

CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR INFLUENCERS

The following article appeared on the Behind the Lines website. It was authored by Ronn Torossian, founder, president, and CEO of New York-based 5WPR, and can be found at http://ronntorossian.com/crisis-management-influencer/?utm_content=Crisi.

A brand must be prepared for a possible reputation crisis caused by its influencers or spokespeople. To be as prepared as possible, here are some steps to take should a reputation crisis occur.

ALERTS

It's a simple and easy step, but oftentimes, one that gets forgotten. Find an alert system that works for you. There are a variety of options: free alert systems, paid ones, comprehensive systems, but decide on one and get it functioning. If you want to thoroughly research the matter before committing to one that charges, then set up a free alert system like Google Alerts in the interim.

Start with your company name, the name of any product tied strongly to your brand, the CEO's name and the name of anyone who represents your company or products. You might also want to establish a designated person to receive and monitor any notifications.

RESEARCH AND PLAN

Your brand's influencers should be carefully researched and methodically selected before you ever put an agreement in place. Don't rush into any deals. You are about to trust them with your brand's good name and a reputation you may have spent years developing. Spend some time with them if possible and talk to people they know.

Once you've done the research and know a bit more about the person, determine the most likely situations that could cause problems and make a plan for each of them. Build press release templates, figure out what the best response would be to proposed situations and anyone harmed, what might be needed by them immediately, etc. If you are prepared for all plausible circumstances, your brand is more likely to experience a more favorable outcome should a crisis arise.

RESPONDING

When an applicable alert is received, do not delay or hesitate. It is imperative to react quickly. Contact the influencer immediately, allowing for a unified presentation. If their demeanor is alarming or they avoid you, look at how to support them while distancing your brand.

Don't try to act like nothing happened. Face the issue and respond accordingly. If you need to fix something, explain something or contact someone, then do it. Whatever you do, do not avoid a crisis and do not wait around for someone to come up with a solution to your problem. Own it and fix it – quickly.

APOLOGIZE

Never forget the power of those simple and heartfelt words – "I'm sorry." Show you are sincere by following the apology with the best thing you can think of to help anyone who has been wronged to move forward. It's your job to show your humanity and build a bridge of understanding by letting people know you care and want to do what you can to make it better.

MOVING FORWARD

Once you have dealt with the crisis, helped where you can and apologized, there's a final step to seal the deal. Moving forward, you need to be transparent, especially with anything relating to the crisis. Falling once can be a recoverable situation – falling a second time becomes infinitely more difficult to gain back lost ground.

Show your humanity, your vulnerability, your willingness to make it right and then show your honor by being transparent.