

Shell Foundation



Applying Business Thinking to Global Development Challenges

Crisis Communications

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Crisis communications strategy

- Objectives of a crisis communications strategy
- Taking a strategic approach

Objectives

Why have a crisis communications strategy?

- Minimise reputational damage
- Maintain credibility and trust of customers, employees and investors
- Respond in line with the wider business principles
- Continuous improvement of business

Taking a strategic approach

1

MITIGATION

- *What measures have you in place to prevent crisis occurring?*
- *Are there any gaps in your business operations that leave you open to risk?*

2

RESPONSE

- *Do you have a formal mechanism for responding to incidents?*
- *When are communications needed? how should they be structured? Who are the priority audiences?*

3

LIABILITY

- *What are your legal obligations/liabilities?*

4

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- *How do you ensure you learn from any incidents, in order to improve prevention and response?*

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1. Prevention measures & risk mitigation

Technical

Relationships/Partnerships – Accreditation, endorsement
Product quality assurance – certifications, standards

Process

Emergency contacts, Issue reporting, Record keeping

People

Selection – Experience, professionalism, knowledge
Training – Qualifications, certification, ongoing development
Equipment – safety equipment
Communications tools/knowledge

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2. Emergency Action – Reporting form

Facts	Time of incident			
	Date of incident			
	Location of incident			
	Person(s) involved			
	Time/Date reported			
	Method of reporting			
	Incident description (include as many details as possible)			
	Identify immediate causes			
	Immediate action taken			
Internal information	Employee information			
	Name			
	Emergency contact			
	Who is responsible for contacting?			
Action	Planned action/ Measures taken			
Communications	Communication required (external)	Holding TIME/DATE	Full TIME/DATE	Update TIME/DATE
	Communication required (internal)	TIME/DATE		

Emergency Action – Communication considerations

It is important to distinguish between what incidents do/do not require external communications.

Before developing external communications ask yourself the following questions to assess if this an appropriate action:

- 1) **What is the severity of the incident?** Low, medium, high
- 2) **Have you ascertained the key facts?**
- 3) **Has the incident already been reported publically?**
- 4) **If it hasn't...what is the publicity risk?** Low, medium, high
- 5) **Could your statement affect your liability?** i.e. deemed to be responsible
- 6) **What would be a reasonable response time for this?** Immediately, <2 hours, <6 hours, 24/48
- 7) **Will the communication improve the situation?** *i.e. reduce discussion on social media/provide greater clarity?*
- 8) **Will the communication make the situation worse?** *i.e. invite more discussion, create debate. And do you have the resources to manage this?*
- 9) **What communication channel would be best?** Website, PR statement, social media post, in-person appearance, media interview

Framework for deciding appropriate communications

This is just illustrative to highlight the different approaches you *could* take depending on the severity of the incident and who reported it. This would require more discussion/development.

	Staff reported	Customer reported	Social media report
Incident severity: Low e.g. xxx	1) Inform SMT (weekly meeting)	1) Inform team (weekly meeting) 2) Customer service team call customer within 4 hours of incident	1) Make contact with 'poster' (shown as a reply) within 24 hrs 2) Contact poster privately to resolve issues 3) Encourage 'poster' to share your actions
Incident severity: Medium e.g. xxx	1) Inform SMT (meeting)	1) Inform team (meeting) 2) Customer service team call customer within 2 hours of incident	
Incident severity: High e.g. xxx	1) Inform SMT (email & meeting) 2) Communication to all employees	1) Inform team (email & meeting) 2) Customer service team call customer within 1 hour of incident 3) Communication to all employees	1) Publish holding statement within 2 hrs 2) Post full statement within 24hrs

Emergency Action – Communications

In a crisis, try to demonstrate the three key sentiments of **care**, **control** and **commitment** in all of your messages. These must be backed up by tangible examples or ‘proof points’. Messages must be factual and may need updating as the incident develops.

1. CARE AND CONCERN – express care and concern for those affected

‘We are deeply saddened...’

‘The safety of our colleagues is our number one priority...’

Proof points

2. CONTROL – demonstrate control over the situation at the most senior level

‘Everything possible is being done to bring the situation under control’

‘We are working closely with ...’

Proof points

3. COMMITMENT: demonstrate commitment to finding out the cause of the incident, taking care of those affected, and trying to ensure it cannot happen again

‘We are committed to finding out how this happened’

‘There will be a thorough, independent investigation’

Proof points

Emergency Action – Communications

Any crisis messaging should be factual and include:

- Acknowledgement of incident/situation/issue
- Time and location of incident/situation
- Actions you are undertaking to control the situation, including any authorities/third parties you are working with
- When the next update is expected (if known)
- Contact information

Emergency Action – Communications

This was not normal. Really.

It's been a rough couple of days at Slack HQ. We've had two separate incidents where too many users were unable to connect for too long a time.

Firstly, and most importantly, we want to apologize. While we're glad it didn't affect more users, any downtime is too much downtime.

In the first event on Tuesday (October 14th), all users were locked out of Slack for 14 minutes (users who had already established connections could continue to work) and, following that, 13% of users had poor or no availability for periods of up to two hours. Today, at 11.27am, there was a separate incident with a similar effect for a subset of users. That one was resolved an hour later, at 12.28pm (all times and dates are San Francisco local time).

We know you depend on Slack, and that any downtime in a service you've come to love and trust is worrisome. It will take time to rebuild the trust we've lost. We can't change history to make the little red squares from this week's status calendar back into little green ones: but we want you to know that we're invested and working around the clock to keep you consistently, confidently connected on Slack.

1. Prevention measures & risk mitigation



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3. Liability: Managing perception

Issue with	Liability (legal)	Perceived liability	How do you communicate/make your liability known
Products			
Customers			We include this in our terms and conditions. This is visible xxx We provide steps on how to address insurance claims against our products
Employees			We explain and check employees' understanding of the company policy on XXX.
Third parties			We provide drivers with a card to give to other road users with details on how to make an insurance claim

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4. Continuous Improvement

LESSONS LEARNT

- *Could this incident have been avoided? How?*
- *Did the communications meet their objectives and intended audience? Was the appropriate channel(s) used?*

PERSON RESPONSIBLE

- *Who will design/implement changes to prevent repeat incidents?*
- *Is there a timeline for any operational changes?*

ACTION TAKEN

- *Was the incident reported and recorded correctly?*
- *Are the relevant people aware of their responsibilities in case of similar incidents?*
- *What measures have been put in place for future prevention?*

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