Challenge Accepted: How The ALS Association Used Integrated Communications for the Ice Bucket Challenge

Did You Know

- The Ice Bucket Challenge raised $220 million worldwide in 2014?
- Website traffic for The ALS Association's National Office rose more than 7,000 % daily following the launch of the challenge?
- Athletes, celebrities, and politicians partook in the challenge? Notable participants included Reese Witherspoon, Jimmy Fallon and the Roots, Bill Gates, Justin Timberlake, the New England Patriots, and Barack Obama.
- The ALS Association received more than $115 million in a two-month period from the challenge.

Image courtesy of WBUR

About ALS

- ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive and fatal neurodegenerative disease that impacts the nerves in the brain and spinal cord.
- ALS is commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease; it's named after baseball player Lou Gehrig who died from it in 1941.
- People typically die from ALS complications 2-5 years following diagnosis. There is currently no cure for the disease.

Image courtesy of Billboard

Integrated Communications

- Website
- Social Media
- Public Relations
- Media Outreach
- Internal Communications (Emails, Intranet, e-newsletters)
- External emails, monthly e-newsletters and publications

Image courtesy of the ALS Association

Sources: Washington Business Journal; Tech Crunch; The ALS Association; Centers for Disease Control

Challenges

- Participants initially wanted to know how to do the challenge
- Questions about who started the challenge
- Some deemed the event “slacktivism,” aka—supporting a cause online with little commitment
- Misinformation about research funding, “misuse” of water in drought-ridden areas, and funds going toward staff salaries
- Onslaught of queries via news outlets and social media
- Confusion about where people could donate

Image courtesy of Canva

Keys to Success

Image courtesy of Canva

- Employ integrated communications with clear and consistent messaging across digital and print channels
- Collaborate with your organization’s stakeholders (affiliates, colleagues, Board members, media, donors, and patients)
- Be transparent in <u>all</u> communications
- Be responsive to questions and pushback
- Demonstrate how event aligns with your mission
- Go the extra mile

About the Presenter

A seasoned communicator with more than 15 years’ experience in non-profits, Stephanie Dufner worked at the National Office of The ALS Association from 2005 - 2007 and 2011 - 2015 in the Communications and Marketing Department. She served as Communications Manager at the Association when the ALS Ice Bucket Challenged occurred in July - August 2014, overseeing the Association’s social media efforts.

Today, she works with Florida-based PR agency, Madeira Public Relations, collaborating with non-profits, associations, and government agencies. Her expertise lies in public relations, media relations, corporate communications, promotions, integrated marketing, and strategy. She recently co-presented a workshop, “Media Relations 101,” at California Lutheran University’s Center for Nonprofit Leadership.

Stephanie is a nature enthusiast who enjoys spending time outdoors walking her Labrador and hiking with family and friends. She can be reached via email at dufnerstephanieb@gmail.com.

PRSA California Gold Coast Chapter
Communicate Your Cause Workshop
April 26, 2019

This Crisis Communication Plan template, while not exhaustive, provides a basis for developing your own Crisis Communication Plan for your organization. I strongly encourage you to dedicate the time to create or update your own plan. Remember, the best plan of action is being prepared to handle anything that comes your way!
Nancy Covarrubias Gill, Senior Executive Director of University Communication
California State University Channel Islands

Crisis Communication Plan Template

A. Overview of a Crisis Response

a. Our job is to show that [Organization Name] is:
    i. Competent: we are handling the situation properly
    ii. Compassionate: we are handling the situation humanely
    iii. Concerned: we are handling the situation expediently

B. Purpose of Our Crisis Communication Plan

a. Facilitating overall communication between our organization and employees, customers/clients, constituents, partners, news media, and the public.
b. Ensuring an effective response structure and chain of command for information, input and decision-making.
c. Ensuring that news media coverage is as factual as possible and minimizing brand-damaging news coverage.

