

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Crisis Communications and Working with the Media

Local Church Pastor Training

- Agenda
- Quick Quiz
 - Media Overview
 - Crisis Communications Basics
 - Practice
 - Crisis Communications Planning

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Crisis Communications Quick Quiz

– Take 4 minutes to work in table groups or pairs to determine your response. What do you do and say in this situation?

– Select a “spokesperson” for your group.

– Some of the spokespersons will role play the response with Judi (who will play the reporter).

Video:
Why charting a
clear course
is important

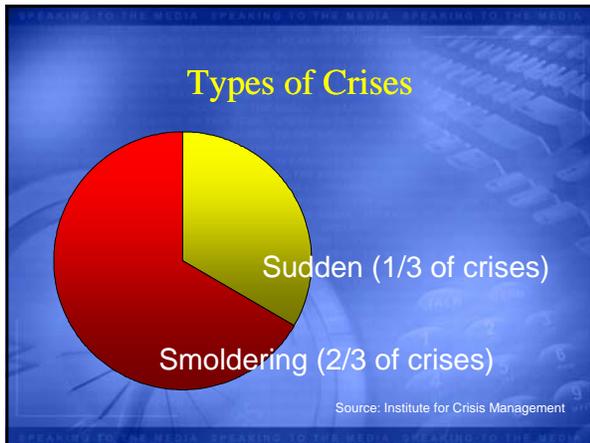
Definition of a Crisis

"A situation that puts your organization's values on trial in the court of public opinion"

- William N. Curry, Public Relations Society of America

Crisis, Disaster, Controversy

- Crisis is different than disaster
- A controversy can become a crisis
- A crisis may start small.....and grow....



What are examples of smoldering & sudden crises you could face?

From the Reporter's Perspective

- A reporter's job is to cover the story—reporters are usually NOT “out to get you,” but they aren't out to make you “look good” either.
- They need fast, accurate information
- Competition to be first and for their story to be on the ‘front page’
- They have deadlines they *will* meet with or without response from the church.

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

From the Reporter's Perspective

- Want interviews with witnesses or "real people"
- A reporter is more likely to give the church the benefit of the doubt if he/she has a previous relationship with the church.
- Media relations pay off!

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

What's News in a Crisis

- Conflict and controversy
- Issues of public safety, unethical conduct, etc.
- Appearance of cover-up or widespread problem
- Emotion / Personal impact
- Visuals
- Perception is reality

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Anatomy of a Crisis

- Event
- Investigative Reporting
- Blame-fixing
- Public Reaction
- Reminders
- Disinterest

-William Curry, Accredited Public Relations

Working Through Crises

- Each stage requires honest, open, helpful communication
- The public and media will reach 'positive disinterest' when they trust that the church:
 - Cares and is concerned
 - The church is doing the 'right' thing
 - Steps are being taken to reduce the risk of it happening again

Pastor's Role

- You are the 'face' of your church in the community
- You are likely to be the first responder in a crisis and probably the spokesperson
- You will lead the church's response
- You will interact with DS, media, congregation, community and appropriate others

Pastor's Role in Effective Crisis Communications Response

- Be ready to respond quickly and consistently
 - first task: get the crisis event under control.
- Alert the DS and crisis team
- Make sure the entire staff knows what's happening and how to respond – determine the 'Hold Response'
- Gather the facts; prepare the initial statement or work with designated spokesperson

Role of a Spokesperson

- Spokesperson is the one reliable, consistent and credible source of information
- Spokesperson's responsibility is to learn the facts & to develop a message and a plan that responds to the media's and the public's information needs
- Spokesperson uses the interest of the media to tell the church's story

Key Elements of a Crisis Communications Plan

- Identifies members of crisis communications team and outlines notification process, actions and roles
- Guidelines for working with the media
- Provides plans for specific scenarios

Handling Media Phone Calls

- Use a 'Hold Response' to allow time to gather the necessary information.
- Emphasize you want to be helpful but need some time to gather facts.
- Ask for the reporter's:
 - Name
 - Media Outlet
 - Direct Phone Number
 - Deadline
 - Topic of story or reason for call
- Always return the call!

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Telephone “Hold” Response I

“I want to make sure we give you the most accurate and up-to-date information. Our _____ (Pastor/Appropriate Person) can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline and topic that you’re calling about, I’ll have that person return your call as soon as possible.”

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Staff Who Take Calls from Reporters

Do’s and Don’ts Video Clip

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Handling Reporters On-Site

- Be polite, but firm – set ground rules
- Assign a staff person to serve as go-between with media. S/he doesn’t answer questions.
- DON’T be hostile, say “no comment,” “wing-it,” or speak “off the record.”
- Use a Hold Response to refer reporters to the appropriate spokesperson.

