Crisis Communications Team Charter and Strategy Development

Crisis Communications Team Charter and Strategy Development[1]

As identified in Chapter 2; section 2.2 – Guidelines to develop a crisis and issue management strategy (page 23), three groups are traditionally involved in the development and implementation of a crisis communications strategy:

- The Executive Oversight Board strategically plans the organization’s crisis communications policy, including developing the Crisis Communications Strategy and chartering the Crisis Communications Team.
- The Crisis Communications Team determines and enacts the communications tactics best suited to the crisis situation. More specific responsibilities are outlined in this charter and in the Crisis Communications Plan.
- The management in charge of the area that is involved in the situation that brought about /most impacted by the crisis is responsible for resolving the situation and for keeping the CCT informed with the latest information on the status of the crisis. The Senior Executive for the affected program (if program-specific) or designee joins the Crisis Communications Team for the duration of the crisis.

Crisis Definition

A crisis is a significant event that prompts substantial, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny and has the potential to damage the organization’s reputation and image. A crisis could be precipitated by an emergency or a controversy.

- An emergency is a fire, hurricane, crime or other event that presents a threat and typically involves a response from police, fire or emergency medical personnel. These types of crises are typically handled by the Office of Administration as part of the organization’s Emergency Response and Evacuation procedures.
- A controversy better describes events such as a case of early data release or questions of data veracity from prominent figures.

This example focuses primarily on controversies and the approach to address external communications for high-profile emergency situations.

Crisis Communications Team Charter

Mission

The Crisis Communications Team is the central element in the organization’s Crisis Communications Plan. The Team determines and enacts the communications tactics best suited to the crisis situation.

Authority

The Crisis Communications Team has the authority to:

- Communicate with political appointees and other agencies on the situation
- Activate a crisis communications response
- Communicate with stakeholders during a crisis
- Determine when a crisis is over

Membership

The Team will consist of the statistical institution’s senior management officials. At a minimum, the core team will include:

- Head of the statistical institution
- Deputy head
- Director of Public Affairs
- Senior Executive for Communications or designee
- Senior Executive for Administration or designee

Additional members may be called upon when deemed necessary by the core Team:

- Senior Executive for Information Technology or designee
- Senior Executive for Field Operations or designee and Regional Executive (if in their Region) or designee
- Senior Executive for affected program (if program-specific) or designee
Roles and Responsibilities

Once developed, the specific duties of the Team will be found in the Crisis Communications Plan. In summary, the Crisis Communications Team will:

- work with the appropriate key personnel responsible for managing and resolving the crisis
- gather information and identify what, if any, actions should be taken
- determine whether it is in the best interest of the institution and the public to issue a response;
- if action is required, tailor the response to that specific crisis by creating and disseminating key messages and working with the media
- respond to key audiences in an open and honest manner
- identify and implement necessary corrective actions to address the situation and protect the mission and reputation of the statistical institution; and
- evaluate the crisis communications process and improve methods for potential future crisis communications.

[1] This example is based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Crisis Communications Plan. It has been edited to remove personally identifying information and to clarify some of the specifics of the U.S. statistical system. For questions or further enquiries, please contact the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.