

## **Eseosa Imade | What is Crisis Communication? | 08/31/2021**

Our world is characterized by organizations in different industries that face unexpected crises; from natural disasters to infectious diseases, every organization needs an effective crisis communication plan. The term crisis is beyond a mere mishap or unregular events; it is a peculiar happening in the history of organizations (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). For example, the Covid-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida. Interestingly, there are three significant characteristics of a crisis; Surprise, Threat, and Short response time (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). Similarly, organizational crises can range from unexpected, non-routine, uncertainty, opportunities, or threats to reputation to an organization (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). Eriksson (2018) argued that social media is imperative in crisis communication; every organization should have a good brand messaging, loyal followers and prioritize traditional media to address the publics. Crisis Communication is the process of managing a crisis to reduce its effect (Sydney Lectures, 2020).

Researchers in Crisis communications have divided crises into intentional and unintentional crises to ensure clarity and practical direction in preparing for a crisis (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). Intentional crises consist of — terrorism, sabotage, workplace violence, poor employee relationships, poor risk management, hostile takeovers, and unethical leadership (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, unintentional crisis includes; natural disasters, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable technical interactions, product failure, and a downturn in the economy (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017). Most researchers in crisis communication focus on the best way to reduce the effect of a crisis through effective communication (Sydney Lectures, 2020). In measuring the success of a crisis, the key components to look out for are; reputation, purchase intention, negative word of mouth, and supportive behaviors of the stakeholders (Sydney Lectures, 2020). Consequently,

there are three optimal crisis response theories — Stealing Thunder, Situational Crisis Communication (SCTT), and Add Accommodative (Sydney Lectures, 2020). It is important to highlight that not all crises are the same, and the level of intensity for each crisis will differ; this is referred to as a “Sticky crisis, a complex and challenging crisis” (Sydney Lectures, 2020). The ineffectiveness of crisis communication can lead to infamy — social disapproval from the public; unlike reputation, which is built over time, infamy takes immediate cause (Sydney Lectures, 2020).

In understanding crisis communication, there are 3 major preventable crisis clusters: (1) Human errors, (2) Mismanagement conduct, and (3) Scansis (Sydney Lectures, 2020). These are measures an organization can adopt to prevent the dangers of a crisis. It is important to highlight that “HOW” and “WHY” a crisis happens are determinants of the response of the public (Sydney Lectures, 2020). Crisis communications involve using fact rather than mere speculation (Institute for PR, 2013).

Over the years, there have been various misconceptions about what crisis communication is and its impact on an organization. As such, we must debunk that crisis communication does not help an organization build character, throw facts at the public, push blames and responsibilities, or lessen the impact of a crisis (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017); Instead, it shows the already established values of an organization, presents an organization with a choice to turn crises into a positive opportunity, create a plan to continue organization’s operations beyond a crisis and to take responsibility for the impact of a crisis while providing effective solutions (Ulmer *et al.*, 2017).

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