

NAVIGATING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

TURNER
THE SHIPYARD COLLECTIVE



INTRODUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

We have diverse and comprehensive experience across industries managing issues and crisis communications - we know what to do in the most difficult of times. From natural disasters and discrimination and harassment claims, to government mandates and hail damage, to executive absences and fake news, we're here for you.

1

PLAN AHEAD

- Issues we know about
- Issues out of left field

2

REGULAR TRAINING

3

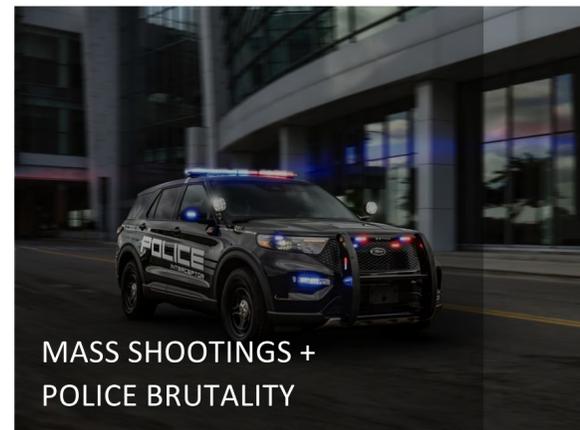
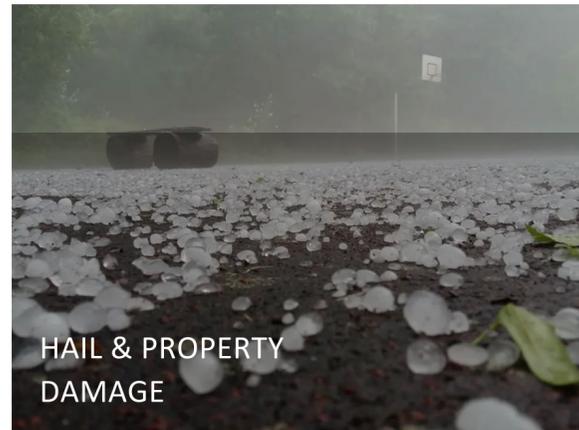
RECOVERY FOCUS

4

CLEAR PROTOCOLS FOR QUICK RESPONSE

5

MONITOR IN REAL TIME



AGENDA

Why Crisis Communications Matters,
Assessing each Unique Situation

Navigating Spokespeople, Transparency
vs. Legal Risk, Stakeholder Comms

Crisis Level Tiers, Media and Social Media
Response Protocols

Action: Plan, Prepare, Train

Q&A + Discussion



In today's information-saturated world, defending your reputation is crucial. Trust is low, pressure from interest groups is high, and employees demand transparency and equity. Consumers are actively listening, judging brands on everything from customer service to employee treatment and sustainability efforts.

Responding to media is never 'one and done' - it takes a strategic approach to see beyond the question to the implications and long-term consequences.

THREE KEY FACTORS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS



The commitment of the corporate exec team



Experienced communication strategists who understand audience + channels



Sync of Execs, Comms, HR, Legal

WHY CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS MATTERS

TRAVEL IS VULNERABLE

Weather, health,
politics

DIGITAL AGE

Complaints are in real
time and public, poor
responses go viral in
minutes

IMPACT

Crisis response
impacts brand
trust, bookings
and recovery

SO, HOW DO YOU
KNOW YOU'RE IN A
CRISIS?

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN A CRISIS?

1.

Is there a disruption in your normal day to day?

Did you stop doing something to manage an issue?

2.

Is it really a crisis?

Did your source overreact?

What is the blast radius?

Who is aware?

Which audiences?

Not every difficult situation is a crisis; our goal is to keep sensitive situations from escalating to a crisis.

HOW DO YOU ASSESS
THE BLAST RADIUS?

AUDIENCE MAPPING

Where did
it run?

Which stakeholders
saw it?

Assess Media Outlets, Journalists,
Social Platforms, Stakeholder
Groups

EMPATHY MAPPING

What's driving the
emotional response?

