

Are You Prepared? Crisis Communication for the Modern Business



In this information filled podcast, you will hear pertinent advice from former FBI agent Jeff Lanza. He is interviewed by Brenda Perkins cofounder of HRBrainBank on the topic of [what is crisis communication](#). Jeff covers what you should communicate as well as how to craft an effective message. He also takes an in-depth look at how today's viral media environment increases the potential for damage to your business during a crisis.

Communication - A Vital Component of Your Response

Acting to resolve a crisis is just half the story when it comes to fixing a problem. If you don't communicate clearly, quickly, and concisely, your ability to restore relationships with your company's stakeholders will be severely hampered. This means having a plan in place for gathering and distributing information is just as important as every other aspect of crisis management.

You should have a specific team of people in place to handle communication and a protocol they are required to follow. Otherwise, you risk doing even more harm by releasing information that is inaccurate. A mixed message does nothing to rebuild confidence in your company after a negative event.

Who Needs to Know?

Any group that is directly or peripherally impacted by a crisis needs to be kept in the loop with the following information: what is going on and how you are addressing the problem. Make a point of expressing empathy for any and all individuals who were negatively impacted - regardless of who is ultimately to blame. This humanizes your company and increases your credibility as you try to resolve the issues surrounding the crisis.

Jeff states that unless there is a safety emergency that necessitates contacting the press first, employees should be in the first wave of people you notify. Otherwise, you will suffer backlash from workers who take this as a personal affront. After all, your employees are the backbone of your company. They are directly affected when an internal or external event puts your organization at risk. They want to know if they are safe, if their jobs are secure, and if/when everything will be returning to normal. You want your employees on your side.

Of course, the other group that can make or break you is the media. Lanza addresses this issue at length. He draws on his extensive experience as an FBI spokesperson in Kansas

City to give you savvy advice on the do's and don'ts of talking to the press. This includes such helpful tips as always assuming a microphone or video camera is running whenever a reporter is around. Also, don't fall for the "dead air" trick. Once you have given your prepared response (including your positive messaging), resist the temptation to keep talking just to fill an uncomfortable silence.

Jeff does point out that the media doesn't have to be your adversary. Listen to the entire podcast to hear how you can position yourself as an ally by distributing accurate, timely information to the press, along with [crisis communication examples](#).

The author, Brenda Perkins, CEBS is Co-founder of HRBrainBank.com, a website devoted to [human resources best practices](#). Brenda's expertise comes from creating and building three unique businesses, all of which serve the human resources profession. The unique blend of her experiences and talents allows her to see problems and solutions that are often not clear to the individuals she works with. Brenda has co-authored four books: Employee Communications 101; How to Produce Benefit Statements (such as [employee benefit communication](#)); Outsource Guide (to help you select the best vendor for [communication and employees](#)); and 9 Critical Elements to Guarantee Your Boss' Approval. She has also co-produced several healthcare education videos with an emphasis on [hsa training](#).