Technical Support Instrument

Supporting reforms in 27 Member States

Building Capacities for Effective Communication of the Benefits of the Recovery and Resilience Plans

Sixth training:

Effective communication in crisis situations

10 October 2024 | 10.00 - 12.00 CET

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pwc

Before we start

- To ensure the quality of the webinar and out of respect for the speaker and other participants, **please keep your microphones turned off** during the training.

- If you have a question or would like to share your thoughts during the discussion or Q&A session, **please raise your hand, and the speaker will invite you to unmute your microphone**. Alternatively, you may use the chat function at any time during the training.

- Please note that **the training is being recorded**. The recording will be shared upon the request of the Member States.

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Agenda

Objective

The objective of the training is to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage communication during a crisis. This includes developing strategies for delivering clear, timely, and transparent messages to the public, media, and stakeholders while minimising damage to public trust, maintaining organisational credibility, and mitigating potential negative outcomes.

Time (CET)	Activity
10.00 – 10.05	Opening remarks by the DG REFORM
10.05 – 11.05	Management of crisis situations and effective response
11.05 – 11.15	10-minute break
11.15 – 11.40	Management of crisis situations and effective response continued
11.40 – 11.50	Best practice examples and discussion on effective communication in crisis situations
11.50 – 12.00	Q&A session and closing

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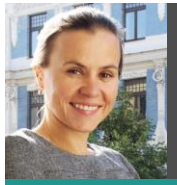
Speakers for today’s training

Radu Danu

DG REFORM

Radu is a Policy Officer and Project Manager responsible for RRF coordination in Horizontal Policies Unit of DG REFORM, European Commission. Previously he worked for Frontex, European Parliament, and several NGOs. He has over 5 years' experience in project management, stakeholder engagement, and policy analysis in public and civil society sectors.



Ieva Stūre

Komunikācijas aģentūra / Edelman Affiliate

Ieva is a strategic director at Komunikācijas aģentūra (Edelman Affiliate). Ieva has experience of over 20 years in the field of communication, consulting clients in financial, retail, IT and technology industries on strategic communication, media relations, crisis communication, B2B and B2C communication. She has been part of extensive public sector campaigns: euro launch in Latvia; vaccination against COVID-19.

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Opening remarks

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Planned training sessions

1. **Training No 1**
   EU communication and visibility requirements on RRP communication
   April 30 (online) at 10:00 – 12:00 CET

2. **Training No 2**
   Strategic RRP communication planning
   May 16 (online) at 10:00 – 12:30 CET

3. **Training No 3 Communication tools, channels and content**
   June 5 (hybrid) | 10:00 – 16:30 CET

4. **Training No 4**
   Stakeholder engagement and media relations
   September 12 (online) | 10:00 – 12:00 CET

5. **Training No 5**
   Efficient use of digital communication tools in communicating RRPs benefits to the EU citizens
   September 19 (hybrid) | 10:00 – 16:30 CET

6. **Training No 6 TODAY**
   Effective communication in crisis situations
   October 10 (online) | 10:00 – 12:00 CET

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What is crisis?

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Fear is the unknown.

I. Ziedonis

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It's always easier to say "what should have we done differently" when looking back...

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Definition

Crisis communication is the strategic approach used by organisations to communicate effectively with the public and stakeholders during an event that threatens public safety, reputation, or operational continuity.

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There's a difference

Crisis Communication	Risk Management	Issue management
		

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What is crisis?

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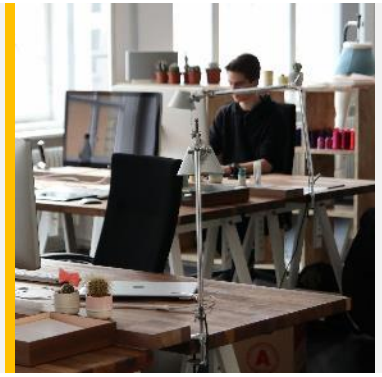
What are characteristics of crisis?

