

Crisis Communication: Case Studies from Students' Favorite Fandoms

Task. Research a specific situational crisis that affected a company or nonprofit. The event must include an element of social media communication at the time of crisis management reaction (or obtain special permission). Students prepare 1. a researched report 2. a creative portfolio and 3. a presentation.

Select a minimum of **three focal documents** to tell this story. Include the complete focal document (tweets, press releases, YouTube videos) in the report. Tweets can be embedded in the page; longer documents like press releases can be placed in an appendix. Videos might be screenshots with a link. The goal is to focus on what students of PR/crisis management can learn from this case study. **Do end your report with an overview of the main takeaway lessons we can learn from this crisis.**

Instructions: Case Study Report.

Format your Case Study Cleverly:

- Information Literacy: Use MLA or APA citation (and a works cited section) for information gathered from outside sources. Include a works cited page.
- Draft the report in a memo report format with expressive, bold headings.
- The report will be 4-5+ pages single-spaced with block paragraphs.
- Do proofread carefully. Write with the 7Cs of business writing in mind.

Conduct Research Wisely: Apply these research questions to uncover the crisis, the company's action, and the publics' response. You do not need to necessarily answer each question specifically, but they can inform your search methods and the sections you create in your report.

- What was the crisis (e.g. leadership change, product failure, data breach, etc.)?
- Who were the key stakeholders (and why)?
- What (publicly available) communication was sent in response to the crisis? Look for multiple options.
- Who was the primary audience for the communication?
- What were the objectives of the communication?
- What was the tone of the communication? Embed samples in your report as proof. (Did they use positive language, for example?)
- What was the company's response to the crisis (based on the communication)?
- Did the crisis influence the financial valuation of the company?
- Did the company offer contact information or next steps specific to the crisis?
- What writing skills are reflected in the resulting communication?

Apply Appropriate Analysis. As you detail the situation, use quotes from the communications to prove your points of analysis.

- Use Coombs's criteria to evaluate the spokespersons' responses. See your notes and the resources uploaded in the Canvas Module from the week we watched and read Coombs). You are encouraged to use Coombs's theories to evaluate. Be sure to cite the Coombs resources appropriately.

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Instructions: Creative Portfolio. This section can appear at the end of your case study report. For full credit, you should apply information covered in class lessons to your creative process.

1. Create two different posts on two different platforms (usually Twitter and FB). The posts will represent messages that the company could have/should have used during part of the crisis.
2. In accompanying text, explain when the posts would have appeared, on what platform.
3. Explain what influenced your tone and content choice.

Instructions: Situational Crisis Presentation. Prepare a 10-minute presentation on your situational crisis complete with visuals. Use this to teach the audience (our class) about what works and what doesn't in PR. Avoid text-heavy slides; handouts may be best for sharing a longer text if that is necessary. For this presentation,

- structure the information for your audience: students of crisis communication who don't know the company details
- practice the presentation techniques to ensure you have eye contact with the audience, a planned introduction and conclusion, natural body language, engaging tone, and avoidance of public speaking pitfalls (repeated "ums," reading from slides or reading notes aloud).

Presentation Organization:

- open with a bit of context on who the company was before the crisis
- tell the story of the problem
- cover the resulting PR management (your three focal docs)
- emphasize the takeaways students of PR can learn from this handling of the crisis
- end with your own Creative Portfolio items

Course Objectives represented in this project.

- Produce a variety of texts using creative, rhetorical, and analytical strategies.
- Communicate clearly, accurately and precisely in multiple modes.
- Integrate and synthesize reading, writing and other communication skills in purposeful life work and professional settings.

Purpose. The assignment assesses students on a variety of higher level thinking tasks appropriate for an end-of-semester advanced seminar:

- story telling for a particular audience (crisis management students)
- report preparation techniques
- information literacy skills
- public speaking and slide preparation
- application of crisis management concepts
- social media production