HENNES COMMUNICATIONS | CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS | CRISIS MANAGEMENT
LITIGATION COMMUNICATIONS | MEDIA TRAINING

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Essential Elements of a Crisis Communications Plan

Crisis communication plans vary in complexity, but here are the essential elements every organization should compile in order to be prepared for a crisis.

- List of members of the Crisis Communication Team and complete contact information (including after-hours)
- A clear delegation of responsibilities for each member of the team (including backups)
- Clear protocols and procedures for activating the Crisis Communication Team and approving communications
- Guidelines for working with the media during a crisis, including a clearly defined media policy and designated spokesperson(s) and support
- Lists of critical stakeholders and databases with their contact information and guidelines for outreach
- Pre-established notification system(s) and instructions for activation
- Policies and procedures for the front office staff on how to handle media calls & visits
- Pre-approved messages for crisis scenarios and templates for letters, statements to the media and other communication tools for each scenario
- Guidelines for the use of social media during a crisis, including company policies, authorized responders, preferred sites, accounts and general guidelines for participation, monitoring and responding
- Background information for the media and/or a dark website containing executive bios, fact sheets, maps/directions to facilities, high-resolution photos and logos, Material Safety Data Sheets, etc.
- After-hours contact information for local media. (Crises rarely happen during business hours, and the local media will continue to cover your organization long after CNN leaves.)
- Other useful information, including instructions and passwords for social media platforms and 24/7 contact information for outside resources

In today's era of social media, reputations can be lost in an instant.

Put the crisis & issues management specialists at Hennes Communications on your team.

Because the Court of Public Opinion is always in session.

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On-Line Press Rooms & "Dark" Websites

Make sure YOU have the knowledge, usernames and passwords to gain emergency access to your website (as well as your Facebook and Twitter accounts)
Downloadable Press Kit
Complete PR Contact info (be sure it's 24/7/365)
Searchable archives
Company history, timeline, mergers, acquisitions, names changes, new plants, etc.
High-resolution, color media-trade photos of company/building/products

- Usually 5x7 at 300 dpi (though some newspapers & magazines like 8x10 at 300 dpi)
- Using a JPEG compressed in "very high quality" mode is usually acceptable
- Offer suggested captions

Executive bios (AKA obituaries), headshots & team photos
Video (both high and low-bandwidth footage)
Video News Releases (VNR) & B-Roll
Diagrams, illustrations and graphics, including company logos (offer in low-rez, perhaps keeping hi-rez password-protected)
Press releases (current w/ release dates and archived); categorize by section or product
Corporate backgrounders
Case studies
Product overviews
Searchable database of experts on-staff
Opt-in for news distribution
Links to related articles
Consider adding a blog to provide insight by expert employees & monitor opinion
Events calendar (executive appearances, press conferences, trade shows, products releases)
Hidden content for crisis comm, including media statements for crisis scenarios (in text format, not PDF)
Post a FAQ, Terms of Use & Privacy Policy

Helpful Tips

Ensure website has an easy to navigate design

- A mobile version is absolutely essential
- Simple and functional is best
- Avoid fancy graphics, Flash animation, etc.
- Keep use of PDF's to a minimum – reporters in the field are likely using smartphones

Whenever possible, do not password-protect your online pressroom – reporters may not have time for lengthy registrations and they may not like feeling they are going to be "tracked"

- That said, you still may wish to consider using a combination of open and password-protected areas within the online newsroom, allowing you to keep control over more sensitive information
  - Pros: allows you to collect data and monitor how the site is being used; password-protected sites will also keep those pages from being "spidered" and, therefore, unavailable through a Google or Yahoo search

Absolutely, positively make certain that your online newsroom is current and up to date

- Learn how to post news releases and update info without being dependent upon your IT Department

Add Really Simple Syndication (RSS) to the site