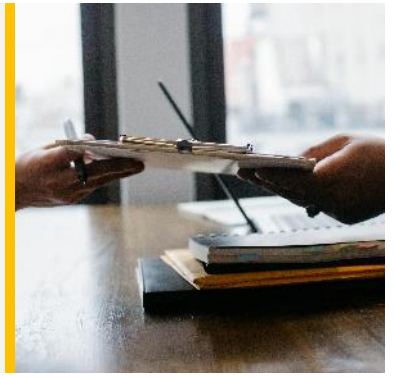
Unexpected

Uncontrollable

Creates damage



Creates interest



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Key differences between Issues and Crisis

Issues:	Crises:
Tend to develop slowly.	Sudden, unexpected, and can cause major disruption.
Are usually manageable if addressed early.	Require immediate attention and a rapid, strategic communication response.
Can be mitigated through proactive communication strategies.	

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Risk Communication

The process of exchanging information and opinions between individuals, groups, and institutions regarding potential hazards that affect public health, safety, and the environment.

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Examples of Risk Communication

Public Health:

- Communicating risks during a pandemic or disease outbreak (e.g., COVID-19).

Natural Disasters:

- Informing the public about the risk of hurricanes, floods, or wildfires.

Environmental Risks:

- Addressing concerns about pollution, climate change, or hazardous waste.

The challenge of Risk Communication:

There might be a gap between what experts & society perceive as "a threat".

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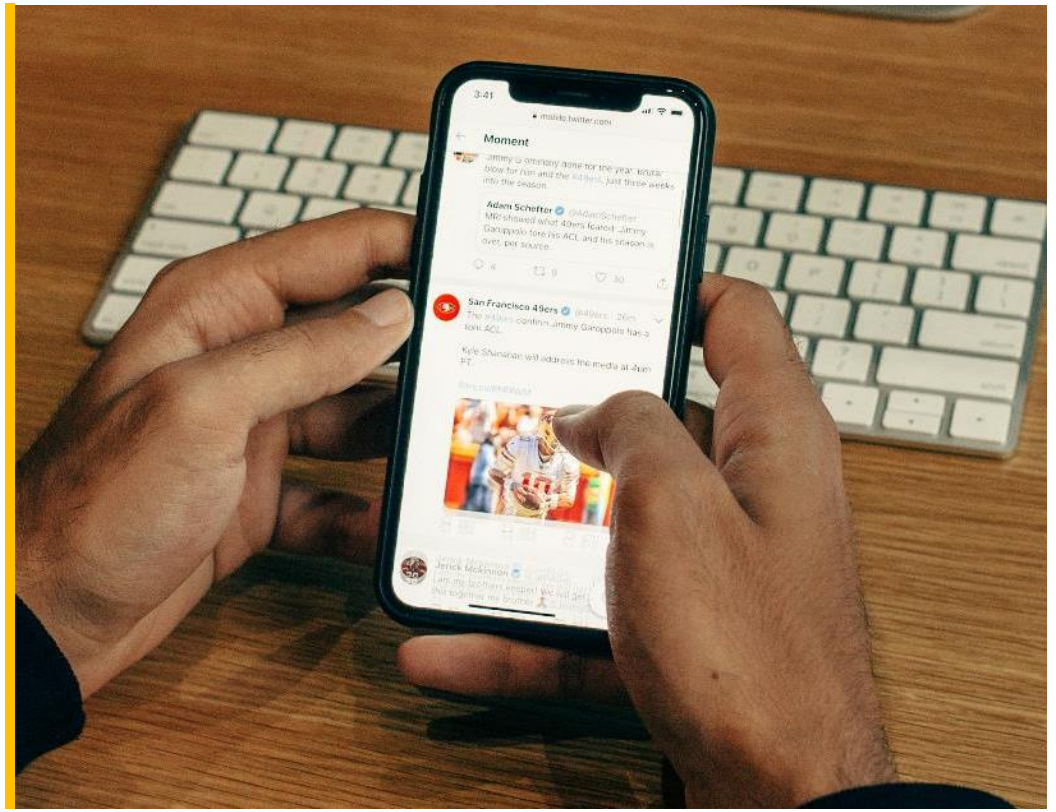
We live in age where news can become a tweet, and a tweet can become news.



