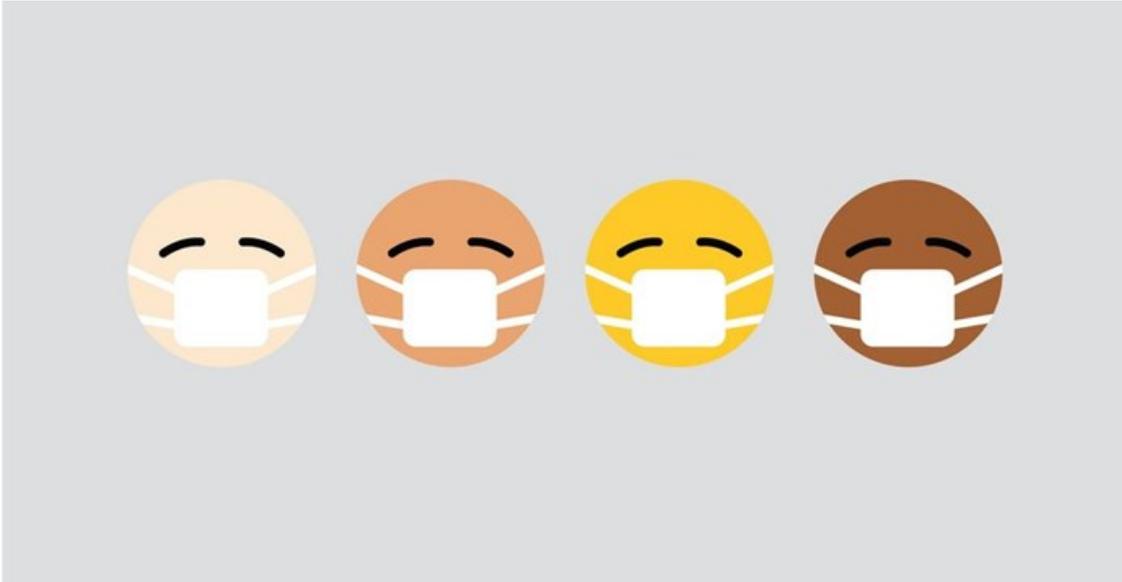


7 tips for crisis communication during the ultimate crisis: Covid-19

By [Regine le Roux](#)

26 Mar 2020

For the first time since the digital age, the entire world is faced with same health pandemic crisis and the same threats and fears. It's a crisis of such magnitude that no textbook could ever have fully prepared any of us for it. Whatever your location or type of business you run, the way in which you communicate during a crisis remains the same.



Credit: visuals on [Unsplash](#).

ONE: Have a plan. In the ideal world, everyone would already have a crisis communication plan in place having scenario planning plotted out with high risk/high impact; high risk/low impact etc. identified. Part of the plan would include:

- Who the key stakeholders are that need to be communicated with;
- How: The channels of communication to be used and,
- What the key messages need to be.

The minute there is a crisis, everyone should know who needs to communicate what to whom. It's very important to have a clear spokesperson during the crisis: this person should ideally be the leader of the organisation, e.g. managing director, chief executive officer, etc.



Communications in a time of crisis

Sandra Gordon 18 Mar 2020



Linking it to Covid-19, I don't think anyone anticipated this virus to morph into a global pandemic. It's difficult to know exactly how to prepare for something like this, but every business should be prepared for a worst-case scenario where their offices may need to be shut down in the event of an emergency.

But, having a plan in place of how to engage with your key stakeholders should at minimum include: employees, customers, shareholders and suppliers.

TWO: Be responsive and give timeous feedback. It's a very uncertain time for everyone. Communication is key.

Key things to communicate and to keep in mind during this time:

- **Respect:** Adhering to government decisions and guidelines
- **Office hours:** Will the business be open or closed?
- **Team availability:** Will the team be available? Will they be working remotely?
- **Contact information:** If anyone has questions, who can they contact?
- **Health advice:** Bring in the health message of social distancing/washing hands/sanitising

THREE: Keep stakeholders updated. The South African government has been a prime example of how it should be done, keeping the public up to date with the situation and what needs to be done, and there is regular communication directly from the President. Because of the government's consistent and proactive communication, the majority of South Africans know that we are going into lockdown from tonight, Thursday, 26 March 2020 and we understand the seriousness of the matter.

If you work in the event or training industries, or were looking forward to an event yourself, you know that there is a lot of uncertainty about whether the event is going ahead or not. It's important to let delegates know as soon as possible whether it's going ahead, being postponed, or being cancelled. Delegates need to know what is happening to their bookings. Ditto for the tourism industry: what is happening to flight and accommodation bookings?



Messaging in a time of crisis

Nicole Capper 20 Mar 2020



FOUR: Stick to your guns. The message needs to be clear and consistent: This is what needs to happen; these are the parameters; and these are the consequences.

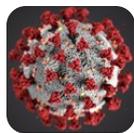
FIVE: In any crisis, empathy is very important. Whenever there is a crisis, people are impacted and we need to remember that we are dealing with human beings who are each coping in a different way. Be sure to highlight that in any communication.

SIX: Keep in simple. The best way to help people listen and remember things is to keep it simple. I have been receiving many newsletters around the pandemic. I think a lot of it should be simplified to get the message across. Sometimes short and sweet cuts through all the noise.

SEVEN: Take action. Here's a basic example. It wouldn't help saying we need to social distance ourselves and then to call a meeting where you need people in the same room. I have actually noticed a few press conferences taking place where

the media are invited into a room and the key message is about social distancing; leaders need to walk the talk and set the example.

It may also be tricky to balance the need for profitability with the need to provide employees with safety and a stable income. However, the businesses who are as committed to their employees' well-being as they say they are will have to demonstrate it in the coming weeks and months.



#Covid-19: Communicating trust in uncertain times

Neeran Naidoo, Hewers 2 Apr 2020



And here's a bonus good habit: before sharing anything, check the sources. There is a lot of fake news doing the rounds, spreading panic. Distributing fake news is now a criminal offence, and you may be liable for a fine or imprisonment.

I read a great line in a *Harvard Business Review* [article](#) earlier today: This is a time to overprotect but not overreact. We wish to thank everyone at the front line fighting this virus; thank our President and leadership teams; and wish all the best to everyone during the national lockdown.

ABOUT REGINE LE ROUX

Regine is a reputation specialist. She founded Reputation Matters in 2005; where they measure and manage companies' reputations using their unique Repudometer® measurement tool.

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