



Crisis Communications Discussions with Leadership Toolkit

This document outlines the process to bring your crisis communication preparedness work to leadership with the goal of achieving support and investment in your organization's crisis communication response.

This toolkit will provide a preparation checklist, key messages document and email templates. Each deliverable is a stand-alone document that should be completed in the order below.

DELIVERABLE 1:

Discussions with Leadership—Preparation Checklist

Introduction

A key component of successful crisis communication is support from your organization's leadership, whether this be your CEO/Executive Director, or your Board of Directors. Ensuring leadership is aware of and supports your crisis communication plan will help support swift and coordinated action when a crisis hits. This time should also be used to discuss requests for funding, training and resourcing requirements, and gaps you've identified that could be a risk to your crisis preparedness.

Leadership should be engaged throughout the crisis communications planning process to enable:

1. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Leadership can ensure that the Crisis Communications Plan is in alignment with the strategic direction of the organization.

2. RAPID DECISION-MAKING & ACTION

During a crisis, time is limited and every moment matters. Having leadership buy-in prior to a crisis will allow your organization to activate a response rapidly.

3. ROLE CLARITY

When leadership understands their role, they are able to provide direction and approval quickly. This is important to avoid slow response times, miscommunication, and missed opportunities.

4. RESOURCE SUPPORT

Crisis communication requires resources and support. With leadership support, you can ensure that any resources you need are prioritized and funded.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL CONFIDENCE

A strong, coordinated leadership team instills confidence among your employees and your external interest holders. Remember, your employees are your organization's biggest asset. Strengthening morale and confidence during turbulent times ensures your organization is at its best to handle the crisis.

This Preparation Checklist is the first document in Discussions with Leadership. Complete this checklist, then build your Key Messages, and finally use the Email Template to draft your communication to leadership.

Process for Engaging Leadership

Below is an outline of three steps to engaging leadership and the deliverables to share with leadership at each stage.



Complete the Organizational Crisis Readiness Audit Worksheet and SWOT Analysis Worksheet.

Connect with leadership to discuss the findings, gather their feedback, and build awareness on the next steps of the process.

By identifying interest holders, outlining the crisis communications team, and completing the RACI Matrix, you now have a full picture of the strengths and weaknesses your organization faces with crisis communications. Reconnect with leadership for their review, feedback, and to request resources to address any gaps/weaknesses.

Now that the draft Crisis Communications Plan is developed, including messaging templates and communications protocols, share it with leadership for their review and feedback.

After making the requested revisions, leadership will need to provide their final approval of the Crisis Communications Plan.



CHECKLIST

Preparation Checklist

Complete the checklist below as you work through the foundational steps of building the Crisis Communications Plan and connecting with leadership. After completing the deliverables under each step, pause to engage leadership before moving forward to the next step.

STEP	DELIVERABLE/TASK	STATUS (Yes/No/In-progress)	NOTES
1	Communications Audit (Past crises evaluated, if applicable)		
	SWOT Analysis		
	Engage Leadership		
2	Identify crisis communications team (include backups)		
	Complete RACI Matrix		
	Complete Know Your Interest Holders Worksheet		
	Engage Leadership		
3	Crisis Communications Plan		
	Crisis messaging templates created		
	Communications protocols established		
	Engage Leadership		

DELIVERABLE 2

Discussions with Leadership: Key Messages Worksheet

Note: Complete the Preparation Checklist before this worksheet.

Introduction

Use this worksheet to prepare your key messages. Key messages are what you want to communicate to leadership about your organization's crisis preparedness and Crisis Communications Plan.

KEY MESSAGES: What do you need leadership to know or approve? Through the audit process, SWOT analysis, and identifying your crisis communications team, you've identified the gaps, risks and weaknesses that your organization is facing regarding your crisis communications preparedness. Now, identify your core asks for leadership and consider:

- Resources:
 - Staff time to dedicate to crisis communications preparedness
 - Financial resources
 - A dedicated contractor/external company to support the organization during a time of crisis
- Learning Opportunities:
 - Train relevant staff on crisis communications
 - Cross-train other coworkers on the Crisis Communications Plan
 - Include the Crisis Communications Plan in onboarding process for all relevant staff
 - Develop a working group with local CDMOs (or alternative lead organization if no CDMO) and Visitor Centres in the region to coordinate responses
- Leadership Support:
 - Approval of the Crisis Communications Plan
 - Sharing the Crisis Communications Plan with relevant staff across the organization
 - Knowledge sharing and support from other departments within the organization
 - Confirmation of a spokesperson and alternate(s)
 - Regular reviews of the Crisis Communications Plan

Reasoning—Why is this important to leadership? Consider:

- Why is crisis communications preparedness important to your organization's reputation and success?
- How does having a Crisis Communications Plan in place help protect your organization?
- What are the risks to your organization's reputation management when acting without the proper resources or a plan in place?
- How does this relate to your organization's overall goals, KPIs or business plans? Include how crisis communications preparedness can support achieving those goals.



TIP! Key messages should be clear and concise, one sentence max, one message per sentence. We create key messages to ensure the key points we want to make are communicated to our audience. Key messages should be repeated multiple times in a presentation. If there is debate or disagreement, always bring the conversation back to your key messages.



WORKSHEET

Write your top three key messages

Key Message 1:

Key Message 2:

Key Message 3:

DELIVERABLE 3

Discussions with Leadership: Email Templates

Introduction

Use the following templates to draft your messaging to leadership, requesting their time to participate in the crisis communication planning process. Each phase of the process for engaging leadership has a separate template.