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The decisions come before communication

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Can you prepare for crisis situation?

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Stages of crisis

Preparation	Active stage	Investigative stage	Maintaining stage
What could happen?	What has happened?	Who is to blame?	What is done to prevent it from happening again?

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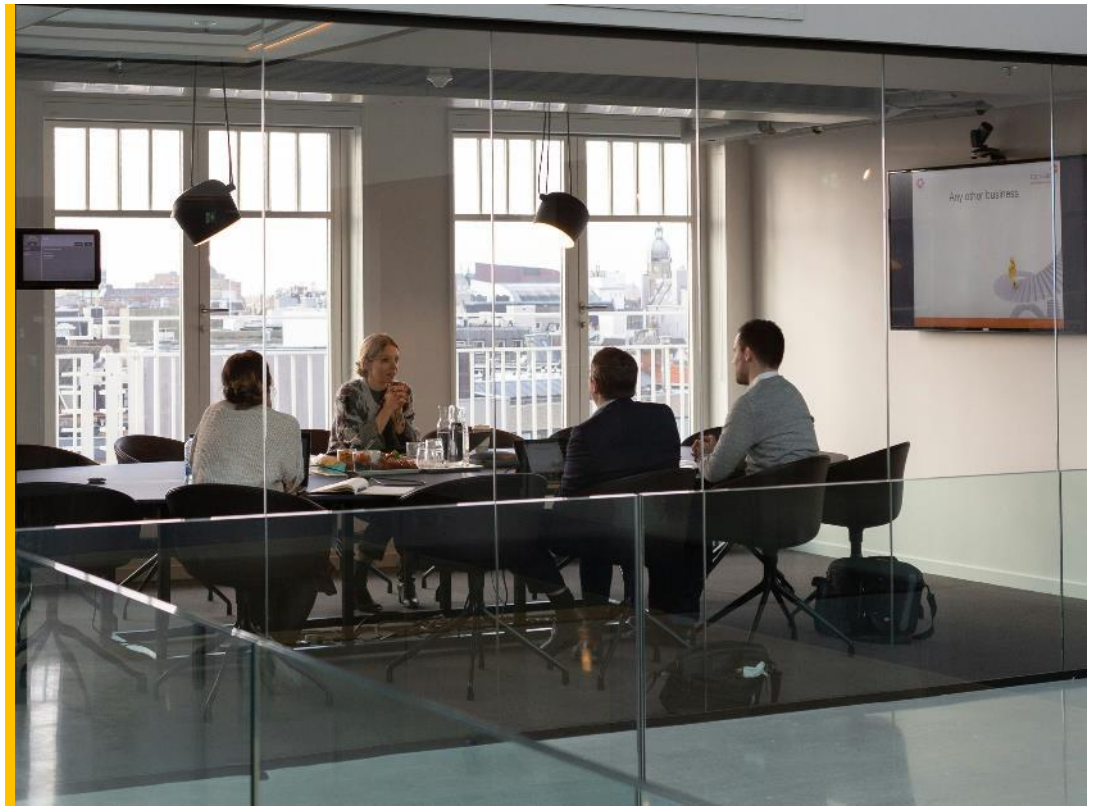
How to prepare?

