

Social media
**CRISIS
CHECKLIST**

ROCK
Social



ABOUT ROCK SOCIAL

Hi! 🙋

I'm Jessica- social media strategist and founder of Rock Social, a social media consultancy dedicated to helping brands rock their social through strategy, management, coaching and communication planning.

With over 20 years of experience in PR and crisis communication for big brands such as Disney and Discovery Networks, I combine my social media savvy with in-depth knowledge to guide brands on how to strategically navigate through a crisis.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

CRISIS

/'krʌɪsɪs/

noun

a time of intense difficulty or danger "the current economic crisis"

Similar: catastrophe, calamity, cataclysm, emergency, disaster, set back

Crisis management is the practice of planning your communication for the unexpected, unwanted and unthinkable. But how can you?

How can you **not**, as a brand? One in four brands do not have a crisis communication plan with start ups being the worst offenders (and potentially the worst sufferers for it) and out of the businesses that do, 40% only update them once a year, which in this fast-moving landscape means they're on the shelf gathering dust.

A crisis communication plan is the very back-bone of how your social media, and all other communication will be handled when that unexpected event happens.

More than a quarter of crises spread internationally within the hour. On the flip side, it takes businesses on average 21 hours to respond to a crisis.

Crisis management is a spectator sport, every move a brand does in a crisis can set the tone for how they are viewed by the customer for years to come. It takes years to build a reputation, and mere minutes to tear it down.

This checklist will list some of the elements a crisis communication plan should include, but please refer to the Rock Social Crisis communication plan template for more details on creating an overarching crisis communication plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS CHECKLIST

Let's get into the nitty-gritty of the checklist.

The purpose of a checklist is to outline the procedure in which, according to the plan, you will approach your social media strategy and activity in a structured and systematic manner during a crisis. A social media checklist will normally be one of the appendices in a crisis management plan.

Crisis management requires a deft touch as there are many pitfalls brands can fall into during the management phase of a crisis.

1 Pause and reflect

STOP. Put a pause on all other ongoing work and reflect on the situation at hand.

A quiet moment is needed to understand the developments and assess the situation and understand what is happening, why and how it might impact the business and the brand.



Prepare a statement for customers. This statement will play a central role in crisis management and should always be clear, come from a place of empathy, expressing understanding and a positive will.

The statement should be visible on the website, and abridged versions posted on social media, and pinned to top of accounts as appropriate.



Go through all pre-schedule marketing and communications going out with a fine tooth comb. This includes, but is not limited to: social media posts, e-mail sequences and newsletters, blog posts, internal comms.

What looked and felt like a great post or blog a few days ago might fall into an entirely different way in the light of the ongoing crisis.

- ✓ Call an urgent business strategy session with all key stakeholders. Unfolding of events will impact the marketing and social media strategy and a session is required to revisit the overarching marketing strategy and set new key marketing messages.

Evaluate whether your brand is set to *gain, lose or stand neutral* in the crisis - this will give you the right perspective for the marketing decisions needed going forward.



"It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and five minutes to tear it down" Warren Buffett

2 The crisis communication plan

The crisis communication plan is the backbone for all the activities required across all comms channels in managing a crisis.

The basic steps of a crisis communication plan are not advanced, however the trick is that they need to be done **in** advance. Once in the midst of a crisis there are other procedures and activities that can be put into play, but a crisis communication plan lives by the adage "forewarned is forearmed".

Crisis communication is integral in the protection of people, assets and brands. Organisations that wait to respond, hesitate or lack visibility of action create uncertainty and possibly anger - it diminishes marketplace trust.

One in four businesses do not have crisis communication plans. This can be a real issue as even the most experienced communications strategist will scramble to contain a crisis and the more catching up an organisation does, the quicker the brand trust devalues.

If you have a crisis communication plan:

- ✓ Put your crisis communication plan into play and activate the procedures therein.

If you do not have a crisis communication plan:

- ✓ Create a specific crisis management policy for this particular event and circulate to to key stakeholders as needed.

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Get into the mind of the customer

As a business you need to get inside of the minds of the customer in order to identify pain points and how you can solve them in this new landscape. Brainstorm and try to understand where the customer is, and what their needs are.

You know your customer best. And your customer knows you. This is where the business intelligence aspect of social media really comes into play.

By its' very nature, social media is a two-way communication. Brands are no longer get to just push out their messaging without any, or little response.

Once a statement has been published, initiate conversations in social media, engage, providing value, empathy and understanding.

Getting into the mind of the customer will be key to getting social media messaging on point.



Create FAQ. This is a powerful way of pre-empting the customers concerns and worries. Pronovias, a global wedding couture brand based in Barcelona, lead by example by quickly putting a statement on their website accompanied by a thorough set of FAQ's to alleviate the concerns of brides-to-be all of the world.

DON'T GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAM

Your questions, answered

In these difficult times, we remain true to our mission: **MAKING YOUR BRIDAL DREAM A REALITY.**

The Pronovias team is here and fully committed to help you.

