

Media Guide 6 - Crisis Management

An event goes wrong, you feel you've got bad press or you have been associated with a negative story – it happens. You have to be prepared to act, to redress the balance.

Someone should be able to respond quickly, to gather the facts, brief individuals concerned, identify a spokesperson, issue a statement, be available for comment, and follow up.

If you are approached by a journalist, never say 'no comment', this comes across as negative and makes it look like you have something to hide. Be courteous, no matter how aggressive the approach, ask for their deadline and say you'll get back to them. Gather information and check the response with the most senior person available.

If a story is wrong, phone immediately, listing mistakes and/or omissions. Time is of the essence. In the case of a daily newspaper you want the reply published the following day.

Write, fax or e-mail your response and make clear the letter is for publication. Always put the date, title and author of the offending piece in the opening paragraph.

Be clear and concise, don't attack the journalist or paper, and do not get personal. Be reasonable, strong, forceful and intelligent, back up with figures. An aggressive letter will only reflect badly on your organisation.

It is always worth thinking about what could go wrong. Consider what your organisation's danger areas are and be prepared. Have a positioning statement ready. Try and stay one step ahead!





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