- **Forecasting of crisis & mapping**
- **Crisis Communication manual**
- **Simulation of crisis situation**



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Crisis typology

- Natural disasters
- Disease/health threats
- Technology-induced crises (power outages, IT system failures)
- Protests & unrest
- Attacks on the organisation
- Terrorism
- Organisational (employee) negligence
- Organisational changes/violations
- Violence/incidents in the workplace
- Rumours

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Crisis mapping/evaluation

1. How likely it could happen to us? (1-10)

2. How big damage it could create to us? (1-10)

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10-minute break

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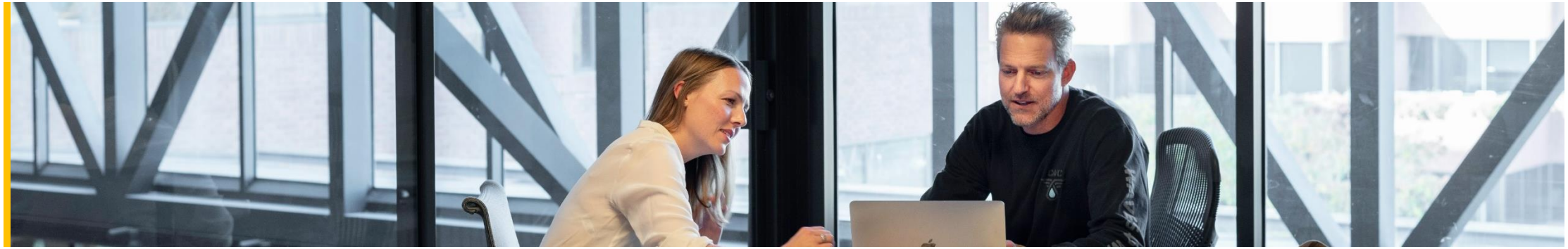
Defining roles of Crisis Management Team

Crisis Management Team:

- Leader of Crisis Management Team
- Coordinator of Crisis Management Team
- Etc.

Communication:

- Spokesperson
- Drafting first responses
- Social media person
- Monitoring



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Crisis Manual

- Typology of Crisis
- Action plan according different crisis situations
- Drafting messages
- Target audience mapping
- Media contact list
- Stakeholders contact list
- Resource planning

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Principles of choosing the right spokesperson

- In a position of responsibility (i.e., a member of the executive committee)
- Can perform in high stress situations & keep calmness
- Have personal charisma and can speak with authority
- Have prior experience of dealing with the news media
- Have undergone crisis communication training

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Training the spokesperson

- An overview of challenges after the crisis; what audiences expect to see & hear
- Understanding the "Always on“ communication landscape
- How the news media work, what will they look for
- The role of company spokesperson
- How to deliver key messages
- The importance of non-verbal communication
- Handling different interview situations – live, recorded, ambush, press conference
- Interview techniques – "blocking and bridging"
- How to hold a press conference

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First response in crisis situation

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Should we communicate the "bad things" proactively?

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If it’s going to come out eventually, better have it come out immediately.

Henry Kissinger

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Stages of crisis

Preparation	Active stage	Investigative stage	Maintaining stage
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First response

Find out the facts → Evaluate the crisis seriousness (potential to get public) → Communicate → Monitor

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Timing is crucial

The principle of "Golden Hour"

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Timing is crucial

T+**15 mins**:	Release first “tweet” acknowledging initial reports. Update regularly with short posts on Twitter as new information is confirmed.
T+**60 mins**:	Issue a longer summary of information confirmed to date, via multiple channels and posted on website. Ensure this information is also shared with employees. Release new summaries hourly, or as key developments are confirmed, while maintaining a regular flow of short updates.
T+**60 mins**:	Change branding to monochrome and remove promotional images and messaging from all online platforms. Dark Site activated. Ensure consistent messages/information appears on every online platform, with simultaneous updates.
T+**3 hrs**:	First media appearance/statement by the most senior executive to arrive at location where families, media and authorities are congregating (usually at/near the accident scene or arrival/departure airport). The airline may decide to post a video statement by the CEO online. This would make the CEO “visible” early in the response, without exposing him/her to media questions while confirmed information is scarce.
T+**6 hrs**:	First in-person press conference with the CEO or most senior executive available (may be at HQ, departure/arrival airport or accident location).
T+**6-24 hrs**:	Further statements, media interviews and press conferences as relevant information is confirmed (may be done jointly with emergency services, response agencies, airport operator, Government representatives or investigating body).
Example:	**Crisis Communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry**
Source:	https://www.iata.org/contentassets/86b7f57b7f7f48cf9a0adb3854c4b331/social-media-crisis-communications-guidelines.pdf