C. Part I: Planning & Preparation

a. Identify a Crisis Response Team (usually members of the communication staff) and Crisis Management Team (senior leadership)
b. Define role of the Crisis Response Team and who will lead each of the following roles:
    i. Identify the Crisis Lead/Public Information Officer.
    ii. Gather and document crisis details: who, what, where, when, how, "why" may come in the hours or days ahead.
    iii. Contact the Crisis Management Team members.
    iv. Establish space to gather the Crisis Management Team, Crisis Response Team and others as needed.
    v. Prepare and distribute news releases, serve as news media liaison and document inquiries, coverage. Coordinate and arrange for a news conference (space, podium, microphone, media invites, scripts).
    vi. Identify spokespeople and subject-matter experts to represent your organization publicly.
    vii. Coordinate social media postings and monitor/respond to conversations.
    viii. Coordinate information posted on the organization's website or other online resources.

ix. Oversee outward communication with customers, clients, constituents, board members, etc. and utilize the appropriate tools to be used for sending notifications, i.e. software, emails, etc.
x. Order food and supplies for the Crisis Response Team and Crisis Management Team (usually handled by catering or event staff).
xi. Budget response needs (usually handled by accounting staff)
xii. Additional responsibilities to be defined and detailed based on the organization.

D. Outline the Possible Source(s) of Unsuspected Crises

- Alcohol or Drug Issues
- Criminal Activities
- Data Security Breach
- Disease Outbreak or Public Health Issues
- Employment or Employee-Related Issues
- Improper Use of Donations, Accounting Irregularities or Fraud
- Natural Disasters (fire, flood, earthquake.)
- Sexual Assault or Harassment Claims
- Racism or Discrimination
- Terrorism or other National Threats

Include the following factors with each potential crisis:

- Who will most likely be involved from the Crisis Response Team and Crisis Management Team?
- Identify primary and secondary audiences for notifications
- Develop generic statements, holding statements and follow-up statements.
- Consider news media questions: do not think of 'softball' questions; be prepared for journalists to ask tough questions. What are the three most important things you want to communicate to the audience?

E. Part II: Response

a. Create Step-by-Step Instructions and Hour-by-Hour Response Flow for:
   i. Phase I: 15-60 minutes
   ii. Phase II: 60-90 minutes
   iii. Phase III: 2-4 hours
   iv. Phase IV: 4-8 hours
   v. Phase V: 8-12 hours
   vi. Phase VI: 12-24 hours
b. News Release Templates & Holding Statements
   i. Pre-draft a news release for each scenario so that in any situation you can easily and quickly integrate the unique details of the incident.
   ii. Align employee communication, social media and other stakeholder communication to the contents and timing of your news releases.
   iii. Social media will run rampant before you're even able to verify or make an announcement. Assign someone to monitor or make posts that align with the communication developed by the Crisis Response Team. Reply to posts as succinctly as possible and without releasing personal or confidential information.

iv. Develop pre-drafted talking points for the different scenarios for your CEO, President, or Board Chair, so your senior leadership is comfortable and confident in your ability to manage communication during a crisis.
v. Keep pre-drafted news releases, holding statements and other resources on a USB drive that you can carry in your purse, vehicle or at home, store these documents 'in the cloud,' i.e. Dropbox for easy access.

c. Equipment & Supplies
    i. Make sure you have a laptop/cord, mobile phone and chargers available for use during the crisis or incident.
    ii. Keep printed copies of all pre-drafted templates, documents, and telephone call lists in an emergency binder in the office and at home.
    iii. Keep emergency supplies such as a flashlight, water/snacks, and a change of clothes in a small container or bag you can easily transport.

F. Crisis Response Do's and Don'ts

a. DO stay in constant contact with your corporate communications office for advice, guidance, background information, or general instructions.
b. DO stay in constant contact with the Crisis Response Team and the Crisis Management Team
c. DON'T engage in casual conversation with news media or make 'light' of the crisis or incident.
d. DON'T panic! Leadership is the ability to hide your panic from others!

G. Determining Your Strategy – A Communication Reference Checklist

a. The organization should make every attempt to contain the information flow to a limited number of individuals who need to know about a potential emergency or a real crisis.
b. When communicating during a real crisis, the Crisis Response Team may need to take some or all of the following steps:
    i. <u>Contact local officials</u>. Possibilities may include calling the mayor's office or the health department. This is especially important when the support of local officials can be critical.
    ii. <u>Determine key messages/communication materials</u>. Key messages are usually the three or four critical points that the organization needs to state about a crisis or incident. Audience-specific communication materials should then be prepared by the Crisis Response Team based on these key messages. Have as much prepared in advance as possible, i.e. templates.
    iii. <u>Notify employees</u>. If possible, notify employees before public discourse of any crisis development – it is far better that an employee hear about a crisis directly from the organization rather than an impersonal news report.
        1. Determine appropriate employee messages (pre-drafted templates to address different scenarios)
        2. Determine how employees will be notified (email, telephone, in-person).
        3. Reiterate to employees that news media inquiries will be handled by the Crisis Response Team or designated spokesperson.
    iv. <u>Respond to/brief the news media.</u> How an organization handles news media inquiries affects the way news about that organization is reported. Respond to inquiries as soon as possible, thank reporters for their patience, let them know

you'll get back to them with answers (if known), keep track of reporter's names and calls/emails returned.

v. <u>Provide the public with accurate and timely information.</u> Depending upon the seriousness of the crisis, this may take the form of advertising, publicity or direct contact through an established call center.

