



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS: PART 1

HOW PRUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ARE  
PREPARING IN ADVANCE FOR THE UNTHINKABLE

**A WHITE PAPER**



## ARE YOU READY IF DISASTER STRIKES?

The damage from the Equifax data breach of over 143 million customer files is far from over. If a catastrophic event like this happened to your firm, would you be ready? Have you developed a crisis/contingency plan that would help your organization better manage the crisis? Do you know how your firm would communicate with your stakeholders—customers, employees, vendors, media, government officials, and others?

### CREATE A PLAN

Regulated entities such as banks, insurers, health care providers and telecom companies are typically required to have disaster recovery plans in place and to regularly test their readiness through simulations.

For small to mid-tier firms, however, there is generally no such requirement. Many never prepare or consider the unthinkable because they believe a crisis would never happen to them.

So how would your firm respond if all hell broke loose? The following best practices are intended to help firms who have not encountered—or planned for—a reputational crisis.

- 1. Determine the facts.** Before any decisions are made, it's important to unearth the relevant facts. That's much easier said than done. Quite often, the first reports about what went wrong are inaccurate or incomplete. Moreover, those directly responsible typically aren't forthcoming because they fear for their job.
- 2. Make informed decisions quickly.** If you don't move quickly and don't respond to your stakeholders, your firm will only compound the problem. Once you have a reasonably complete understanding of what happened and have decided upon a course of corrective action, you need to act.
- 3. Do the right thing.** In a crisis, your reputation has already taken a hit. If you do the right thing—admit a mistake or say you are working cooperatively to resolve the issue—the public will be more understanding. Denying a problem exists or blaming others is a recipe for further disaster.



4. **Communicate via every channel.** Use every channel at your disposal to deliver your messages. Email, text, social media and news media can communicate breaking developments. Print and mail pieces as a follow-up are equally important. Use all of these levers as appropriate.
5. **Be transparent to the extent possible.** In a crisis, your stakeholders understand that you may not have all of the answers or information. Tell them that more information is forthcoming. Communicate as often as you can, as long as that information is new and helps clarify what has happened previously.

One word of caution: Don't necessarily allow your legal advisors to limit your options or direct the communication. By training, attorneys are risk managers whose role is to limit lawsuits. However, most attorneys are not crisis communicators. The question a CEO needs to ask is this: What's more important—doing whatever it takes to limit the immediate damage or worrying about future lawsuits that follow?

That's always a judgment call. The point is that attorneys are just one set of advisors who need to be consulted.

**MANY BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE TYPES OF CRISIS THAT CAN HAPPEN: NATURAL DISASTERS, TERRORISM OR GUN VIOLENCE, A PRODUCT DEFECT OR MALFUNCTION, A CYBERSECURITY BREACH, THEFT OF TRADE SECRETS, OR A DISGRUNTLED EMPLOYEE WHO IS CAUSING HARM.**

## SETTING UP THE CRISIS INFRASTRUCTURE

In preparing a crisis plan, it's essential to appoint a standing crisis team before one ever happens. Then, when a crisis hits, that team should be called together to take action. The sooner the team declares the company is officially in a crisis, the easier it is for the entire crisis protocol to begin.

The crisis team should be comprised of executive-level officers with decision-making authority, along with functional and subject matter experts. Ideally, the CEO should be in charge, but it should also include finance, IT, communications and HR. Knowing in advance that there is a well-defined crisis team will help minimize the chaos you will inevitably face.

It's also important to simulate a crisis with your team on a regular basis. This is one of the best ways to identify weaknesses and make sure everyone understands their roles. There are many third parties who specialize in crisis simulations and who can provide feedback that allows you to adjust your plan accordingly.

Also important is making sure you have partners in place who can help you absorb the crisis-related workload. For example, if CSG were asked to print and mail several million pieces of communication in just a few days, we can scale to meet those needs, and we can augment with automated voice calls, SMS, and email notifications as well.



## CREATE YOUR TOOLKIT IN ADVANCE

Many businesses understand the types of crisis that can happen: natural disasters, terrorism or gun violence, a product defect or malfunction, a cybersecurity breach, theft of trade secrets, or a disgruntled employee who is causing harm.

For each one of these incidents, a variety of external and internal communications can be developed in advance. Your communications toolkit should include:

- Talking points explaining the situation and who is taking action to address it
- Email and/or texts that can be quickly disseminated
- Phone scripts for your employees—everyone from the receptionist to call centers
- A pre-written news release that can be issued to provide updates, if needed
- A website or web pages (offline) that tells your stakeholders what to do
- Draft letters and follow-up surveys that can be quickly printed and mailed

Of course, the details of each situation are different, but having all of these tactical communications in place will help you manage the crisis better.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

At CSG, we work with public and private organizations to make sure they understand all kinds of risks, including how to respond in a crisis. While no one knows when a crisis will occur, you can minimize the fallout by having a plan in place.

## WORK WITH CSG

CSG is a provider of strategic business communications and one of the nation's leaders in using advanced color technologies to create communications with maximum impact. We provide fully integrated, end-to-end solutions for secure data management, multichannel communications, offset and digital printing of material, storage, order fulfillment, distribution management, and direct mail.

We understand complex program design and management, and we have unmatched institutional experience in delivering exceptional results. We provide proactive program management, securely handle and manage all materials, orders and data, and have superior technical expertise with storage, order management, fulfillment, printing and multichannel distribution assets.

## CUSTOMER ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT

CSG helps you increase the lifetime value of your customers. We facilitate customer engagement and drive revenue by delivering world-class strategy, technology and fulfillment. We turn data into business intelligence to help your team understand consumer behavior. Then we create compelling offers and calls-to-action that motivate consumers to act and keep them coming back to you.



## END-TO-END PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

CSG can manage the entire order and fulfillment supply chain, from material development and design to production, storage, ordering, picking, fulfillment, and distribution, to audit and compliance reporting. Our process employs formal security and cyber safeguard procedures that protect confidential data. We apply state-of-the-art technology and expertise that offer you maximum control, flexibility and transparency while maintaining the absolute integrity of their information and materials.

## GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH US

**Our teams create the strategy to increase revenue and market share.**

- > Acquire new customers
- > Upsell products and solutions with more features
- > Cross-sell products—offer new products to existing customers
- > Build customer loyalty and renewals
- > Accelerate customer response via digital and mobile channels
- > Identify the most profitable and least profitable customers
- > Raise the response rates of hard-to-reach consumer populations
- > Use effective analytics and sophisticated models to accelerate marketing growth
- > Reduce customer acquisition costs by increasing the effectiveness of your marketing communications efforts

## RUN YOUR BUSINESS WITH US

**We deliver a wide range of cost-effective, high quality solutions.**

- > Redundant IT servers and FTP communications with formal cybersecurity protocols to guard all data and processes
- > Variable digital full-color imaging operations to personalize and customize communications
- > Conventional offset 4-color printing operations
- > ePresentment communications to accelerate payments
- > Email communications and tracking
- > Text communications and confirmation
- > Intelligent inserting and mailing operations
- > Automated kitting and fulfillment operations
- > National distribution from coast-to-coast to speed delivery ensures no disruption in business
- > Tracking and auditing from receipt of data to mailbox

## A CONSULTATIVE PARTNER

CSG serves as a consultant, a collaborative contributor, and a trusted expert. We add value and improve results to all of your deliverables—letters, forms, statements, digital media, marketing services and more.

**For more information, contact [marketing@csgi.com](mailto:marketing@csgi.com).**