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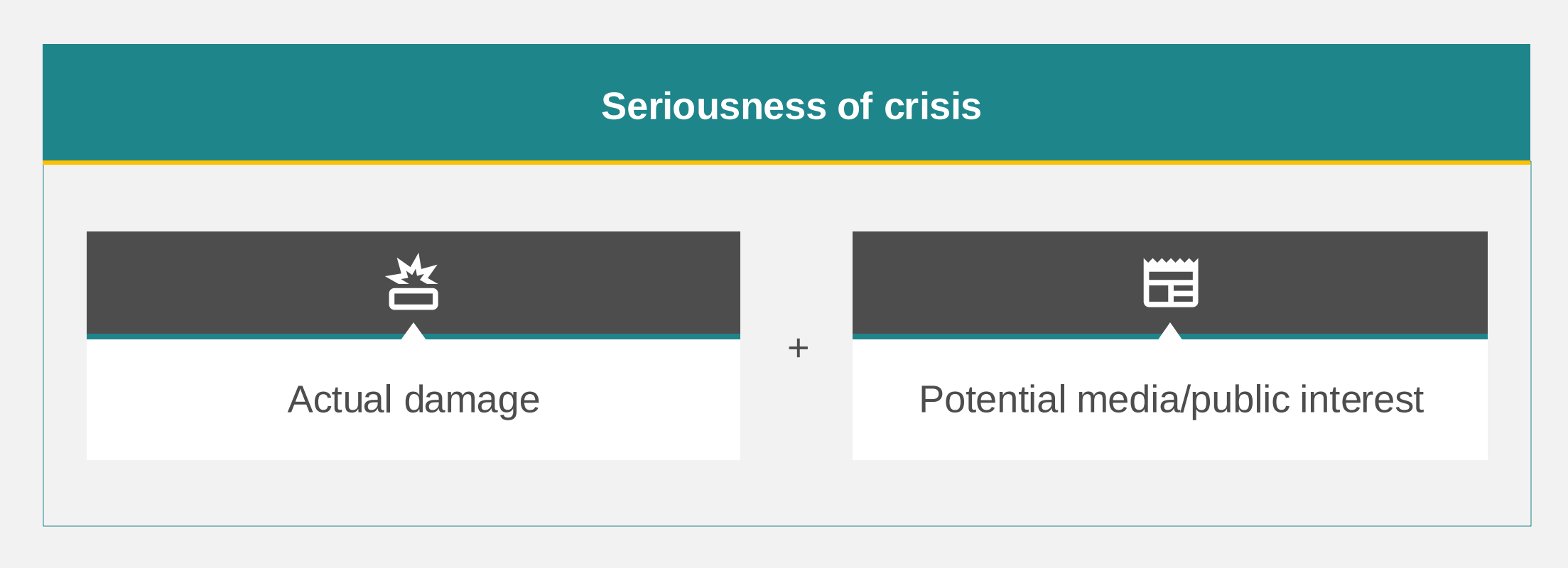
Evaluation of crisis



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Communication during crisis situations

- What we know about this crisis situation?
- What we want the target audiences to think about it?
- How to communicate it shortly/easy to understand?

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The "Basic Formula" for crisis communication first public draft

What Happened?

Facts: what, where, when, why?

Scale Of The Threat

Were there injured people? Were there damages? How significant?

Accident Consequences Mitigation / Preventive Measures

What is being done to eliminate the consequences? What is being done to prevent it from happening again?

