



Crisis Communications Plan Worksheet

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This worksheet serves as a template to ensure that you have all the communications tools you might need in the case of an unexpected or planned business disruption before, during and after the event, through reopening. All businesses are different and not all sections may be relevant to you, but completing the worksheet as much as possible will create a foundation that will allow you to move through a business interruption with an organized, actionable plan.

Plan Goal – This can be as simple as, “This plan creates a structure for communicating with customers, employees, vendors, partners and other stakeholders in the event of a crisis or disruption that impacts the normal operations of the business.” Stating your goal or objective will help keep all aspects of the plan aligned.

Identify possible crisis scenarios and outline in advance.

It can be helpful to identify example crisis scenarios that may impact your business and prepare communication templates in advance for some of them. It can also help to sort them into the categories of Disruption and Disaster. Your plan may or may not be different for the two categories, but it is important to define the two to gain clarity on how your business may be impacted by events in both categories. See the examples in each category below and add any others that may impact your business.

Disruption: Planned or unplanned interruption of business that does not put any employee or customer in harm’s way and results in temporary, short-term closure of business or potential damage to reputation. Examples include:

- Closing due to weather, power outages, holidays, etc.
- Unexpected power outages, phone line or internet outage.
- Negative publicity due to issue with product or service.
- Vandalism, break-in, or other events caused by a person that doesn’t put customers or employees in danger.
- Disruptions that may impact your business:

Disaster: Major unplanned event that may put employees and/or customers in danger or that results in longer term business closure. Examples include:

- Major health crisis such as pandemic.
- Snow/ice, major storm, tornado, flood, fire or other natural disasters.
- Active shooter, bomb threat, act of violence, robbery or other event caused by a person or persons that puts employees or customers in danger.
- Isolated incidents such as accident with injury, domestic violence, death on property, etc.
- Disasters that may impact your business:

Identify Your Audience – Who are your stakeholders that will need to be informed of the event?

- Employees
- Customers
- Vendors
- Suppliers
- Partners
- Lenders/Financial Institutions
- Shareholders
- Others:

Identify key person who will be go-to for all communications throughout the event.

This person might not execute all communications, but will be responsible for delegating, providing information for updates, and following through with all communications throughout event. **It is important for key person and all other communications contacts to have a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities and level of decision making autonomy for any crisis event.**

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Key Communications Person

Name	Role/Title	Phone Number	Email Address
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Additional Communications Contacts who will report to above:

Name	Role/Title	Phone Number	Email Address
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Create FAQ or Fact Sheet pertaining to crisis. Make it a priority to update it throughout the crisis as things change to keep it relevant. This should be posted on a standalone page on the business website and linked to from all online platforms used, and within any email or other communications distributed throughout crisis. Be sure to address these topics:

- Date FAQs are updated – this should be in an obvious place at the top. Things can change from hour to hour or minute to minute during a crisis, and if the information is already stale or dated but there’s no date/timestamp visible to the public, it can create confusion or misinformation.
- Date of occurrence (anticipated or actual).
- Impact on business operations (anticipated or actual) and what it means for stakeholders.
- Steps your business is taking to mitigate crisis.
- Where can stakeholders contact you and/or find the most up to date information?
- Links to relevant resources – local or national depending on event.
- Anticipated date of conclusion of event.
- Reopening information.

Prepare Crisis Messaging for the following communication channels, if applicable.

You may or may not have advance notice of business interruption, so creating templates for all your communications channels that can be quickly accessed and altered to fit the situation at hand will help you be prepared. If there is no opportunity for advance preparation, start with a simple message about the interruption directing people to a single source that will be updated regularly (website, Facebook, blog – wherever people most interact with your business).

- Internal notification to staff, shareholders (Consider whether to use email, print, mail, telephone, in-person meetings or a combination)
- Social media posts (all platforms used)
- Business listing pages (Google My Business, Yelp, local listings, etc.)
- Website / blog messaging
- Email to client / customer base
- Phone calls to clients with appointments during impacted time
- Signage for business
- Response to media inquiries
- Email or phone call to vendors, suppliers, etc.

Identify the risks of each message and its platform, and how those risks can be mitigated during the crisis. For example:

- Negative comments on social media or business listings in response to your announcement.
- Media inquiry requesting interview or statement.
- Loss of customers/clients.
- Loss of vendors/suppliers.

Notes on Crisis Messaging:

- Keep messaging consistent across all platforms.

- Monitor and respond on social media, Google My Business, blog comments, web forms, etc.
- If more than one person is handling these platforms, establish guidelines for social responses to ensure consistency, transparency and accuracy.
- Track and record messages and inquiries received throughout crisis.
- Continue to update local/national resources from media, partners, vendors, peers, etc.
- Be sure employees have copies of communications/info being provided to customers/clients.
- Keep platforms updated, even if there are no real updates.
- When posting updates to all platforms, ensure date/time of update is included in an obvious place.
- Don't forget notification of the conclusion of the disruption on all platforms.

Post-crisis – business reopening/resuming standard operations

- How has your long-term goal/vision for your business changed?
- What changes have you made to your business operations that will continue, and what will end and return to pre-crisis operations?
 - For example, a retail business may have created online sales, restaurants offering curbside pickup, etc.
- Update all communications and all platforms with anticipated reopening date and what business operations will look like for all stakeholders.
- Create reopening FAQ, if necessary.
- Ensure employees have clear direction for reopening communication
- Include messages of thanks to all stakeholders for continuing to support your business.
- Continue to update platforms and engage audience after operations have resumed.