

Why Crisis Response Should Operate Like a Newsroom

Alongside 24/7 reporting, articles published in real time require the modern newsroom to always be open. So when incidents happening across the world reach newswires and social media in mere moments, crisis teams must take action immediately.

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Bringing Newsroom Agility to Your Brand Communications

Most news teams share a common structure: individual assignment desks track specific issues and topics, editors provide guidance and escalate stories, and an editorial lead determines timing, tone, and direction. Though variations of this structure exist, its basic form allows for flexibility to cover emerging stories, while prioritizing in-depth, hardhitting reporting.

Crisis and PR teams can adopt a version of this newsroom structure to increase effective response time. Executing this transition can require new roles:

- **Field Reporter:** In place of an employee at an assignment desk, a team member can be tasked with tracking relevant news.
- **Managing/Assignment Editor:** Another employee can build from his or her colleague's work by following specific topics of interest and bringing them up to the PR head for further investigation.
- **Deputy Editor:** The PR head can then rapidly structure an organization's realtime response when and where needed, or develop a posture for more delayed reactions.

By adopting this workflow, PR teams are better able to make swift decisions about the content and timing of responses, and more rapidly adapt to market news relevant to its business and brand mission.

Social Media Adoption Is Increasing

Social media is driving both emerging stories and conversations that can impact brands. A [2017 Pew Research study](#) found that 67% of Americans retrieve a portion of their news from social media. This trend is similarly reflected in newsrooms: A [Cision survey](#) found that 42% of participating journalists leverage five or more social media channels when reporting.

In effect, crisis response and PR teams should follow these statical leads and establish plans to tap into social media and other forms of real-time information in order to react to events as they occur. They can also leverage more than one channel to gather information, staying on top of long-term trends and stories alongside real-time emerging news. This leads to better awareness, as PR teams know when exactly to join the narrative and control, substantiate, or contribute to the story.

Leverage Real-time Insights From Social Media and Experts

Similarly, PR and crisis teams can use social media to learn of breaking news and mitigate potential reputation damage quickly, or keep employees and facilities safe and secure.

While both teams traditionally have strategies in place in order to react to breaking stories or brand-related issues, these plans are often delayed due to lack of

story clarity, confirmation, and/or internal bureaucracy. By adopting social media in their approach, however, teams can begin to execute plans directly in response to emerging stories as they happen, in effect launching strategies when they're needed and not when it's too late.

Execute Measured Responses

News editors can choose to break a story with a fast response or slowly gather facts and perspectives to avoid risks and mistakes. This approach was adopted by Google, when the company [waited to aggregate information and impacts before reacting](#) to a potential extremist content crisis. Following the trending story, Google took immediate steps to ban selected content, without overextending its reach. Simultaneously, by gathering all the details before acting, Google was able to limit backlash from advertisers and content creators.

This proactive stance to emerging stories can help crisis response and PR teams best respond and adapt. A team that structures itself like a newsroom, with defined roles to find and elevate relevant news and plans for interaction, can make more informed decisions. Pairing this awareness with social media empowers these teams to leverage all the information at hand in the moment, define their plan, and decide if or when to enter the public conversation. Incorporating social media tools to protect and propel your brand will ensure that you are prepared to handle virtually any situation.

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