



When Media Attacks: Turning a Communication Crisis into an Opportunity

Overview

When joining FTA, companies aim to better understand their supply chains and limit reputational risks. They should remain ready for the unexpected and know how to manage it. Based on practical case studies, the session will explore different crisis scenarios and identify the elements which are necessary to turn a potential damage to the reputation of the company into an opportunity towards internal and external stakeholders.

Speakers:

Moderator: **Ana Maria Martin**, Media and Editorial Planning Coordinator - FTA

- **Monica Vicente Cristina**, Director Corporate Communications and Social Impact, Weber Shandwick
- **Lea Rankinen**, Senior Vice President, Sustainability and CSR at S Group
- **David Connor**, Consultant strategist, Coethica

Session Highlights

- Communicating during a crisis is key, you musn't stay silent!
- Adopt a tone early and respond to anyone who needs responding to – emergency services etc.
- Be empathetic and open and honest. This will set the tone for how you will collaborate with authorities in other parties.
- Be open and honest as opposed to defensive and closed. If a problem is found, be compliant and use the exposure to show how you're now working on that problem and making sure it doesn't happen again in the future.
- By defining roles you'll be prepared and better placed to act quickly when something happens.
- Don't use internal language, no one will understand it! Communicate in a way that will be clear for external people.
- Cut out the company jargon and lines and just give concrete acts.
- Don't hide from problems – talk about these issues.

- Don't be afraid to communicate the good things you're also doing. It's not just about responding to crisis situations.
- Just because someone has ten thousand followers it doesn't mean they have influence. However certain people may have more influence than an organisation like the BBC. If a blog has ten followers who are key industry people, then it's worth communicating with them.
- It's like a customer service perspective: engage with people in the right way, turn them into fans, then it'll be beneficial.
- Try to create a culture within the organisation that these situations are opportunities to learn.
- No one expects companies to be perfect or even close to perfect. It's ok to be honest and it can create a unique selling point regardless of what the legal and marketing people say.
- Understand who is complaining and what they are complaining about.
- A crisis is also a great time to grab the limelight and expose the great work you're also doing alongside this one problem.
- When Greenpeace attacked Timberland, owner Jeffrey Swartz was upfront in saying: 'You've got us, we didn't know. Nobody knew.' The company then proceeded to send everybody an email response in their local language. It was upfront and personal.
- Use your communications team and brief all spokespersons on the messages you want to get across.

Quotes

- **Monica Vicente Cristina:** The first 24 hours are critical because that's when you adopt a tone.
- **Lea Rankinen:** From a business perspective these situations are really crises, it's daily work that can turn into opportunities.
- **David Connor:** Most companies are doing great stuff but they just don't communicate it and it's a great shame.