



Takeaways from MHA Webinar:

The Global Pandemic and Hospital Leadership:

Best Strategies for Crisis Communication Now and After COVID-19 | April 14, 2020

Overview

As our frontline staff work around the clock to manage the many issues of the COVID-19 crisis, there is a pressing need for adequate and efficient communication amongst employees, patients, media, and leadership. At the current state of our world, leadership needs to step up to provide accurate information while reassuring stakeholders of the future. In this webinar, Laura Fay and Margery Myers, both principals and senior consultants at Bates, discuss the best strategies for crisis communication. These include the fundamentals of crisis communication and media engagement in addition to the necessary tools to deal with crisis communication.

Strategies:

Crisis Communication Fundamentals. As the fundamentals of communication are often overlooked, it is critical to remember that now is the time for leaders to be visible. By stepping forward, speculation is prevented so that accurate information is able to be relayed. Messages need to be clear while providing perspective because being transparent will generate credibility. Leaders should also remember to reinforce the good of situations and focus on the future. Regular communication is key in crisis communication.

Media Engagement: Sound Bite Science. Excellent media engagement will gain credibility, whether it is for a leader or the entire organization. **TRUST** is an acronym that can be used to prepare yourself for excellent media engagement.

- **Think** while the question is being asked.
- **Reframe** the question
- **Use** a characterizing phrase
- **Succinct** and clear answer
- **Train** yourself to stop as soon as you're finished

Tools for Crisis Communication.

- **Audience Agenda:** Document your agenda and the audience agenda. Your agenda is what you would like your audience to know. The audience agenda is what the audience truly cares about, such as budget cuts. In crisis communication, audience agenda has a greater importance than your agenda, as it keeps the audience engaged.

- **Quick Prep Method:** Preparing for Q&A is a critical component of crisis communication. Write down questions that are most likely to be asked and start with the most challenging questions to be answered. Write down the answers in bullet point form and practice the Q&A session out loud.
- **Communications Roadmap:** A communications roadmap is used to ensure that a leader has customized messages for different audiences. Leaders will not always be speaking to the press and it is important to consider what other groups you may want to communicate with. Have a chart with all of the key audiences with the corresponding messages and how you will communicate with them.
- **Anatomy of a Message:** First, tell your audience what is currently using a brief overview. Then, offer perspective on why decisions are being made and why these are good decisions. Always convey a positive tone when delivering a message. An honest assessment is critical in relaying accurate information, as transparency will create credibility. Next, “rally the troops” by describing challenges and opportunities with a clear sense of how people can help. Set specific short term expectations for your audience and be sure to admit what is unknown. Lastly, end your message with something energizing that rallies everybody into action. Infusing your optimism into the message is key when considering this.