

www.thebusinessnewsonline.com

COMMENTARY

Being prepared for crisis may be key to survival

You're a CEO of a major transportation company and you've just received word that one of your trucks has crashed into a shopping complex. You're the owner of a small business and during the night, the building starts on fire. You're head of operations at a large factory, and you've just lost power and it won't be back on for several days. Now what?

It doesn't matter if your company is a fortune 500 company, a small, family-owned business or if you're in Wisconsin or Antarctica, a crisis can still happen to you, and when it comes to preparing for a crisis, it's essential to be proactive rather than reactive. Being prepared is crucial for your brand, your reputation and your survival.

We know the worst time to learn about crisis management is during a crisis, so where do you start in order to be prepared ahead of time?

First and foremost, you must understand what a crisis is.

A crisis is anything that can cause a threat to your organization. Typically, a crisis situation appears out of nowhere and you have a very short time to make a decision as to how to overcome the crisis.

**BETH
KNEISLER**
GUEST
COLUMNIST



A crisis can range from natural disasters, strikes, power outages or even contagious diseases.

To make sure your company is prepared for anything life may throw your way, it's crucial to develop a crisis-management plan.

A workable crisis management plan should include the following:

Potential crisis situations — Before you can be ready for a crisis, you must first identify potential crisis situations.

Make sure you plan for the best and worst case scenarios.

Then, with each scenario, strategize how you would handle and recover from that situation.

However, understand that when a crisis actually strikes, it is not likely to be exactly how

you envisioned it.

Still, the planning effort will make you much better prepared.

Organize an internal crisis management team. Not just the company leadership team, but others at the company who may play an important role should there be a crisis.

For instance, you'll need administrative people to help with the phones, documents, etc. A representative from that group should be a part of the team.

Also, decide who has what job in a crisis; as you want it to be clear before a crisis occurs.

Contact information — Make sure there is a list of contact information for your crisis management team and share it with everyone on the team.

This should be kept on site as well as off site by every team member.

Communications plan — Determine how you will communicate with employees, customers and suppliers/vendors. By phone? In person? Via email or letters?

Also give some thought as to where you will meet if you have to vacate the main building for your business. Who is handling what?

Strategy for dealing with the media — If you're counting on the media not finding out about your crisis situation, think again.

When the media does call, make sure you have a plan in place as to who will answer their questions and how often you'll provide updates.

Saying "no comment" does not work. While you don't have to provide every little detail, you do need to share what happened, why it happened (if you know, and do not speculate if you don't) and what you're doing about it. Always express concern for those impacted and reassure stakeholders that action is being taken to deal with the situation.

Keep in mind, even if a crisis has ended, crisis management should not end. This is the time you should be learning from your mistakes and altering your current plan.

Getting ready for a potential crisis will take some time initially, but when a crisis does happen to your business, and you are prepared, you will be able to recover that much quicker and keep your business going strong.

Beth Kneisler is an account assistant with Leonard & Finco Public Relations, Green Bay.

In our *Opinion*, a sound staffing strategy
is a positive *Commentary* on your organization.

We can help.

temployment

Green Bay's Staffing Source

(920) 432-1600

staffing@temployment.com