H. Part III: Crisis Roles/Example: Crisis Leader

<u>Crisis Leader</u>

<u>Crisis Role:</u> Leads the overall Crisis Response Team – most commonly a senior member of the Communication staff.

<u>Responsibility:</u> Oversees all aspects of the crisis communication response. Ensures that all key crisis roles are being filled, that Crisis Response Team is quickly and properly mobilized, and that we have provided all of the resources required to successfully respond to and manage the crisis situation. Interacts with the Crisis Management Team, CEO and senior leadership in making key strategic decisions that shape the organization's response and how the response is perceived by employees and the public.

<u>Duties:</u>

- As soon as notified, immediately initiate the Crisis Response Team.
- Ensure that the Crisis Management Team has been notified about the crisis or incident.
- Oversee the mobilization and completion of critical communication tasks. In particular, overall communication has been provided to primary and secondary audiences, including the news media and public.
- Identify in advance, roles and duties for each of the Crisis Response Team members (usually members of the Communication staff) and are mobilized to the designated emergency space location or are able to accomplish tasks remotely.
- Conduct bi-annual or annual training or table-top exercises for the Crisis Response Team.

I. Part IV: Crisis Telephone List

a. Update regularly contact information for the Crisis Response Team, Crisis Management Team and communication staff.
b. Information to be maintained should include: mobile and office telephone numbers, any landlines, primary and secondary email addresses.

J. Part V: Post-Crisis Reporting: Fact Sheet

a. Date/Time of crisis or incident
b. Location
c. Identify Leads
d. What we know at this time.
e. What we don't know.
f. News media coverage/response, including social media.
g. Who was/has been communicated to?
h. Next steps

California Lutheran University

Dr. Jean Kelso Sandlin
Professor, Communication &
Associate Dean
jsandlin@callutheran.edu

Why, When, & How Your Nonprofit Needs to Apologize

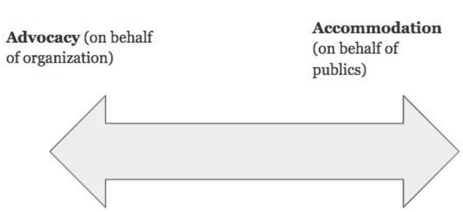
"In cyberspace, everyone will hear you scream"
Organizational transgressions:

- No longer between the offender and offended
- Travel at the speed of cyberspace
- May be based on false rumors, but spread like truth
- May be as small as a mishandled volunteer interaction or as serious as ...
- Are based on perceptions - which vary according to groups & individuals

We live in a *Masspersonal* media environment

Interpersonal Steps (Plus Remorse) Schmitt et al. 2004	Image [Repair]Restoration Options Benoit 1995, 2014
Admit fault	Denial
Admit damage	Evasion of responsibility
Express remorse	Reducing offensiveness
Ask for forgiveness	Mortification
Offer compensation	Corrective action

Deciding on Apology Actions
Caution: Audience Perspective Required Cameron et al., 1997; Coombs and Holladay



- Who will people blame? (was the organization a victim, was it an accidental, or could the organization have prevented it?
- Are there "Intensifying factors" - e.g., does the organization have a history of transgressions or prior negative reputation?
- Is the corrective action perceived to be on par with the transgression?
- What to say:
  - Help people prevent further harm (protect themselves)
  - Help people cope psychologically (provide corrective info/express sympathy)
- Who communicates? Who audience perceives as appropriate? Training?
- Where and how? Channel selection & budget considerations

Rumbaugh Public Relations
2166 Flintridge Court
Thousand Oaks, California 91362
Phone: 805-493-2877
E-mail: Diane@RumbaughPR.com
www.RumbaughPR.com

"Event Publicity and PR to Maximize Your ROI"

Event Communications Planning – Start Early

--Define your audience
--Demographics
--Interests
--Ethnic make-up
--Decide on your media spokesperson(s)
--Consider having more than one spokesperson
--Spanish speaking spokesperson? Need to translate news releases?
--Photos/video/logo for publicity purposes
--Advertising/Media Sponsorships
--Ticket giveaways
--Media list
--Identify outlets for calendar listings, interviews, articles
--Media invitations to attend/cover
--Consider activities leading up to the event to generate event awareness
--Contests
--Giveaways
--Announce sponsors, contests
--What's new, unique?

