

Protecting Your Agency's Reputation

Dealing with the Press in Good Times and Bad

Agenda

- Crisis prevention
- Crisis communications: do's and don'ts
- Working with the press
- Key messages
- How to stay in control

Difference between Crisis and Issue

Issue:

—Warning sign that a crisis is possible. There's time to assess and take action

Crisis:

- —Destroys trust in organization, reputation and image
- —Can spiral quickly, pressure for quick action
- Examples: fraud, embezzlement, death due to negligence

A crisis strips your organization of privacy and leaves it exposed to scrutiny



METRO



Elderly NYCHA tenants trapped in their homes for 13 days because of elevator

By Nolan Hicks and Olivia Bensimon

July 19, 2019 | 7:48pm | Updated



TOP STORY

Six months later: 'The housing authority murdered them,' says brother of Allen Benedict Court victim



The agency – which is being overseen by a federal monitor following a series of scandals involving lead paint, mold and heating outages – has been without a permanent leader since former chairwoman Shola Olatoye quit in disgrace in April 2018.

Crisis Prevention

- Ethics training
- Checks and balances: understand budgets
- Befriend the enemy (keep your friends close and enemies even closer)
- Open communication between Board President and Executive Director
- Monitor issues that could spiral into crises

Crisis Communications: the Do's

- Key principles
 - 1. Be quick
 - 2. Be accurate
 - 3. Be consistent
- Use all available communication channels (social media, website, intranet, mass notification systems)
- Provide some expression of concern/safety for any victims

Crisis Communication: the Do's

- Use all available communication channels (social media, website, intranet, mass notification systems)
- Provide some expression of concern/safety for any victims

Crisis Communications: the Don'ts

- Don't wait. Communicate what happened with priority stakeholders even if incomplete information
- Don't speculate. Share the facts only.
- Don't run from news media. They will catch up.
- Don't say "no comment." More on this later.

News Media in a Crisis

- Attracted to crises conflict "sells"
- Can amplify the crisis by reporting on how organization manages it
- Especially important to work with news media during crisis
- Can build or destroy organizational reputation

News Media Post-Crisis

- Will watch and report how your organization recovers
- Can help restore reputation
- Key questions they will ask:
 - What changes have been made?
 - What are you doing to prevent this from ever happening again?

Role of News Media

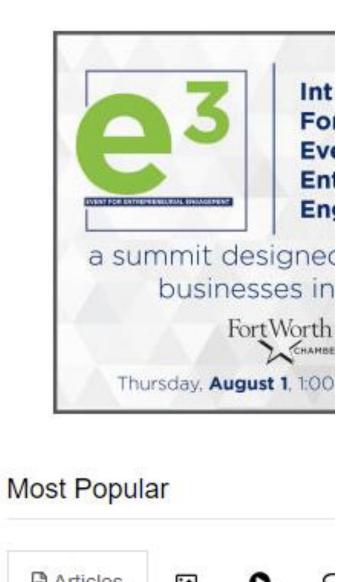
- "Watchdog" role
- Shapes public opinion
- Reaches your elected officials and other stakeholders
- Positive news can help your housing authority achieve its goals
- Can help build your H.A.'s reputation if handled well

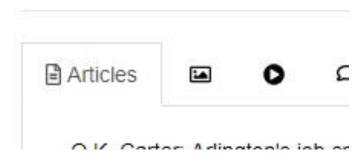
Examples

Dennison returns to Fort Worth Housing Solutions as SVP of Development and Asset Management

Apr 4, 2019 💂 0







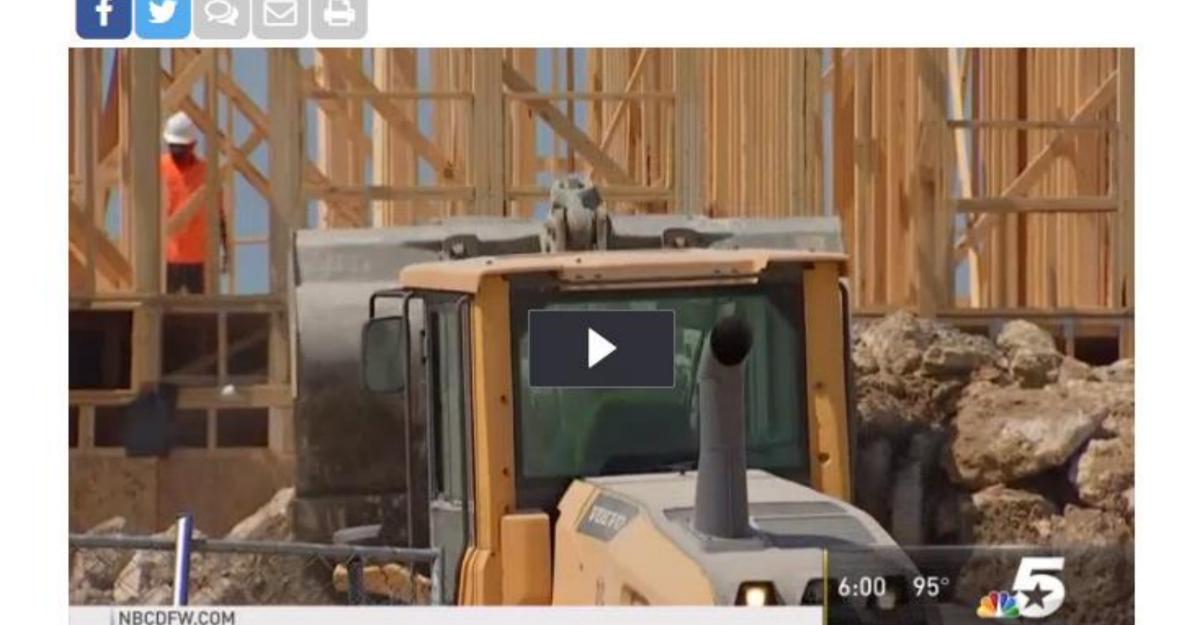
Examples

Fort Worth's Solution to Affordable Housing Crisis:

