



Top 10 Things Not To Do In A Crisis

Your organization's reputation takes years to build. But things can go wrong, even with the best run organization. If bad news hits your organization, here are the Top 10 Things Not to Do in a Crisis.

- 1. Not commenting** - Something bad has happened related to your organization that lands you in the public spotlight. Frequently the first corporate response is "don't say anything." Sometimes not saying anything is good policy, however, if the problem is big enough to draw significant public attention "not commenting" is a bad idea and is likely to make the situation worse.
- 2. Saying "no comment"** - Even if you choose not to comment, never say "no comment." That's what criminal defendants say when they're guilty and saying "no comment" will make you look like one.
- 3. Lying** - No matter what, if something bad happens that lands your organization in the public spotlight, don't lie about it. Lying destroys reputations. Lying compounds the underlying problem and geometrically increases the odds that the problem will grow and cause long term damage to your organization.
- 4. Evading** - Don't evade either. If you aren't ready to answer real questions with accurate information then pledge to provide the information as soon as it becomes available. Not responding (see above) can be a big mistake, but not as big as lying or evading.
- 5. Not addressing the real concern** - Some organizations respond to crisis by issuing information that is factually accurate but misses the point. The statement itself isn't a lie or evasive, but the statement doesn't answer the questions that are in the minds of the media and the public. If you choose to respond and you have accurate information that answers the real questions, provide that information.
- 6. Not expressing empathy** - If a crisis hits your organization causing harm to others, whether it's your employees, customers or the general public, acknowledge that harm and express that you understand and regret the harm. Expressing empathy does not automatically mean you are responsible for the harm that's been caused but it demonstrates you are human.
- 7. Seeing the crisis as a nuisance** - Organizations have their daily routines. Crisis disrupts routine. All too frequently, the leader of an organization expresses frustration about what a nuisance the crisis is to the routine of the organization. A prominent example of what not to do is the BP oil executive who addressed the media after the giant oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico by saying, "I just want my life back."
- 8. Convening a big committee** - Two keys to effective crisis response are speed and clarity. Committees are "slow" and "vague." Your organization's crisis response team should be small, nimble and trained ahead of time.
- 9. Being slow to respond** - In crisis a narrative is going to be created. The media and public will start speculating as soon as an incident occurs. The only question is whether you take the lead and serve as the main source of accurate information about your organization?
- 10. Letting others capture the narrative** - Being slow to respond means letting others take the lead in describing the problem and critiquing your organization's response. The best advice is to respond promptly and remain the regular source of accurate information related to your crisis.