What's being said by
each audience?

Assess what is being written. Make
sure you have all the
facts on the situation.



United Airlines' passenger removal incident

In April 2017, [Dr David Dao was forcibly removed from a United Airlines flight](#) that was accidentally overbooked.



United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz says he felt "ashamed" when hearing about the violent removal of a passenger from an overbooked flight and promised the situation will never happen again.



BACKGROUND

Flight 3411 was overbooked and United had to remove passengers from the flight at Chicago O'Hare Airport.

Dr. David Dao was removed by force, injuring him in the process. Other passengers recorded the incident.

HOW DID THE COMPANY REACT?

Initially, the CEO put blame on the passenger for his reaction. Internal emails were leaked, blaming the passenger rather than taking accountability.

Eventually, the United Airlines CEO apologized to Dr. David Dao and the rest of the passengers.

EVALUATION

Poor initial company reaction.

Accountability and empathy should have been lead reaction, followed by a refund and credit.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 👉 React quickly and honestly and apologize for errors.
- 👉 Apologizing can mitigate some damage, but it's the initial reaction that has the biggest impact.
- 👉 Give something in return, like a refund or credit; take real action to show you take the blame and promise to do better by all customers.



Airbnb - COVID-19 pandemic response

COVID-19 shook the entire world, and hospitality was one of the industries that was almost killed.



BACKGROUND

Airbnb needed to support hosts and, at the same time, allow guests to cancel their bookings.

HOW DID COMPANY REACT?

Changed cancellation policy, allowing refunds for bookings before 3/14/20. Guests relieved, hosts felt unsupported.

Extended policies, allowing guests to rebook at a later date.

\$250 million support fund to compensate hosts for losses. Introduced health and safety guidelines.

CEO spoke to hosts and guests, ensuring they could come unharmed.

EVALUATION

Transparency and rapid action saved public perception.

While initial backlash was hard, it was largely mitigated by the financial aid. The company swiftly recovered, despite pandemic.

LESSONS LEARNED

👉 Stay flexible, communicate clearly, and support your entire community, even if it means putting your money at risk. Acting quickly can mitigate the chatter online and in the media. Investing to prevent a bigger crisis can paradoxically save brands more in the end.



American Airlines DC crash



"I'd like to express our deep sorrow about these events. This a difficult day for all of us at American Airlines. And our efforts now are focused entirely on the needs of our passengers, crew members, partners, first responders, along with their families and loved ones."

American Airlines CEO Robert Isom

BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2025, an [American Airlines flight collided midair with an Army Black Hawk helicopter near Washington, D.C.](#), resulting in 67 fatalities. The tragedy was an immediate test of the airline's crisis comms strategy.

HOW DID THE COMPANY REACT?

Speed and Immediate Action:

First hour: Released official statement confirming incident, announcing helpline for families, CEO released video with condolences, outlining priorities.

Transparency + Empathy:

Consistent updates via dedicated webpage ensuring stakeholders—media, passengers' families, public—received verified information. Full cooperation with NTSB.

EVALUATION

While some hesitate to disclose details in real time, American struck a balance between maintaining confidentiality during investigations and keeping the public informed.

The CEO's approach humanized the company, reinforcing its priority was not just operational recovery the well-being of those impacted.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 👉 Be Prepared – Crisis simulations and response training should be integral to corporate strategy.
- 👉 Act Fast – The first few hours post-crisis define how the narrative and brand reputation.
- 👉 Stay Transparent – Trust is built on honesty and timely updates.
- 👉 Lead with Empathy – Acknowledging human loss and distress is non-negotiable.

When speed,
empathy and
transparency are
critical for the
response...

How do you
navigate the
spokesperson?
and transparency
vs. legal risk?



