



## Managing Communications in a Continuing Crisis

Communication in a continuing crisis involves three key concepts to success:

- **Transparency**
  - Who’s making decisions?
  - How are those decisions made?
  - Where do I get more information?
  - When will that happen?
- **Candor**
  - No apologies, no sugar-coating or irrationally optimistic projections.
  - No conditional declarations.
- **Credibility**
  - Pay attention to science and authorities in a position to know.
  - Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization websites, for example.

People will *trust* you if they can see how decisions are made and information is gathered, if they see you and your organization as candid, and if they believe what you’re saying is true. So, how is a continuing crisis different from managing a business?

- Surprise.
- Insufficient information.
- An escalating flow of events.
- Impatience on the part of many.

Ten best practices for communicating in a crisis:

1. **Get the facts**
  - Deal from an informed position.
  - Separate fact from rumor.
  - Document what you know for certain and what you don’t know.
  - Become *the* reliable source of information for your stakeholders.
  - Keep the information flowing.
2. **Determine the problems for your stakeholders**
  - Short term, long term.
  - Focus on those problems you can fix.

3. **Put someone in charge**
  - With responsibility, authority, resources.
  - Tell people who it is.
4. **Assemble a team**
  - Staff it with required expertise.
  - Large enough to be effective, small enough to be nimble.
  - Isolate team members from day-to-day responsibilities.
5. **Develop a strategy**
  - For resolving your stakeholders' most serious issues.
  - For dealing with affected parties.
  - For communicating
6. **Centralize communications**
  - Incoming communication provides intelligence.
  - Outgoing communication provides some measure of control.
7. **Limit the number of spokespersons**
  - They should be knowledgeable, authoritative, responsive, and patient.
  - No more than three: they should talk to each other regularly.
  - One of them should be awake.
8. **Consider all markets**
  - Local, regional, national, global.
9. **Think about your stakeholders**
  - Employees and their families.
  - Management.
  - Suppliers and vendors.
  - Contractors.
  - Customers and clients.
  - Creditors.
  - Regulators (consider filing an SEC 8-K, as necessary).
  - Elected officials.
10. **Expect the best, Plan for the worst**
  - Commit to resolving issues within your control to the very best of your ability.
  - Anticipate that it will get worse before it gets better.

**Communication is your primary tool in a crisis.** Your day-to-day guidance in three words: Transparency, candor, and credibility