Evaluation: After a crisis

Once the crisis is over, you're done, right? Wrong! The time following a crisis is an opportunity to improve your plans and update potential scenarios and messaging.

1. Evaluate



After responding to a crisis, your team will be exhausted and need time to rest and recover. But the work isn't done after the threat subsides. While the response is still fresh, bring your team together to review the plan and your response efforts. At minimum, evaluate whether your organization:

- Met your communication goals in a timely manner.
- Delivered accurate key messages that reached your intended audience(s).
- Took accountability for any missteps.

A communications director or manager can lead this step. If your team lacks dedicated communications staff, a subject matter expert can step into the lead position. Designating a specific team member to oversee the evaluation helps establish clear accountability.

Evaluation is a critical component to maintaining effective crisis communication plans. Write out the lessons learned from your communication strategies and approach, as well as how to adapt them for future use.

Dig deeper when possible. The Public Health Communications Collaborative details key metrics for communication goals, including:

- **Message effectiveness:** What was the reach? Did people react to your messaging the way you intended?
- **Behavior change:** Did people take action as directed? Did they learn to protect themselves from the risk?
- **Identifying and countering misinformation:** Were you able to track and manage it? Were you able to stop its spread?
- **Public trust and credibility:** Did your communication approaches increase or decrease public trust in your organization?

2. Record real-time observations

An evaluation can help you identify messaging and partner tactics that will benefit you at all times, not just in an emergency[3]:

- Adjust messaging to align more directly with audience values.
- Shift resources to the most effective communication platforms. You can determine effectiveness based on audience engagement.
- Strengthen community partnerships.
- Increase transparency by acknowledging evolving information.

For longer-duration crises, consider pausing for real-time or mid-term monitoring. This helps you determine if your messaging, strategies and goals remain effective or require adjustments.

3. Adapt and improve

This is the time to go back to the plan and update the parts that the evaluation revealed as gaps. Consider the steps you take to improve your plan as an opportunity to be even better prepared the next time an unfortunate event takes place.

Worksheet

- Evaluation exercise

3 Adapted from Public Health Communications Collaborative Creating a Plan: Crisis Communications for Public Health.