SPOKESPERSON CONSIDERATIONS

- Use the President/CEO when it's a big issue. Can be watered down if you use the CEO for everything. And use top executives for other situations.
- Have multiple options due to availability, real time needs and expertise. You need a bench.
- Even if CEO isn't serving as spokesperson, be sure the CEO is known and trusted. (LYFT)
- Don't let crisis be first time audiences hear your spokesperson(s).
- Corporate statements not relevant today, need a leader, not entity.
- Invest in MEDIA TRAINING (especially. broadcast); video and live interviews can go poorly if person isn't trained.



Erin Brewer
CFO, Lyft



David Risher
CEO, Lyft



Elizabeth Magil
University of Pennsylvania



Claudine Gay
Harvard

NAVIGATING TRANSPARENCY VS. LEGAL RISK



How transparent should you be?

- It depends
- Accountability measures vs. apology

Don't speculate or assign blame

Use neutral, fact-based language:

“We are investigating...”

“Safety is our top priority...”

Always loop in legal for approvals, yet be sure

consumer trust and brand reputation is at the forefront.

CEO/HR/COMMS typically craft statement, lawyer approves.

Ex: University presidents

If asked for statement or interview, exec or comms respond.





STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

Work with comms team on messaging and timeline for each stakeholder group.

- Don't forget your employees are your most important stakeholders. Be sure they receive info quickly, execute regular town halls, be in front of workers.
- Training is key - arm your people managers.
- Work with comms on pathing of messages.

Own where to respond

- Look at blast radius for where you need your message to go - which audiences, which avenues.
- If issue is on Reddit, don't respond on Reddit. Depending on level of situation, bring it to your own social channels or podcast or respond via a trust journalist.



CRISIS RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

You have a situation... what now?

- ✓ Verify Incident Internally (guest safety)
- ✓ Response Team Activated
- ✓ Align DMO/Property/Brand, Corp, Comms
- ✓ Assess Media + Social Sensitivity for Reactive/Proactive Needs
- ✓ Holding Statement Drafted
- ✓ Decide Who/When/How to Communicate (or not)
- ✓ Internal Alerts Go Out
- ✓ Align Comms Across Teams, Stakeholders, Channels - Employees, Visitors/Guests, Media, Investors

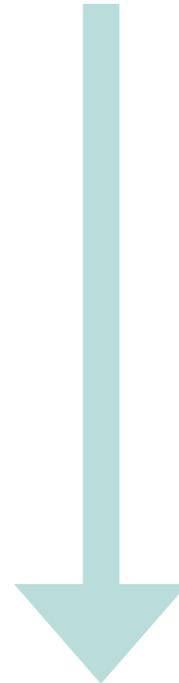


WHAT HAPPENS ONLINE, DOESN'T STAY ONLINE.

Online interaction can color a consumer's perception of a brand. It can also take on a life of its own, landing brand mentions in publications and in the mouths of potential consumers.

Knowing how and when to step in or speak up (or when not to) can have a real world impact on current and future sales.

