



Organizational Crisis Response Evaluation Toolkit

Taking time to assess your crisis response helps your organization prepare for the next crisis, protecting your reputation and ensuring you're ready to respond quickly and effectively.

This toolkit will guide you through a structured, step-by-step review of your crisis response. It is designed to help you move beyond informal conversations and toward a clear, documented assessment that can inform leadership decisions and future preparedness.



CHECKLIST

Crisis Response Evaluation

Follow these steps to conduct your crisis response evaluation. It will help you document lessons learned, identify gaps and opportunities for improvement, and coordinate your findings with leadership and other interest holders.

By the end, you'll have a clear understanding of how your organization performed, what to improve, and how to communicate your findings.

- ☐ **1.** Gather the essential information about your response:
 - ☐ a. Review and document the crisis timeline of events.
 - ☐ b. Retain documentation of all communications and media coverage.
 - ☐ c. Gather feedback from staff and partners.
 - ☐ d. Schedule a Post-Crisis Debrief meeting to review your organization's response.



- ☐ **2.** Prepare for the Post-Crisis Debrief meeting:
 - ☐ a. Use the Audit Worksheet (see the [Crisis Communications Performance Audit Worksheet](#) below) to assess:
 - ☐ i. What went well: strengths in your response, staffing, and partner support.
 - ☐ ii. What didn't go well: opportunities to improve your speed, information, approvals, and media response.
 - ☐ iii. Impact on reputation: was there damage that needs to be repaired, or did you fare well? What was the feedback from your interest holders?
 - ☐ iv. Assess alignment with your crisis communication strategy. How well did you follow the processes and activate the plan?
- ☐ **3.** Conduct the Post-Crisis Debrief meeting (See [Post-Crisis Debrief](#) —How to run an effective discussion and analysis below).
- ☐ **4.** Prepare Next Steps & Improvements (See [Next Steps & Improvements](#) below).
- ☐ **5.** Prepare a Post-Crisis Report for Leadership (See the [Crisis Response Report for Leadership](#) below). Include next steps in your crisis response, improvements to be made to your response strategy, and any resource requests.
- ☐ **6.** Receive Approval from Leadership and make improvements to strengthen your future response.



WORKSHEET

Crisis Communications Performance Audit

Use the worksheet below to assess how well your organization delivered key communication actions. Mark each with Yes / No / Needs Improvement and provide notes for what worked and what didn't.

PERFORMANCE AREA	YES	NO	NEEDS IM-PROVMENT	NOTES
Performance Area	☐	☐	☐	
We responded quickly with a holding statement.	☐	☐	☐	
Our spokesperson was prepared and available.	☐	☐	☐	
Our Crisis Response Team was prepared and understood their roles.	☐	☐	☐	
Internal staff received timely and accurate updates.	☐	☐	☐	
Messaging was clear, empathetic, and action-oriented.	☐	☐	☐	
Interest holders knew what to do and who to contact.	☐	☐	☐	
Our social media and web channels were updated appropriately.	☐	☐	☐	
Media inquiries were managed professionally.	☐	☐	☐	
Our response aligned with our crisis plan.	☐	☐	☐	
We documented lessons learned in real time.	☐	☐	☐	
Communications were reviewed and approved efficiently.	☐	☐	☐	





POST-CRISIS DEBRIEF

How to run an effective discussion and analysis

Once the immediate crisis has passed, it's important to step back and review how your team responded. A debrief session will help your team reflect on what worked and what didn't, capture lessons learned, identify gaps, issues and challenges, discuss what (if any) improvements are needed, and prepare a summary for your leadership.

Invite all the key team members who were involved with the crisis response. Schedule ideally within one to two weeks after the crisis has passed. Allow for at least an hour to review the timeline, what happened, and how it was handled. Have someone facilitate the discussion and another to record notes. Focus on learning, not blaming. Capture the lessons learned and clear next steps.

POST-CRISIS DEBRIEF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Strategy & Planning

- Did we follow the crisis communications plan? If not, why?
- What elements of the plan were missing or unclear?
- Were we responding as lead, support, or observer? Did we play that role effectively?

Delivery

- What communications channels worked best?
- Were we too slow, too reactive, or just right in our response?
- Were our messages consistent across all platforms and spokespeople?

Teamwork & Leadership

- Were roles clearly defined and played?
- Did we have the resources and staff required to deliver our response?
- Did our spokesperson feel prepared?
- Was decision-making timely and effective?

Interest Holder Engagement

- Did we meet the needs of key audiences?
- Where did any confusion or misinformation occur?
- Who supported us well? Who should be more involved in the future?
- Is there any communication we need to issue now that the crisis has passed?



WORKSHEET

Next Steps & Improvement Plan

Consider the Performance Audit and Post-Crisis Debrief and outline the list of action items you have created, who will take on the task, and any important details.

As a final step, share this action plan with your Crisis Communications Team, include it in your final report, and follow up to confirm completion.

ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DEADLINE	NOTES



REPORT

Crisis Response Report for Leadership

When the debrief is complete, compile the findings into a report for your leadership. The report should summarize:

- What happened, how your organization responded, and what was learned.
- A timeline of events with the communications issued.
- Interest holder feedback.
- Outline of what worked and what didn't.
- List of changes to make to your crisis communications plan.