

Is Your Crisis Management Plan Ready for Today's Crisis?

Leonard & Finco Public Relations, Inc.

What is a crisis?

cri·sis

krīsis/

noun: crisis; plural noun: crises

- ❑ a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger
- ❑ a time when a difficult or important decision must be made



What is a crisis?

- ❑ A crisis isn't always obvious
 - Accidents, fire, death
- ❑ It can also include things like:
 - Embezzlement
 - Arrests
 - Rumors and perception
 - Social media



If I ignore the crisis, will it just go away?

Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way...

- ❑ Internet and social media = instant news
- ❑ 24/7 news cycle
- ❑ Situations are likely to escalate
- ❑ Rumors can cause things to get out of control
- ❑ Situation will be harder to manage the longer it goes on
- ❑ Long term reputation damage / trust issues
- ❑ If it's perception vs. reality - perception usually wins

Bottom Line

People are going to get the news of the situation somewhere -
it should be from you!



Looking at Social Media's Impact

According to a Pew Research Study (updated April 2015)

- ❑ 92% of teens (age 13-17) go online daily
- ❑ 24% report being online “almost constantly”
- ❑ 56% say they go online several times a day



Why?

- ❑ Three quarters of those surveyed said they have or have access to a smartphone
- ❑ Smartphones have become the primary driver of teen Internet use

Looking at Social Media's Impact

71% report using more than one social media site.

Top 4

- ❑ Facebook
- ❑ Instagram
- ❑ Snapchat
- ❑ Twitter



*If you don't know what these are or how they work,
you should!*

*Social media has a bigger impact on how we communicate and
receive information every year.*

DeForest Examples

First week of school: Thursday, Sept. 3, 2015

- ❑ Serious potential threat was made to the school district by a student, causing the superintendent and police chief to close all schools on Friday, Sept. 4 (searched all buildings Thursday evening and Friday)
- ❑ District put protocols into place, communicating with families, staff and media
- ❑ Media coverage Thursday, Sept 3 through Tuesday, Sept 8

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DeForest Examples

Second week of school: Wednesday, Sept 9, 2015 (end of school day)

- ❑ Young child called 911 from elementary school cafeteria, saying there was a man with a gun in the school
- ❑ Lockdown and evacuation
- ❑ Precautionary lockdown in all school buildings
- ❑ Law enforcement responded (nearly 50) - assumed active shooter
- ❑ No gunman found (determined within 20 minutes)

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DeForest Examples - Issues

- ❑ Student and family confidentiality
- ❑ Two juveniles in custody; rumor of a third suspect
- ❑ Active investigation
- ❑ One media outlet shared details of court proceedings
- ❑ Media reported on second incident 3 minutes after 911 call (before we knew what was happening)

DeForest Examples – What We Did

- ❑ Consistent messages developed jointly between district and law enforcement (with “OK” from DA office) -press release served as basis for other messages
- ❑ Timely and frequent information via Facebook, Twitter, phone, text, website and email
- ❑ Several channels used for messages to public, families and staff - phone, email, text, website, social media (School Messenger; Hootsuite)
- ❑ Translated messages (Spanish and Hmong)
- ❑ Answered emails and social media posts (when facts needed clarification or questions answered) in a timely manner
- ❑ Prepared for potential questions

DeForest Examples – What Worked

- ❑ Coordinated messages with other agencies, and used consistently
- ❑ Asked for help (coordinate social media, messages to parents, media info/press conference)
- ❑ For the most part, became the source of legitimate information: website (running list of messages)
- ❑ At beginning of crisis (second incident), asked news media to follow messages on website and social media
- ❑ Strategic (and somewhat limited) attention given to news media
- ❑ Received good feedback on parent communication

Northeast Wisconsin Example

- ❑ Two students got into an altercation prior to start of school day in March, 2015 (was captured on video)
- ❑ Speculation that a teacher may have instigated the altercation
- ❑ District put its protocols into place, spoke to families involved
- ❑ Meetings between the district and families were not positive
- ❑ Father posted video on Facebook a month later because he was unhappy with the district's response
- ❑ Media scrutiny became intense

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Facebook Post by Father

0:09 / 0:09

Shared with: Public
439,882 Views

[Embed Video](#)
[Embed Post](#)

[Redacted] This video is very disturbing. My son was assaulted in the school lunchroom at [Redacted]. There was a bunch of kids making annoying noises (including my son) and a student the one who assaulted my son in this video went to [Redacted] a teacher that is employed by the school and asked him if he could do something. [Redacted] replied by saying "I would like to hit one of them in the back of the head but he could not do that" Then he continued by saying "If (Name of minor that assaulted my son) were to hit one of them he would slowly make his way over to break it up. This behavior is inexcusable. The School district seems to think a simple Don't do that again and a sorry excuse for an apology is enough. I THINK NOT. I would like all of you to spread this around so that the parents of kids in the [Redacted] District in [Redacted]. know how they are more concerned about covering up this kind of thing than keeping our kids safe.