FROM SOCIAL POST



TO FRONT PAGE



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



MANAGING PUBLIC COMMENTS

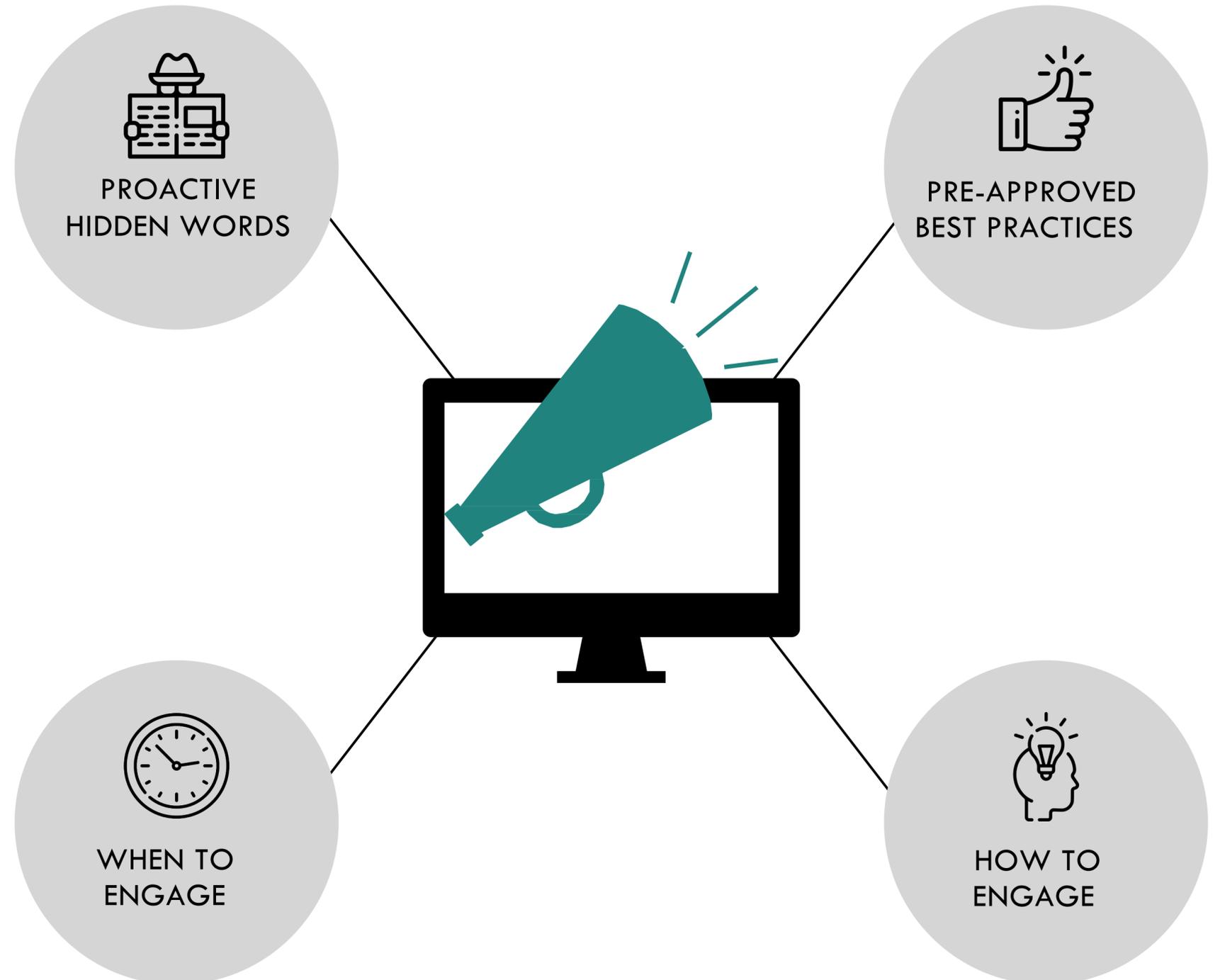
Proactive Hidden Words

- Meta (Facebook, Instagram, Threads) allows you to build a list of up to 1,000 words, phrases and emojis to block from comments on its page.
- Proactively hiding words associated with divisive social causes, political campaigns and geopolitical conflicts protects the health of your page.

MANAGING DMs

How to Engage

- Know that *your responses are not truly private*. Your private responses should be as thoughtful as your public comments.



ARE YOU AND YOUR TEAM PREPARED?

- ✓ Are you ensuring your comms team not only has a seat at the table during a crisis, but is informed on all potential threats?
- ✓ Do all of your frontline workers know who is authorized to speak to media, and where to direct inquiries? Are they regularly briefed - or reminded - not to engage directly with journalists?
- ✓ Do you have crisis comms plans for all scenarios?
- ✓ Have your teams been media trained?
- ✓ Have you invested in your employee engagement programs to help protect each brand?



DO'S & DON'TS



HOW TO PREPARE

- Dress appropriately, dependent on style of program / shoot location
- Set your space: In-person or Zoom interviews
- Be aware of your surroundings

WHAT DO I SAY?