Two bonus templates are provided to help leadership share your Crisis Communications Plan across your organization, and to help you connect with leadership for their review of the Crisis Communications Plan.



TEMPLATE

Step 1 Template— Crisis Readiness Audit Review & Request for Feedback

Subject: For Review: Crisis Readiness Audit & Evaluation

Hello **<Name>**,

As a part of our risk management strategy, I have evaluated our organization's current crisis communications readiness and reviewed our response to past crises. The tourism sector is particularly vulnerable to fast-moving public issues, and our ability to respond directly impacts visitor, interest holder, and staff trust and confidence.

I would like to request a meeting to review my findings and to receive direction on next steps.

continued



To lead the discussion, the following documents are attached for the leadership team's review:

- Readiness Audit: An evaluation of our organization's readiness to crisis communications.
- SWOT Analysis: An evaluation of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to crisis communications.

At this stage, the leadership team's feedback is required to confirm the audit findings and provide direction on the next steps of the process. I will set up a time with the leadership team in the coming weeks to discuss. To prepare, please review the documents attached to this email in advance of the meeting. **<Insert relevant process details from your organization>**

This is the first step in ensuring our organization's preparedness for a crisis. Leadership will be engaged through the following next steps to complete our crisis preparedness efforts:

1. **Plan Ahead:** As we build our crisis communications team and assign roles and responsibilities, leadership will be provided the opportunity to review these materials and approve the direction of our organization. We will also use this time to identify methods to reduce risks and weaknesses for our organization, for your approval.
2. **Prepare to Respond:** At this time, we will provide leadership with a draft Crisis Communications Plan, including key messaging and communication protocols. Leadership will have the opportunity to provide feedback at this time and will support sharing the plan across our organization.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to myself or **<Contact>**.

Thank you,

<Signature>



Step 2 Template – Analysis and Planning Ahead

Subject: For Review: Planning for Crisis Communications—Resource Needs

Hello <Name>,

Thank you for your time reviewing the audit and evaluation. Your feedback was valuable in developing the next phase of materials. As a next step in our crisis preparedness, I would like to schedule another meeting to discuss:

- Crisis Communications Team: Outlines our crisis communications team, roles, and a resource assessment. How we can fill the gaps and address weaknesses in our crisis preparedness.
- RACI Matrix: Outlines the responsibilities of all interest holders and key team players.
- Know Your Interest Holders: Identifies our organization's interest holders, their needs, their preferred communication channels and cadence for connection.

I will find a time with the leadership team in the coming weeks to discuss the above documents. Please have the leadership team review the documents above beforehand. **<Insert relevant process details from your organization>**

Next Steps: The leadership team's review and direction are necessary to preparing our organization for a crisis and the completion of our crisis communication plan, communication protocols and key messaging. Leadership will be engaged for their feedback and approval of the final Crisis Communications Plan when **<timeline>**.

If you have any questions, please reach out to myself or <Name>.

Thank you,

<Signature>



Step 3 Template – Getting the Crisis Communications Plan Approved

Subject: For Approval: Crisis Communications Plan

Hello **<Name>**,

Thank you for the leadership team's feedback in our last session. Your direction has been incorporated into the draft Crisis Communications Plan, attached for the leadership team's review.

Following the format of our previous sessions, I will find a time in the coming weeks to meet with the Leadership Team to discuss the draft plan and any of their requested revisions. Please have the leadership team review this draft before the meeting.

Once your feedback is received, our team will revise the Crisis Communications Plan and reshare with the leadership team for final approval.

We thank you for your support through this entire process to ensuring our organization is prepared for the next crisis. If you have any questions, please reach out to myself or **<Name>**.

Thank you,

<Signature>



Bonus Template 1—Sharing the Crisis Communications Plan Internally

Subject: Our Crisis Communications Plan

Hello team,

As you may be aware, the leadership team has approved our organizations first (updated, revised) Crisis Communications Plan. The team is excited about the clarity, structure and efficiency this plan will provide our organization and ensure ample preparedness for any crisis that may come our way.

To understand what role you play when a crisis hits, please refer to the **<section outlining roles and responsibilities>**.

Each team member listed in the plan will be invited to attend a presentation on the crisis response strategy where we'll review each role and answer questions about the plan overall.

Our organization will be reviewing and evaluating this plan once every year to ensure it stays up-to-date and aligned with our organizational needs.

Thank you,

<Signature>



Bonus Template 2 – Request to Review

Subject: Organizational Crisis Response Evaluation

Hello **<Name>**,

Following our Crisis Communications Plan and reputation management efforts, it's time to conduct our Organizational Crisis Response Evaluation to ensure our plan is up-to-date and to identify any improvements we need to make in our response.

Our organization's Crisis Communications Plan is attached for your review, along with an evaluation of the **<crisis>** we faced this past year.

In addition to general feedback on the Plan, we would like you review and reconfirmation of the following:

Crisis Communications Team & RACI Matrix: do we have the right players involved at the right times? Does the structure of our organization still match the order of operations/approval levels?

Know Your Interest Holders: Have our interest holders changed, or have their needs changed?

Crisis Messaging Templates: Do our templates still meet our communication needs?

Communication Protocols: Do our protocols need updating?

Please provide your feedback to us by **<Date>**. Revisions will be made as needed and sent to the leadership team for approval.

Thank you in advance for the time and effort to complete this review. Your oversight and approval are imperative for our organization's crisis preparedness.

Thank you,

<Signature>