

A PR approach to crisis management

A crisis is an unexpected event that can disrupt your business or in some cases, cause your business to cease. A crisis can create long-term brand damage.

Examples of crisis in the tourism sector may include customers being seriously injured or killed on site; being subject to food poisoning; criminal conduct accusations directed at your staff; an extreme weather event that impacts your ability to conduct business and perhaps the safety of your customers. These can all be planned for.

Steps to managing a crisis:

- Prevention – identify and monitor issues relating to your business. This is an ongoing exercise. What risks are on the horizon? What changes may affect your business, employees or both? What topical conversation is the community engaging in, and could your business be drawn in?
- Preparation – create a crisis management team. Involve them in your PR crisis planning. Agree on roles (media liaison, employee liaison, spokesperson, legal adviser, social media adviser, government relations and so on). Practice a crisis-management scenario such as food poisoning.
- Response – in all your communications, ensure “visible leadership based on empathy, trust and collaboration” and display the **5 Cs of crisis management**:
 1. confidence
 2. clarity
 3. control
 4. concern
 5. competence
- Recovery – evaluate the outcome; assess how your crisis communications plan worked.

Remember social media. Today, people can discuss your company crisis on Twitter, Facebook and other platforms. Myths and lies can circulate. Anxiety can build. Be on the front-foot and communicate clearly on your social media channels.

Information sheet developed for the SATC by Michelle Prak;
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