- Factual information
- Information that does not change
- Be honest
- Be confident
- Be real
- Be succinct
- Give your response context by rephrasing the question
- Provide a statisticProvide a relatable example that supports your opinion

QUICK TIPS



BROADCAST

- Be comfortable, sitting or standing
- What does your scene look like?
- Don't fidget or make large movements
- If you mess up, start over



PRINT

- Don't expect to see a draft
- It may feel more casual than you expect
- Phone interviews are fine



RADIO OR PODCAST

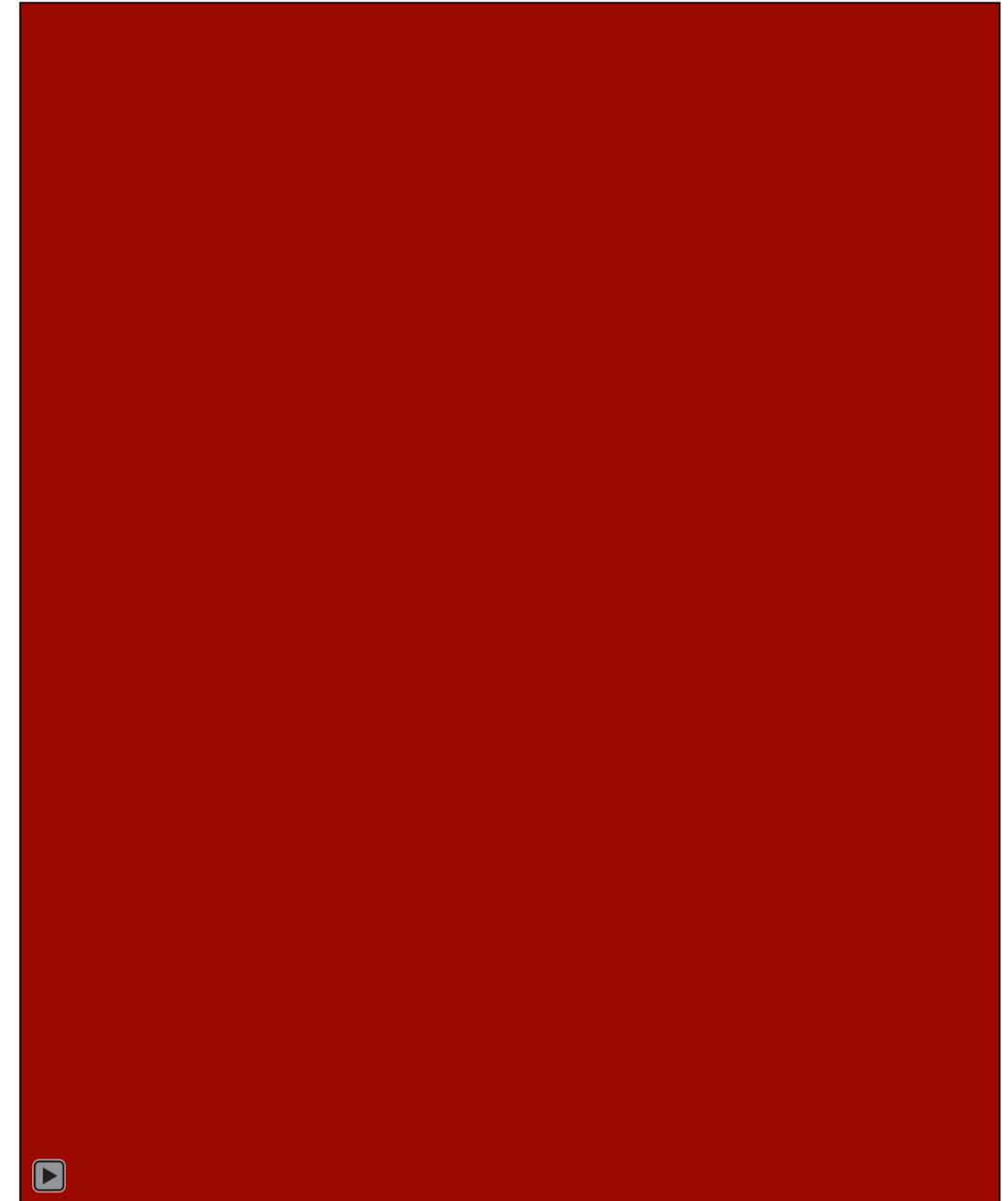
- Know if it will be live or recorded
- Think about verbal vs. non-verbal communication
- Try to minimize unnecessary noises



