

Transportation Sector Political Crisis Communications 101 – Presentation Outline

BEFORE: PREPARATION & STRATEGY

Preparation

- Identify allies
 - In preparation for a political crisis, this would include: community leaders, local and state elected officials, toll road/highway users, or key constituencies (e.g. parent, commuter, or employer advocacy groups) who can put a local face on the issue
 - Engage your allies; develop a “Thought Drivers 1,000” list of influencers in the transportation sector to open lines of communication
- Put your team in place
 - Designate a spokesperson (internal or third party) who has media training and can relate to the community
 - Build a crisis team (could include legal, communications, HR, or CFO)
 - Establish a notification and approval process in the event of a crisis

Strategy

- Know your messaging
 - By their nature, crises are unpredictable and will change your approach or alter your communications, but having core messages established puts you ahead of the game
 - e.g. Key messages/talking points, FAQs, myths & facts documents, infographics, testimonials, white papers, and other easily-distributed collateral , video, etc.
 - Focus groups, polling, and one-on-one interviews can give insight to winning messages
- Know the landscape
 - Journalists who cover transportation, stories, and quotes
 - Allies/competitors who’ve been in crisis scenarios before
- Scenario planning
 - Define what would constitute a crisis to prevent over- or under-reaction
 - Create a matrix of how to react to different types of crises, based on scale, timing, impact, internal/external, etc.

DURING: ASSESSMENT & RESPONSE

Assessment

- Gather the facts & determine an appropriate, measured response
 - What happened? How do we know? Who is impacted? Should we be low profile (i.e. only respond to direct inquiries) or high profile (i.e. stay out front, visible, and proactive in your messaging)?
- Notify
 - Based on the initial assessment, prioritize *who* needs to know (e.g. employers, consumers, lawmakers, media) and *what* information they need

Response

- Engage allies who can carry your message
 - Capitalize on third-party relationships to call, write, and email media and elected officials
 - As appropriate, place op-eds, LTEs, interviews, “Hill Drops”
- Establish continuous monitoring
 - Use the right digital tools for digital and print monitoring (e.g. Signal, Google alerts)
 - Based on monitoring, have a rapid response in place
- Control the message
 - Repeat the facts, correct misinformation immediately, be forthright and open
 - Set your digital footprint, with videos or online collateral that are “sticky” and encourage sharing
 - Deploy tools such geo-targeting to reach your audience with advertising in social media, consumer or trade publications, national news outlets, blogs, etc.

AFTER: EVALUATION, RECOVERY, RESTORATION

Evaluation

- Assess the impact made on the company, its relationships with community and stakeholders, its brand, and reputation
 - Continued media monitoring and what the political/public conversation is
 - Surveying employees, customers, etc.

Recovery

- Based on lessons learned, determine a plan for recovery
 - This includes an internal plan (employees) and external plan (media, community, stakeholders, consumers)
 - Build a case study that qualifies lessons learned and how to prevent similar scenarios in the future

- Apply lessons learned toward a new image campaign
 - Continue to engage media on what you did right and what you will do right going forward
 - Adjust advertising and marketing messaging
 - Adjust talking points and collateral based on what worked and what didn't