Communication Crisis Response Examples

Overview

When a statistical organization is faced with a communication crisis situation, the following steps can be followed to ensure the situation is handled effectively and efficiently.

In any situation, it is best to first check the Crisis Communications Contact List for names and phone numbers. Keep in mind that all statements must be approved before they can be used. Below you will find examples. Please insert information or select alternative wording when you see (statement in bold).

Standby statements are initial announcements stating what is known and what has been verified. They provide the institution with time to properly assess the situation and organize appropriate responses specific to the event.

Example 1 - Generic Communication Crisis Scenario Response[1]

The following example offers advice on how to generically approach a communication crisis situation and the steps to be taken within the first eight hours.

Steps to take:

1. Determine if this is a crisis. If media are involved or if the statistical institution’s reputation could be impacted, it should be handled as a crisis: Notify Crisis Communications Team (within 5 minutes of report).
2. Verify the facts of the situation (who, what, when, where and how) (within 10 minutes).
3. Depending on the urgency of the situation, post an initial statement on appropriate channels (e.g., website, Twitter) and share the same statement with the media (within 10 minutes):
4. Conduct the appropriate notifications (within 10 - 30 minutes). If the media are involved, notify political stakeholders immediately (e.g., the Minister’s Office).
5. Issue a standby statement to the subscription list, place it on website and place a link on Twitter or other appropriate social media platforms (within an hour or when confirmed):
6. Internal communications: Use the standby statement with an additional paragraph, to notify employees and to allow them to answer calls (within one hour):
7. As more information becomes available, the Director of Public Affairs will issue an additional statement (within an hour or as information is available):
8. Prepare key messages explaining what happened. These key messages should also be used as recommended speaking points for political stakeholders, if deemed appropriate by senior management (within three hours):

We are aware of recent public reports concerning the Agency. We are reviewing the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available.

The Agency is aware of (what happened) at (location) involving (who) that occurred today at (time). We have no further information at this time. If and when we do, we will issue another statement.

The Agency confirms that (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time). We have no further information at this time. If and when we do, we will issue another statement.

All questions from the public about this statement should be directed to the Director of Public Affairs, (name and phone number).

Regarding (what happened) at (location) involving (who) which occurred today at the Agency, further review shows (reasons for event) and (resolutions of event).

What happened (clear, concise and factual information) and action to be (or has been) taken.
9. If the statistical institution is taking action, monitor mitigation actions taken by the management in charge of the crisis area to determine if any additional communications are warranted (ongoing).

10. Monitor media coverage throughout to determine what is being said, by whom, how and when. Keep political stakeholders, the Crisis Communications Team and appropriate officials informed and determine when the crisis is over (ongoing).

[1] Ibid.

Example 2 – Specific Communication Crisis Scenario Response[1]

The following is an example of a high impact crisis situation involving an employee of a statistical institution. This example offers advice on how to approach the situation and the steps to be taken within the first eight hours.

Steps to take:

1. If there is media coverage, Contact Crisis Communications Team as soon as the issue has been identified (within 5 minutes of report).
2. Verify the facts (who, what, when, where and how), identify who, if any, police authorities are involved, and obtain the contact person’s name within these authorities (within 10 minutes).
3. If it is a law enforcement matter, contact the Solicitor’s Office (within 10 minutes).
4. Notify political stakeholders (e.g., the Minister’s Office) (within 10 minutes).
5. If it is a law enforcement matter,
   a) The Director of Public Affairs will use the following standby statement using the appropriate or all available medium (e.g., phone, email, text) (within 30 minutes or as needed):

   We are aware of the incident being reported in the media with potential involvement by an Agency employee. Because this is a law enforcement matter, (name/title) of the (law enforcement authority) will be handling all further inquiries about this case.

   b) Internal communications: The Director of Public Affairs will notify the Senior Executives of the event and will remind managers to direct questions about this statement to the Director (within 30 minutes).

6. If it is not a law enforcement matter (such as a social media blunder by an employee), but media are requesting information, direct all inquiries to the Director of Public Affairs.
   a) Initial statement to be used by the Director of Public Affairs using the appropriate or all available medium (e.g., phone, email, text) (within 10 minutes):

   We are aware of the incident being reported in the media with potential involvement by an Agency employee. Because this is a law enforcement matter, (name/title) of the (law enforcement authority) will be handling further inquiries about this case.

   Any additional questions from the public about this statement should be directed to the Director of Public Affairs, (name and phone number).

   b) Once the facts are confirmed, the Director of Public Affairs will issue a standby statement using the appropriate or all available medium (e.g., phone, email, text) (within 30 minutes):

   We are aware of the incident being reported in the media with potential involvement by an Agency employee. The Agency will look into this and we will get back to you as additional information becomes available.

   c) Internal communications: The Director of Public Affairs will notify the Senior Executives of the event and will remind managers to direct questions about this statement to the Director (within 30 minutes):

   We are aware of the incident being reported in the media with potential involvement by an Agency employee. The Agency can confirm that this person is an employee. I cannot provide further comment on personnel matters.
We are aware of the incident being reported in the media with potential involvement by an Agency employee. The Agency can confirm that this person is an employee. I cannot provide further comment on personnel matters.

Any additional questions from the public about this statement should be directed to the Director of Public Affairs, (name and phone number).

7. Monitor media coverage throughout to determine what is being said, by whom, how and when. Keep political stakeholders, the Crisis Communications Team and appropriate officials informed and determine when the crisis is over (ongoing).

[1] Ibid.