Sympathy For The Victims

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Don't forget about different stakeholders

Internal audience

Employees

Management

External audience

- Emergency services
- Related institutions
- Local communities/ neighbours
- NGO’s
- Decision makers
- Media
- Social media
- Public

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Remember, that: Emotions hinder to grasp the information

Don't:	Do:	
Focus on the negative	Be short	Be simple

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Remember, that: When worrying, people tend to miss the most important information

Balance the negative with positive

Try not to repeat the negative sentences

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Remember, that during a crisis there is a lack of trust

Choose carefully the spokesperson

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Main principles to follow in communication

- Develop short, easy to understand messages (what happened, why happened, what is done to prevent it)
- Use simple, non-technical language
- Avoid professional terms
- Remember that for TV (also social media) the most important is the key visual
- Be consistent when using the denotations
- Give the most relevant information to the audience: Will it impact me? How?
- Use metaphors
- Don't be too assertive (situation might change)
- Use "if...." constructions

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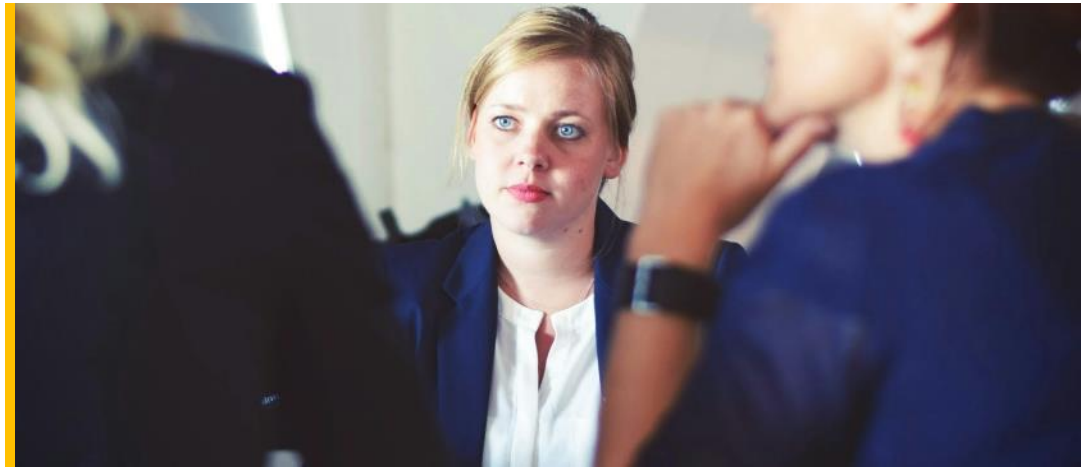
Communication in hostile situations

- Admit the hostility
- Maintain restraint
- Be prepared
- Show empathy and care
- Understand the reasons for hostility



- Be proactive
- Be careful – when choosing the spokesperson (choose the ones that can keep calm)

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Stages of crisis

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Some of the future milestone that may spark public attention & communication planning

- Continuing the "regular operations"
- One year (5 year) anniversary
- Completion of criminal/civil litigation (if any)
- Announcement/dedication of accidental memorial (if any)
- Etc.

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Five C's

- Concern
- Commitment
- Competency
- Clarity
- Confidence

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Issue management

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Key differences between Issues and Crisis

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Can be mitigated through proactive communication strategies.	

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Issue management

Strategic and **timely** communication approach in order to address the issues that are important to the target audiences.

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Steps for Effective Issue Management

Environmental Scanning:

Monitor the media, social networks, and internal sources for early warning signs

Stakeholder Mapping:

Identify key stakeholders who may be impacted or have influence on the issue.

Scenario Planning:

Anticipate different scenarios and develop action plans for each.

Developing Key Messages:

Craft clear, consistent, and proactive messages to address stakeholder concerns.

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Q&A and Wrap-up

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Key takeaways

Speed and transparency are the most critical components of crisis communication

Preparation through environmental scanning, stakeholder analysis, and scenario planning can prevent issues from escalating.

Social media is both a risk and an asset in crisis communication—monitor it closely and use it wisely.

Post-crisis evaluation is crucial for learning and improving future communication strategies.

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Questions for discussion I

1. Speed vs Accuracy?

In a crisis, should you prioritize speed in delivering a message, even if all the facts are not yet clear, or should you wait for full accuracy, risking delayed communication and public trust?