Speaking to the Media

Handling Casual Conversations or Questions about a Crisis

- ✓ Don't speculate, repeat unconfirmed information or express personal opinions
- ✓ Don't feel like you have to answer questions
- ✓ Do respond with a brief, positive, general statement

Speaking to the Media

Reporters On-Site

Do's and Don'ts Video Clip

Speaking to the Media

General Supportive Statement

"We're very concerned about what happened. Our priority is the safety and well-being of everyone. The staff is working with the Health Department to learn all the facts. We're going to do everything we can to reduce the risk of this happening again."

Time To Practice

Three phases to this exercise:

1. Practice the hold response
2. Gather facts and interview preparation
3. Role-play interview

Crisis Scenarios

- Van crash
- Youth worker accused of molesting child
- Food poisoning

**Crisis Scenario Exercise
Step 1**

Using the Hold Response

- Each group will develop a “hold” response for your group’s scenario.
- Select a spokesperson for your group.
- Prepare your spokesperson to role play the “hold” response.

Phrases for Difficult Questions

- We will review the situation and take appropriate action
- We have high expectations for moral and ethical behavior...
- According to the law...
- We're offering counseling/prayers/etc....

Sudden Crisis Response, Step 2
(See Crisis Plan scenarios for ideas)

- Fact-Gathering
- Coordinate with Govt. Agencies & Church Leadership
- Communication with Key People
- Disclosure Guidelines / Media Statement
- Trained Media Spokesperson

Crisis Scenario Exercise:
Step 2

Each group answers the following questions:

1. With whom do you need to communicate? (make short list)
2. How will you gather information to give to reporters?
3. When & where will you talk to media?
4. What will you tell reporters?
5. What will you NOT tell reporters?

Formal Media Interview
Step 3

- Include Basic Facts
- Demonstrate Concern & Compassion
- Address Investigation
- Commit to do your best

Crisis Interview Tips

- Take control at start / use opening statement
- Use only confirmed facts
- Don't speculate about causes, assign blame or respond to hypothetical questions
- Show compassion & concern

Crisis Interview Tips
continued

- Focus on policies & procedures if you can't address specifics.
- It's OK to politely wrap-up the interview after a few questions.
- Don't wait for the perfect question—**Bridge to your main points.**

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Tips for Television

- Look at interviewer, not camera
- Sit-up or stand-up straight
- Choose a location that's comfortable for you
- Dress appropriately
- Keep calm and pleasant

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Preparing for the Interview

- Develop your main point(s) and facts
- Keep it short, simple and conversational
- Use supporting examples
- Anticipate questions
- Practice points out loud

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Potential Types of Q&A

Question about investigation or lawsuit when you can't discuss specifics

Best Response:
"I can't talk about this specific case, but I can tell you that OUR POLICY is...."

Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media Speaking to the Media

Potential Types of Q&A

When you have few or no facts:

"We take these concerns very seriously, so we're investigating the situation. If we find a problem, we'll do our best to fix it."

OR

"We're committed to...(safety, ethical conduct, etc.). We'll review the situation, and take appropriate action."

Potential Types of Q&A

Questions such as, "Organizers say you're hiring part-timers to avoid paying benefits...."

Best Response:
"I strongly disagree. We're committed to...."

Potential Types of Q&A

Hypothetical question: "What will you do if...?"

Best Response:
"I can't address a hypothetical situation. What I can tell you is...."

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Potential Types of Q&A

Defensive question: "If you are doing such a good job, then why would people say such bad things about you?"

Best Response:
"I can't speak for others. What I can tell you is...."

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Potential Types of Q&A

A or B question: "What was the problem – incompetence or intentional neglect?"

Best Response:
Go to your positive, proactive statement rather than getting caught in a negative, inaccurate response. "What we found is...."

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Potential Types of Q&A

Judgment question: "What kind of punishment do you think this person should receive?" or "What's your personal opinion?"

Best Response:
"That's not my decision to make. (or "My personal opinion is not relevant.")....What I can tell you is...."

APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA APPEARING TO THE MEDIA

Crisis Scenario Exercise
Step 3

- Group has 5 minutes to prepare spokesperson
- “Reporter” interviews spokesperson

This is just the beginning

- The first media interview is rarely the end of the crisis.
- Your crisis could last for days, weeks or months.
- Your best strategy is to be prepared.

Pastor’s Role in Crisis Communications Planning

- Identify potential crisis situations and take steps to prevent a crisis
- Use the crisis communications plan at <http://desertsouthwestconference.org/crisis-communications>
- Guide implementation of the plan

**You Know You Are Prepared
When...**

1. Crisis Communications Plan in place – you know who to call
2. Confidence in your ability to talk to the media
3. Knowledge about what to say and how to say it

Moving Forward

What will you “take away” from today’s session?

**Evaluation, please
Thank you!**

[desertsouthwestconference.org/
crisis-communications](http://desertsouthwestconference.org/crisis-communications)