DO

- DO be professional. Remember that you are representing yourself and your brand.
- DO be pleasant and positive. Smile.
- DO respond to questions in a clear and concise manner. If you are asked a “yes” or “no” question, it is recommended that you keep going. Say something like, “Yes, and you should also know...” or, “No, but let me elaborate...”
- DO phrase your responses as headlines or easily quotable remarks, without too much detail. Follow up with more detail only if the reporter specifically requests it. Try to remember, less is more.
- DO take the high road when it comes to competitors. Never attack other organizations, people or competitors.

- DO share your personal experiences. One of the strongest and most credible forms of evidence is personal experience.
- DO dress appropriately.
- DO place an equal amount of importance on priorities. A reporter may give you an “a or b” or an “either/or” question. For example, what is more important, student safety or providing a comfortable environment? In this case, say all options are equally important.
- DO speak plainly. Try not to use industry jargon, as the reader/viewer will not understand it, even if the reporter does.
- DO make an effort to clarify any slip-ups or statements you said in error. You have every right to start the interview over (if it is pre-recorded). Reporters are used to this.





DON'T

- DO NOT ask the reporter to kill a story. It won't happen.
- DO NOT tell a reporter what is and is not newsworthy.
- DO NOT warp facts. The truth will come out eventually.
- DO NOT make statements "off the record." Anything said to a reporter can be used.
- DO NOT be long winded. Succinct sound bites control your message.

- DO NOT say "no comment." This is almost invariably reported as a refusal to make a statement and makes you look bad, guilty or uncooperative.
- DO NOT attempt to cover up a mistake or mislead the media.
- DO NOT speculate, hypothesize or agree with a reporter who does so.
- DO NOT comment on what others have said, particularly if you haven't seen or heard it, and never verify something that might not be true.

- DO NOT play favorites among reporters – it creates resentment.
- DO NOT complain about minor errors.
- DO NOT complain if your story is never used. There is no guarantee that an interview will always result in a story, but most of the time, your efforts will pay off.
- DO NOT waste reporter's time, either by being late, or by not having the facts or a story ready to discuss.
- DO NOT attack or blame other organizations, other people or competitors.

IT'S CALLED PRACTICE

Practice key messages in front
of mirror

Take notice of your gestures,
expressions

Relay your key messages to a friend,
spouse, etc.

Make sure it feels natural, take out the
jargon

Ask for honest feedback



THE “ISSUES” CHECKLIST

Use this when a potential situation arises as a checklist for what the PR/comms team will need to know:

- ✓ Is the issue confirmed and verified? (All details will need to be shared with PR team, including detailed timeline of incident)
- ✓ Does it involve guest safety, staff conduct or public operations?
- ✓ Has it been escalated to corporate/HR/legal?
- ✓ Has it been escalated to outside investigators (ie. Police, Park Rangers)?
- ✓ Is this part of a larger National Park system issue? (ie. does NPS need to be briefed?)
- ✓ Should media monitoring be turned on for this situation?
- ✓ Is there active or pending media interest?
- ✓ Is a media holding statement needed?
- ✓ Who is responsible for reviewing/approving media statement?
- ✓ Who is the media spokesperson for this situation?
- ✓ Is this being addressed on owned and/or social channels?
- ✓ Do social channels need to be “turned off” for the duration of this issue?
- ✓ Are all internal team members briefed and aligned on issue?
- ✓ Who needs to be briefed on approved message points?
- ✓ How are employees being briefed on response (or reminded not to respond)?
- ✓ Have talking points and Q&A been developed?



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION





TURNER

**THANK
YOU!**

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?
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