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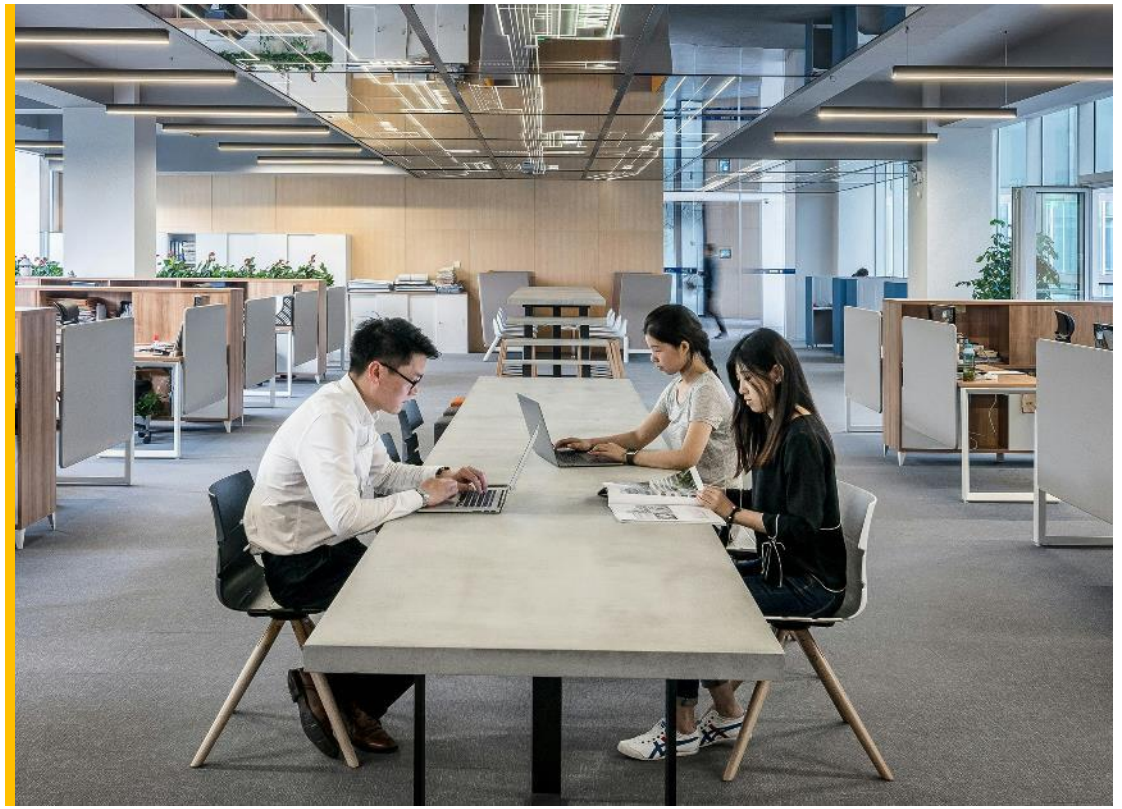
Questions for discussion I

2. Transparency vs. Confidentiality

Should you always be fully transparent with the public, or are there situations where withholding certain information (e.g., sensitive details) is better for protecting the organization or the public?



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Questions for discussion I

3. Empathy vs. Authority

When communicating during a crisis, should leaders focus more on showing empathy and understanding the public's emotional state, or should they prioritize projecting authority and control?

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Questions for discussion II

4. Internal vs. External Stakeholders

In a situation where both internal and external stakeholders are demanding information, who should you prioritize: employees and internal teams or the external public and media?

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Questions for discussion II

5. Honesty vs. Reassurance

If the reality of the crisis is grim, should you focus on delivering an honest message that may increase fear or try to reassure the public, even if that means downplaying the seriousness of the situation?

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Questions for discussion II

6. Blame vs. Accountability

When the organization is at fault for a crisis, should the focus of communication be on taking accountability and admitting mistakes, or on shifting blame to external factors to protect the organization’s reputation?

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