

Issues Management & Crisis Communications, Part 1



COMM 386R
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Agenda

1. Issue vs. crisis
2. Issues management
3. Crisis stages and common questions
4. Crisis planning and response
5. Apologizing

Amazon Turns on the Charm Amid Criticism From Right and Left

By CECILIA KANG OCT. 15, 2017

WASHINGTON — On a sunny day in July, commuters arriving at Union Station, in the shadow of Capitol Hill, were greeted with free bananas passed out by Amazon employees. In a Senate building, lawmakers and their aides attended policy panels on how Amazon manages privacy on its Echo devices and how sales for small businesses are booming on its online store.

The day was capped off with a cocktail reception hosted by Amazon's chief spokesman, Jay Carney — the former press secretary to President Obama.

The public relations and lobbying push represents a new face for Amazon in Washington. Facing greater skepticism about its growing power over retail, [including from President Trump](#), Amazon is following the well-worn path of oil, pharmaceutical and even other large tech companies, which try to bend policy in their favor by enhancing connections with federal officials.

What is an issue?

What is a crisis?

**What can we do about either of them,
if anything?**



Issues Management: Planning

- Plan regularly
- Early warning system: internal and external stakeholders
 - Executives
 - Competitors
 - Industry news
 - Current events and public controversy
 - Complaints...
- Early warning system: media intelligence
 - Track messages that have met resistance
 - Track influencers
 - Track keywords
 - Track sentiment: spikes and duration...



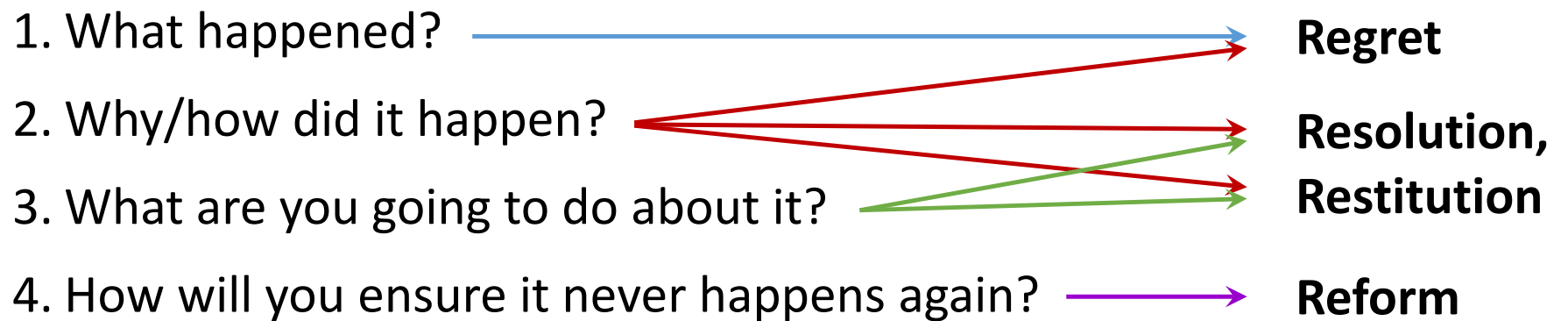
Stakeholder	What to Look For
Customers	Customers are usually most directly affected by a crisis. You need to understand to what extent the crisis has negatively impacted them and how many customers are unhappy.
Investors	A crisis can have a negative impact on your company's stock price. Find out how the financial community is reacting, taking this into consideration when you communicate with investors.
Employees	Employees act as representatives, or brand ambassadors, for your company. It's important to provide them with corporate-approved messaging and monitor their public-facing communication regarding the crisis.
Influencers	"Influencer" has come to designate bloggers, social celebrities, analysts, and journalists. Among the first two, some might be established advocates for your company, and some detractors. Media intelligence lets you know who is likely to be on your side.

Source: "Media Intelligence for Crisis Communications", Meltwater, n.d.

Common Crisis Stages

- 1. Pre-crisis:** warning stage where advance signs of trouble can be seen; must respond quickly
- 2. Acute Crisis:** full-blown crisis; reputation at risk
- 3. Chronic Crisis:** clean-up after crisis has been addressed; ongoing risk, but stable management
- 4. Crisis Resolution:** returning to “normal” (the new normal)

Common Media (and Stakeholder) Questions



Accountability – Empathy – Speed – Transparency

Crisis Planning and Response

1. Scenario planning
2. Prepare a crisis management workflow – checklists
 - Assign duties and roles
 - Identify key advisors
 - Outline review steps, including legal and CEO review
3. Establish a notification system – internal and external
 - Remember earned, owned, paid media
4. Write as much ahead of time as possible
5. Keep in touch with key influencers
6. Know when to walk away

Apologizing

- Apologies should not include denials or hedges
 - e.g. “We’re sorry to those who were offended.”
 - Versus e.g. “We messed up – and we’re sorry.”
- Move quickly
- Provide context for how the mistake happened, if you can
 - But just an explanation, NOT a justification
- Acknowledge responsibility
- Declare repentance
- Offer reparations



Key Takeaways

- Issues can become crises in no time – so be proactive and set up an early warning system
- Stakeholder-controlled media: reality, risk, and resource
- Plan, plan, plan – and practice, practice, practice
- Accountability, empathy, speed, transparency
- If people are affected, apologize – and mean it

Reminder

Next class: bring notes from today's class and an internet-enabled device