April 13

[Redacted]

9,846 shares

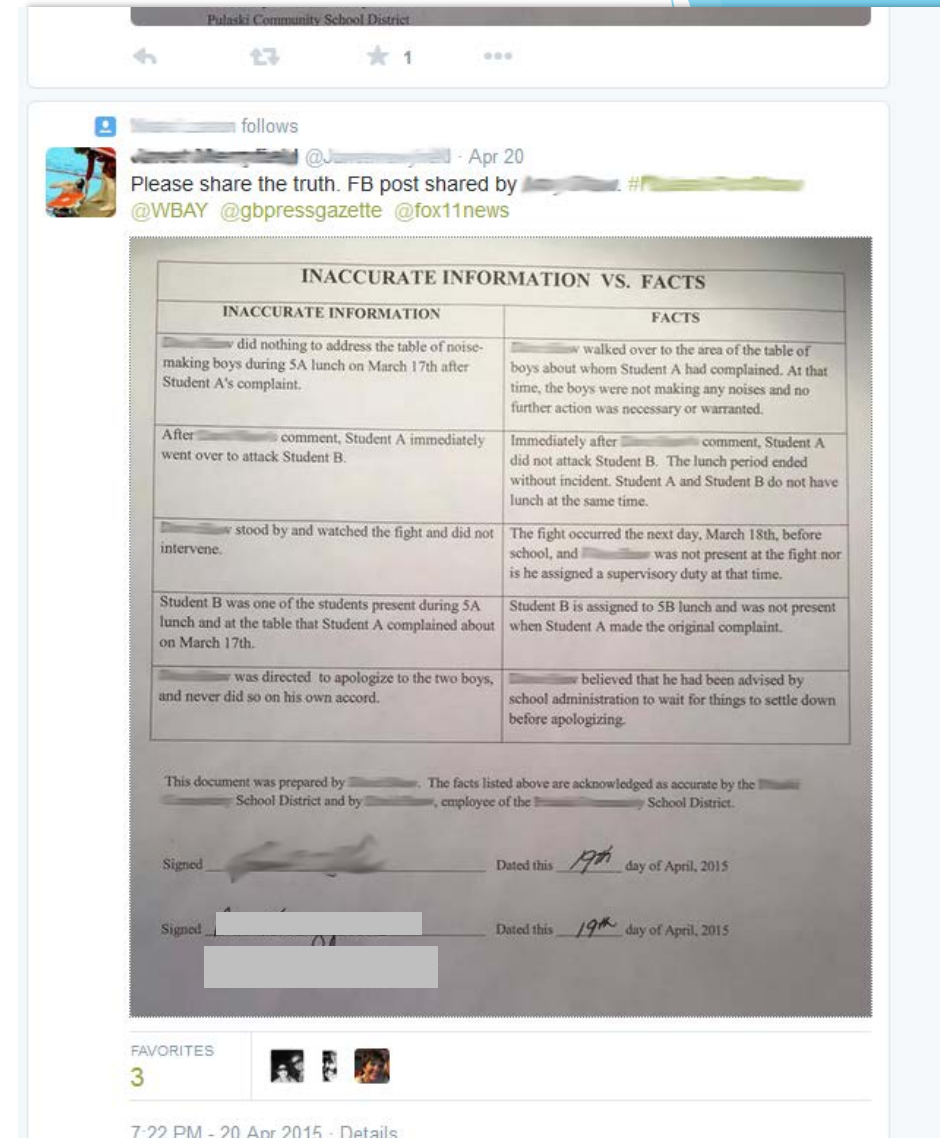
[Redacted] Makes me sick to my stomach, there should be an outrage. That kid should be expelled
April 13 at 6:35pm - 1

[Redacted] Its the Teacher that instigated it that reall upsets me
April 13 at 6:36pm - 1

[Redacted] That too. These things make my flesh want to come out...
April 13 at 6:36pm

What Did Posting Do?

- ❑ Divided the community
- ❑ Social media campaigns supporting the teacher were started using #
- ❑ Teacher's family posted his account of the situation using Twitter and Facebook
- ❑ Open records request from several media outlets started coming in
- ❑ Seeking personnel records and other documentation about the situation



3 Keys to an Effective Response

- ❑ What happened
- ❑ Why it happened
- ❑ What you are doing about it



Action Steps

- ❑ The district decided to provide all media outlets the exact same information at once
- ❑ Packets were hand delivered to each media outlet and included:
 - A statement from the District outlining general facts (**what/why happened**), action taken (**response to what happened**) and action to be taken moving forward (**what District is doing about it**)
 - A separate public letter of apology from teacher and principal
 - A DVD recording of interim superintendent statement
 - All FOIA documentation requested by the media
- ❑ The video was also posted to the district's Facebook page and website

Action Steps

- ❑ In addition, the district sent out an email to all teachers, staff and administrators
 - Provide an update and talking points
- ❑ A “script” was developed for front desk personnel in case any calls came in

RESULT

- ❑ Media coverage was extensive, but tapered off within two days.

Keys to Successful Social Media Crisis Communication

- ❑ Address concerns quickly
- ❑ Frequently update information
- ❑ Be straightforward and factual
- ❑ Be careful what you delete
- ❑ Monitor, monitor, monitor
- ❑ Don't neglect other ways to communicate!



Other Tips for All Communications

- ❑ Avoid speculating
- ❑ Acknowledge the seriousness of the situation
- ❑ Acknowledge genuine concern for those impacted
- ❑ Do not blame
- ❑ Communicate early with teachers, staff and administrators
- ❑ Remember: Local may not stay local



It's really about what happened, why it happened and what you are going to do about it.

Thank You!

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