

SEVEN TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR COOL IN THE MIDST OF A PR CRISIS

The following article was prepared by the Forbes Agency Council, a group of executives in successful public relations, media strategy, creative, and advertising agencies. The post can be found at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2016/07/12/seven-tips-for-keeping-your-cool-in-the-midst-of-a-pr-crisis/print/>.

Successful PR, media strategy, creative and advertising executives from Forbes Agency Council share trends and tips.

No one wants to deal with a PR crisis on their hands, but when it does happen, you're better off being proactive instead of reactive.

At the onset of a crisis, think about taking a step back and assessing the situation before taking any sudden actions. Most importantly, be honest and forthcoming about the situation: if you're up front with your audience from the start, they'll be more likely to remain your loyal fans and stick with you as you ride out the storm.

Below, seven agency executives from Forbes Agency Council offer their top tips for handling a PR crisis in a way that does minimal damage to your brand.

1. Take A Step Back

When dealing with a crisis PR situation, it is very important to take a step back, breathe and look at all possible options. The worst thing you can do is overreact and make the situation worse. I would recommend talking to a mentor or someone in your peer group who can give you a second perspective. - Jeremy Ostermiller, Altitude Digital

2. Predict, Plan, Prepare and Practice

Predict potential crises. Plan who will talk to whom, who will gather what information, how you will respond, and write it all down. Prepare for crises by having good relationships with media covering your space and by doing your homework. Practice your response. This way, you won't panic. If you do, buy yourself some time: respond first with, "We're assessing the situation." Then, assess and respond. - Starr Million Baker, Ink Public Relations

3. Be Honest and Accessible

It's most important that you always stay honest with your consumers, especially during a time of crisis. If you made a mistake, admit it. Consumers will always appreciate honesty over any other policy. Be accessible to the press and answer their questions. Have a strategy in place that will help you come out of the crisis, prepare ahead of time for all possible questions and stay calm and focused. - Ayelet Noff, Blonde 2.0

4. Respond, Don't React

If you find yourself with a crisis PR situation on your hands, it can be easy to slip into a dangerous and reactive mindset. This is the opposite of where your head needs to be. First, diffuse the emotions around the situation. It is what it is. Second, move quickly to a proactive state. Don't react, respond. Get

ahead of the crisis. Be honest, open and reachable. Above all, don't hide or ignore. - Robby Berthume, Bull & Beard

5. Steal Your Own Thunder

In a crisis, the sensationalist nature of news can be the end of a brand. Steal the media's thunder by telling on yourself or being the first to announce an issue. Decide what can readily be shared, own the issue when necessary and prepare talking points. Let the media know you are working on a resolution and that as more information becomes available, you will share it. Be transparent. - Bernadette Coleman, Advice Local

6. Prepare Yourself

Do the research, analyze the facts, estimate the impact and understand the nuances before jumping to conclusions. When a crisis occurs, you'll feel like you need to respond instantly, but the first critical step of research and measuring all plans of action will be time well spent. - Jenna Gross, Moving Targets

7. Own The Situation

In order to preserve your brand's reputation during a crisis, it is important to honestly address and own the situation before other media outlets do. By doing this, a company can use humor or humanize their brand in order to put a positive spin on the circumstances. Furthermore, this can prevent negative stories from being told by the media, which would result in a diminished reputation for your business. - Solomon Timothy, OneIMS