons as a prophylactic measure - before a crisis hits."

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About David Jahr, APR

David Jahr, APR is a distinguished ghostwriter and public relations PR master promoting the mind, body and soul. He has helped write and/or launch three *New York Times* best-selling books, and related websites. This includes *The Daniel Plan* (danielplan.com) with best-selling celebrity authors Rick Warren, Drs. Mehmet Oz, Daniel G. Amen and Mark Hyman. David has more than 25 years experience representing some of the largest corporations in the world, familiar brand names, new company startups and high-profile celebrities and experts. The "APR" initials represent *Accredited in Public Relations* by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), recognizing experience and education in the field. [Connect with David here.](#)

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