Crisis Management and Crisis Communications for Nonprofits

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What's a Crisis?
- A sudden situation
- that threatens a nonprofit’s ability to survive
- an emergency, disaster or catastrophe

Past is Prologue
- “The best of prophets of the future is the past.” —Lord Byron
- Go one step beyond what happened in the past… what might the future hold?

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Consider the possibility:

- What’s happened to you in the past
- Crises that have affected other nonprofits (geography and scope)
- What’s never happened, but is still possible
- What could make achieving your mission impossible… or next to impossible

What’s a crisis for your organization?

- Depends on your organization’s mission
- Depends on the nature of the event
- Depends on the assets impacted

What’s Crisis Management?

- Risk management versus crisis management
- Deal with the unthinkable in the present; take steps to ensure survival
- How will we restore operations within an acceptable time frame?
The Paranoia Principle

“No threat is too improbable to ignore.”

Guiding principles

Before the Crisis
—Do what you can, when you can
—Be flexible
—Involve a diverse group of people
—Focus on the most probable crises first

Guiding principles

During the Crisis
—Remember that compassion is your business
—Do what you can
—Act with unity
—Call on others for help
—Be flexible
—Document everything
Step 1:
Create a framework for crisis planning

- Who
- What
- When
- How

Who?

Crisis Planning Team
- Financial expert
- Operations/facilities expert(s)
- Spokesperson
- Outside advisors
- Who else?

What?

Goal: organizational survival
- Protect people and other key assets
- Explains how the organization will:
  - control
  - coordinate
  - communicate
The Crisis Management Plan

- Contains check lists
- Plans in outline form
- Lists of essential people and phone numbers
- Location of essential documents, resources

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The Crisis Management Plan

- Includes Crisis Communication
- Information about the organization
- Media contacts
- Strategies for communicating with internal & external stakeholders

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What?

- Key people need copy at home
- Not encyclopedic
- Keep it simple
Step 2: Conduct a crisis assessment

- Look for a crisis in the making…
- Consider:
  - the ties that bind
  - image is everything
  - it’s what you do
  - it’s where you’re located
  - it’s a small world

Step 3: Conduct an inventory of your assets

- people
- equipment
- records
- software

Step 4: Plan to act and consider contingencies

- What will we do, if…
- What alternatives should we consider?
  - What looks like the best option, given what we know
  - What will it cost?
  - Are there impediments we need to think about?
Restoring Operations

- Prioritize mission critical functions
- Identify maximum acceptable down times
- Specify how mission critical functions will be restored within the maximum acceptable down times

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Business Continuity Planning Process

- Identify all functions and services
- Rank order them based on their contribution to the overall mission
- Estimate the "maximum acceptable downtime" or MAD for each
- Identify critical resources for each
- Develop strategies to restore functions within MADs

Maximum Acceptable Downtime (MAD)

- Impact on service recipients
- Revenue streams
- Personnel issues
- Contract/funding requirements
- Scope of the crisis
- Seasonal operations
- Public perceptions

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**Critical Resources**

What resources does your organization require to restore services within the MAD?

- Personnel
- Equipment
- Facilities
- Money
- Material

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**Step 5: Rehearse**

- Drills
  - evacuation
  - emergency response
  - contact trees
- Recovery exercises
  - restoring data from backups
  - what else?

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**Step 6: Plan What You’ll Say to Whom and How**

- Who
- How
- What
Crisis Management Team — Spokesperson

- The only person authorized to speak on behalf of organization
- Trained for function
- May be CEO, but should it be?

Step 7: Keep a Record

Document your actions
- what was done?
- when?
- by whom?

Step 8: Conduct a post-crisis review

- Did your plans work as expected?
- Were you able to access the resources you needed?
- Were there any aspects of your plans that were unnecessary?
- Were the “right” people on the crisis response team?
- What other skills would be helpful in handling a future crisis?
Crisis Communications

The Five C’s
1. Care
2. Commitment
3. Consistency
4. Coherence
5. Clarity

Crisis Communications – Key Documents
- Summary Statement
- Q&A Fact Sheet
- Media Kit
- Media Contact Strategy

Media Smarts
- Be clear – what do you want the media to know?
- Always tell the truth (Tell The Truth)
- Don’t feel the need to tell everything!
- Stick to the prepared text
Media Smarts

- If you don’t know, say so!
- Be sincere
- Accommodate reasonable requests
- Admit when a mistake has been made
- Don’t evade interviews!
- Designate a back-up for your spokesperson

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Nonprofit Risk Management Center

- Free technical assistance by telephone and e-mail
- Free fact sheets and resources at: www.nonprofitrisk.org
- Affordable publications, software and training programs
- (202) 785-3891

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Thank You! We’d love your feedback on our survey that will follow.

Contact us with questions: 202-785-3891
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Next Month’s Webinar

*Domestic Violence in the Workplace: Protecting Your Staff and Your Nonprofit*

January 16, 2008
2-3 pm EST