Build Its Own

By Scott Gordon

Published May 31, 2018 at 6:03 PM | Updated at 7:01 PM CDT on May 31, 2018



Fort Worth's housing authority has come up with a solution to the affordable housing crisis - building its own apartment complexes for low-income residents. (Published Thursday, May 31, 2018)

Media Relationships

- Be proactive, not reactive
- Build goodwill
- Help them do their job
- Give them real news
- Relationships developed over time will help if and when a crisis hits

What News Media Wants

- Quick and accurate information
- Newsworthy information the viewers/readers will care about
- Access to a spokesperson (leader or expert)
 - YOU, the commissioner, can be that spokesperson

Commissioners and the Press

- In fact, if crisis implicates the top executive ...
- Board President may need to be the spokesperson

Typical Concerns

- Will the media tell our story the way we want it to be told?
- Will I choke on TV?
- How do I keep from babbling on & on?
- Off-the-record: should I ever do this?
- How do I prepare?
- How do I handle tough reporters?

Expect the Unexpected

You just never know what can happen on camera

Basic Rules of the Road

- Respond promptly
- Set a time for the interview (you're in control)
- ALWAYS prepare for interviews
- ALWAYS tell the truth (even when it hurts)
- Avoid treating reporters like they are the enemy

How the News Media Works

- On the record vs. off the record
 - On the record means "fair game" for reporting
 - Everything you say before, during and after an interview is on the record
 - YOU ARE ON THE RECORD AT ALL TIMES

Reporting Techniques

- The "pregnant pause" after you answer the question
 - If you made your point, stay quiet
- Saying something to elicit a reaction (stay calm)
- Is there anything else you'd like to say?
- Is there anything I missed?
- Good opportunity to convey key messages

You have the right to:

- Set the ground rules for the interview (time limits, location, etc.)
- Audiotape the interview (great coaching tool for later)
- Ask who else the reporter is talking to
- Ask if the reporter has covered this topic before

Controlling the Interview

- Always remember, you're in control
- Establish rapport
 - How long have you been with NBC5?
 - How long have you been writing about housing?
- Don't be afraid to stop and start over
- Remain cool, calm and collected

Controlling the Interview

- Listen carefully to questions
- Answer using part of the question
- Don't say "no comment"
- Assume the audience knows very little about the subject

Three Kinds of Questions

1. GOOGLE

- What does a Google search for your organization reveal?
- 2. QYWLTAIOSWA (Questions you would love to answer if only someone would ask)
 - Example: "Tell me about the difference Fort Worth Housing Solutions is making in our community?
- 3. KILLER (if something bad happens to your organization)
 - Example: "Why weren't you more concerned about safety?"

Preparing for an Interview

- Practice answering killer questions
- Practice answering Google questions
- Practice delivering key messages that you really want people to hear
- Get someone to pretend to be a reporter

Good Answers

- Focus on your objective and key messages
- Are credible
- Are specific when appropriate
- Use "power" words: ex. "candid," "clear," "important," "crucial" (see hand-out)
- Use simple language: to the point

Words Matter

- Eradicate negative language, toxic words
- Stay positive (or at least neutral)
- Suppress the jargon and acronyms
- Speak so your grandmother could understand

Key Messages

- Key message = the most important messages you want people to hear
- Extremely important to develop at least three in advance of any interviews
- Must practice saying them

Key Messages

- Prepare at least three for the interview
- Say it in 150 words or less
- 150 words = 1 minute
- 75 words = 30 seconds
- 37 words = 15 seconds
- Your interview may last 15 seconds in a TV news spot
- Make every word count.

Stand Out

- Provide examples tell stories. Make it real.
- Be repetitious three times and it will be included!
- Use numbers: "There are two reasons for doing it this way. First, ..."
- Use chronology, especially with complex subjects (beginning, middle, end)

Use transitions

- Two great techniques you can use to make sure you get a chance to deliver key messages:
 - Bridging
 - Flagging

Bridging

- The critical issue is ...
- Let's consider another perspective ...
- Here's an even tougher question ...
- But the facts are ...
- Here's another way to say it ...
- Yes, but ...

Flagging

- Help the reporter remember what you want them to remember
- Underscore what you think is important
- Repetition is key
- "The most exciting thing about our work is ..."
- Before I forget, let me remind you …"

Verbal vs. NonVerbal Communication

- The way we communicate nonverbally is equally, and some MORE, important than verbal messaging
- It's not what we say, but how we say it that sometimes matters most
- Especially when communicating feelings and attitudes

When You're Speaking

- Speak with increased energy
- Use higher volume, range, tone and pitch than normal
- Don't be afraid to be animated
- Use inflection to make a point
- Pace yourself
- Speak slower and more succinctly
- · Be aware of facial expressions, eye contact, gestures

Final Reminders

- Always answer the question you want to be asked first
- Flag to underscore what's important
- Focus on your objective
- Bridge <u>away</u> from trouble and <u>to</u> your key messages

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