Crisis Communications

COVID-19 Rapid Response Leadership Series Webinar
Your NORD Membership Team

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ABOUT THE COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE LEADERSHIP SERIES
NORD has developed a multi-faceted program to support patient organizations through education, training and resources to better equip them to face the additional challenges brought on by this pandemic. Topics covered in this program are informed by NORD’s expertise in capacity-building and nonprofit management during crisis, input from member organizations in NORD’s closed Facebook group, and direct outreach. A critical component to this program is the timely cultivation and delivery of these resources to ensure rare disease organizations remain solvent in this time of crisis.

PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP
This fund is made possible by individual donations, grants and corporate sponsorships.

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Agenda

Opening
Debbie Drell, NORD Director of Membership

Keynote Presentation
Michael Williams, Board Veritas Media Relations & Journalism Senior Consultant

Q&A
NORD, an independent nonprofit, is leading the fight to improve the lives of rare disease patients and families.

We do this by supporting patients and organizations, accelerating research, providing education, disseminating information and driving public policy.
Crisis Communications

Michael Williams
Board Veritas Media Relations & Journalism Senior Consultant

Alone we are rare. Together we are strong.
Learning Objectives

• Understand the basics of crisis communications through practical examples (the good, the bad, the ugly).
• Learn what it means to triage a crisis.
• Recognize the three pillars of crisis communications and why they are integral to successfully navigating through a crisis.
• Hear how a crisis can be an opportunity to meet fiscal challenges and become a trusted source of information.
• Gain strategies on engaging your Board of Directors, including determining who should comment and who shouldn't.
Crisis Communications 101

• Practical examples of Crisis Comms 101: The Good the Bad and the Ugly

• What is a Crisis
  • What does it look like?
  • Who defines crisis status for the organization?

• What is at stake?
Case Study #1: Wounded Warriors

The Cost
- Millions in revenue
- Federal scrutiny
- Reputation
Case Study #2: MIT Media Lab and Jeffery Epstein

The Cost
- Key staff
- Revenue from donors
- Reputation
Case Study #3: Tylenol

The Cost... and the benefit

• Even though police were convinced that the incident was confined to the Chicago area. The CEO of Johnson & Johnson ordered the company to pull their product off all US shelves (more than 31 million containers).

• Johnson & Johnson’s forthright response (and spending $100 million on tamper-proof packaging) helped convince the public the product was safe.

• Tylenol regained its #1 market position within a year.

• In terms of how a corporation should behave in times of crisis, the gold standard is still Tylenol.
Defining a Crisis
What is a “Crisis”? 

• Company **financial woes**, such as layoffs and bankruptcy
• **Employee wrongdoing**, such as sexual harassment claims
• **Natural disasters**, such as floods, fires and hurricanes
• Forced closures due to an **owner’s illness or death**
• **Cybersecurity issues**, such as stolen data and a cyber breach
• **Community dissatisfaction**, such as protests
• **Reputation issues**, such as rumors, scandals, and threats
• **COVID-19 specific issues**
  • Delayed clinical trials
  • Cancelled fundraising event
The 3 Pillars of Crisis Communications

- Honesty
- Transparency
- Frequency
Who Leads in a Crisis?

“Them that know won’t say. Them that will say, don’t know.”

1. Information gatherers
2. Message crafters
3. Information disseminators
9 Steps of Basic Crisis Management
1. Recognize the forming crisis and get ready for action
   • Grab that Crisis Comms Playbook
   • Gather any and all available information, both internally and externally

2. Alert the team and provide information
   • Make sure the chain of command and communication is clear
   • Decide if your team needs to pause any scheduled social media posts, client emails, content, etc.

3. Develop your messaging
   • Know the relevant internal, leadership, customer, and media talking points
   • Establish a spokesperson and a source of truth where you can direct traffic to (e.g., a blog post)
Steps 4 - 5 - 6

4. Prepare your deliverables (as necessary)
   • Prepare a press release
   • Prepare social media posts
   • Prepare for a press conference

5. Review with your legal team/stakeholders
   • Report relevant information to executives and decision makers
   • Consult with legal team/executives before sending out any external communications

6. Deliver the deliverables
   • Send out press releases and social media posts (if applicable)
   • Ensure your spokesperson has a clear voice throughout your deliverables
Steps 7-8-9

7. Monitor for additional coverage and responses
   • Look closely at the social conversation
   • Check for spikes in media coverage
   • Respond when and where appropriate

8. Reassess the situation
   • If the crisis is contained, breathe a sigh of relief
   • If not, consider reaching out to some journalists and/or influencers- who are advocates of your brand- to help mitigate the crisis

9. Perform a postmortem
   • Analyze where you handled the crisis effectively and where there was room for improvement
   • Update your crisis comms plan for future events
Crisis as Opportunity

• Meeting fiscal challenges
• Becoming a trusted source of information
• The Mother of Invention
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NORD’s COVID-19 Rapid Response Leadership Series

Tentative Rapid Response Video Topics:

- Transitioning to Virtual Events: Considerations from NORD
- Fundraising in a Pandemic – June 4
- Crisis Communications: COVID-19 and the Future – June 25
- Leader Roundtable: Virtual Platforms for Engagement – June 29
- Building a Village: How to Re-Engage Your Board Members, Leaders and Volunteers – July 8
Thank you.