Five Months Out (if possible)

--Begin gathering specific information that could be included in a calendar listing. There are 50 plus outlets in Ventura, L.A. and Santa Barbara counties.
--Prepare calendar listing.
--Create public relations calendar of activities

<u>Three Months Out</u>

--Begin preparing and sending/posting information about the event per p.r. calendar.

--Prepare:

- **--Fact Sheet**
- **--Media Questions – to help interviewers and spokespeople**

<u>One to Two Months Out</u>

--Send/post overview news release, other news items
--Pitch media interviews – think visually for TV
--Arrange media interviews
--Arrange event ticket giveaways
--Invite the media/send media passes

<u>One to Two Weeks Out</u>

--Conduct electronic media interviews
--Handle last minute media requests
--Prepare and send media advisory (one last time to reach out to media)

<u>Other Items</u>

--Add media page to website that includes:

- **--P.R. person's contact info**
- **--News releases**
- **--Link to high-resolution photos, videos and logo**

--Prepare laminated media passes for those attending
--Arrange photographer for event photography/video/b-roll
--Post-event news release – money raised, number of people attending, other positive outcomes
--Compile media clips to gauge effectiveness of p.r. campaign

ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Best Practices for Successfully Sharing Your Message with Diverse Audiences

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

If you would like to expand services and/or awareness of your organization into different communities, talk from the viewpoint of the public's interest and what their cultural and language needs might be. Pro tip: Be data driven. Know your community's demographics and aim to hire diverse talent.

BE PREPARED TO TRANSLATE AND RESPOND

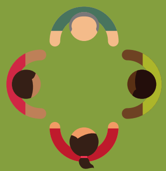
Are you equipped with staff that can effectively translate and interpret? Make sure that materials and services you provide in the target language can be supported by staff that are fluent and knowledgeable. Pro tip: Degree-holding or credentialed interpreters or translators lend credibility to your message.

BUILD CONSISTENCY OF COMMUNICATION

Develop a baseline goal and strategy for what messages and communication everyone will receive and experience. Consider the materials, resources, and time invested when deciding to translate. Pro tip: Avoid confusing your audience by mixing English and the target language.

DON'T FORGET THE NEWS MEDIA

Translating and sharing press releases, events, and announcements with target language news media amplifies your message and widens your reach to new clients. Pro tip: Best practice is to share media announcements in English and the target language.



FOCUS ON INCLUSION

Consider your organization's policies that support accessibility of information. Ease of access to information supports your entire community. Pro tip: For websites, review the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Putting a face on your pitch

Kim Lamb Gregory
Communication Specialist
805-437-8454

1. The best way to make an **impression** for your nonprofit is to make a human **connection** with readers.
   —show them how the story personally affects them
   —go for the heart. Engage the reader's emotions

2. Find an angle, then find that person who personifies that angle

3. Show don't tell
   —don't describe how special your organization is, show it

4. Find a person whose story is linked with the story you are pitching
   —if it's a relay race, find someone who is running for a loved one, or who came in last the previous year and is determined to make it this time.
   —if it's a nonprofit cause, find an interesting volunteer.
   —if it's an achievement, find the person/student who had to jump the biggest hurdle to get where he/she is
   —celebrities often work. If LeBron James, Oprah or the mayor will be kicking off your event, he/she's the lead.

5. Look for interesting profiles within your organization. Look beyond the obvious choices.

6. Go easy on the bureaucratic interviews—board members, directors, managers, etc.—people want to hear from other ordinary people.
   —i.e., if the story's about building a home for a homeless family, get one interview with a bureaucrat and the rest with the family.

7. Be as specific as you can with your pitch. You can even put a "face" on an event.
   —rather than advertising "food and fun" try "beignets with powdered sugar and a human-sized hamster wheel."

8. Avoid "tell" language when pitching a person. Show. Rather than "hear their heartwarming story," try "they make it a family affair to visit the Red Cross bloodmobile" or "Michelle overcame a lot of barriers to get her scholarship," try "Michelle took three buses and a train every day just to get to class."

9. Always, always look for visual possibilities.
   —Look for action shots. The building of a Habitat for Humanity home; photos from last year's festival. Candid action photos.
   —this is especially critical with television.
   —Send a photo with your news release