Here are answers to your questions we have received from you in the past days.

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Keep posting on social media

Why shouldn't you? A crisis is not a time to go quiet on your key marketing channels. However, there is much to be mindful of as the road to successfully managing a crisis on social media is lined with pitfalls.

- ✓ Create posts that express understanding, empathy, honesty and transparency. Reassure customers (once).
- ✓ Create posts showing understanding for the current social media climate. Just pretending like it's business is usual will fall on deaf ears and can appear insensitive.
- ✓ Focus on pain points after a business strategy re-evaluation. How can your business meet the current need? Always provide value.
- ✓ How can your business help the crisis or victims of the crisis? Examples are Kurt Geiger, a British high street shoe chain which closed their physical shops and swiftly launched the #smallactsofkindness campaign which gifted key workers in the National Health Service giftcards whilst encouraging their followers to also get involved in the campaign creating User Generated Content for the campaign.
- ✓ Use your social media to pivot your business if needed. If your brand is in the category of businesses set to lose from an ongoing crisis, a well executed pivot can create business opportunities.
- ✓ Engage more than normal - now it's all hands on deck. Also utilise social listening tools to identify potential issues. Look out for both negative and positive aspects and mitigate the negatives and utilise the positives.

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The human touch



Be more human. "People buy from people, not brands". During a crisis where humans are in any way affected, the last thing we need is another faceless business. Consider adding more personal element to your social media strategy, involving senior leaders and employees to be more visible, Lives, more behind the scenes content.



Ensure not to take any action that can be interpreted as taking advantage of the situation or profiting from a crisis. History will not be kind to brands using a crisis for business gains, however acts of kindness reverberate well beyond a campaign and can lead to significant increases in brand appreciation.



"The brands that are being proactive and making contributions to their communities and employees have seen the most engagement on Facebook and Instagram", according to Socialbakers.

Top tips on how to handle a backlash on social media

There will always be negative comments on social media. That is a fact - not a crisis. But what can become a crisis is a major negative change in the online conversation about your brand.

Customer backlash in stressful times is a given. Ensure not to feed the fire by the following:

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE.** Speed wins in a crisis - monitor engagement closely and respond as quickly as possible even if it with a holding statement such as: "Thank you for sharing your concern with us. We look forward to addressing this shortly". This does not imply culpability but a staggering amount of businesses apply the ostrich method of hiding their heads in the sand. It does not work.
2. **POINT OR LINK TO STATEMENT.** A major time-saver as you can always point the customer back to your position on the matter quickly and not repeat yourself.
3. **ALWAYS RESPOND WITH KINDNESS.** "Kill with kindness". Crises put people on high alert, it being stressful times. Stay calm. Better the devil you know on your Facebook page than a conversation happening in dark social.
4. **TAKE IT FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATE ASAP.** Crisis management is not about winning the argument - it's about damage control. Never send a third reply - two is an answer, three is an argument. Take it offline asap.
5. **KEEP THE TEAM UPDATED.** Internal communication is key even for small organisations. Keep everyone relevant in the loop, make sure you have a social media policy in place and that any employee could be a potential spokesperson.

6 Using or avoiding the C-word?

There is no conclusive black or white answer to this question. This is entirely dependent on how's it done in addition to your brand positioning, your customers, brand strategy and brand values.

If you, have a brand that normally has a fun, cheeky and light hearted tone of voice making people smile about the crisis may indeed be the right thing to do, lightening the mood and putting people at ease. One example is juice and smoothie company Innocent.

But equally, using the c-word when it is outside your brand content strategy and tone of voice could fall flat or even potentially cause offence.

Let the adage of "Adding value" guide you. Are you adding value? Adding value can mean many things so anything from engaging in meaningful conversations, posting updates, tips & tricks, helpful posts, engaging in the community or simply making your audience smile can all fall under this category.

Go back to your updated key marketing messages and look at how this falls into those.

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Paid versus Organic in a crisis

Again, the answer on whether to advertise or not at the time of crisis, is entirely related to your brand's overall social media strategy.



A time of uncertainty causes most businesses to stop their current marketing strategies, including advertising. What we know is that this lowers costs for advertising and with high activity and engagement on social media, this means those who chose to advertise typically get a higher reach for a lower cost.

Many digital marketers are however re-investing their budgets for cancelled trade shows and events and it is likely this type of spend will go into paid social to an extent.



"When times are good, you should advertise. When times are bad you must advertise." Forbes



On the flip side, when advertising spend is generally on a down-turn, brands turn to more cost-effective social media strategies and this is where organic growth comes into play. Organic strategies with the right content can be a winner.

Thank you

...for making it all the way to the end. What you can do now is implement - and once this is over learn. I am on a mission to get brands social media crisis ready.

Please let me know your thoughts and drop me a line or a DM any time if you have questions, need a quick brainstorm or want advice.

You can sign up to the newsletter on the website: www.rock-social.com

Please do give me a follow to stay up to date:



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Stay safe,

Jessica Audsley

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