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Social Media and Crises

Lecture 5

DGM 730

Creating the Right Tone of Communication

Prepared by
Dr. Doaa Rady

www.esu.ac.ae

Creating the right tone of communication

- Creating socially acceptable behavior
 - Acceptable use policies (AUPs)
- Factors to Consider Before Posting
- Creating Social Media Messages
- Creating a plan
 - Crisis Communications plan
- Activate your social media plan



Acceptable use policies (AUPs) to manage social media use

Developing an AUP to cover social media

- Start by expanding your company's existing acceptable use policies governing email and web communications
- Clearly specify what is acceptable and what is inappropriate to post to social media sites
- State what can be posted during business hours and outside of business hours (if indeed there is any difference). Where there is no differentiation, clearly state this in the policy
- Let staff know that messages posted to social media sites will be monitored. This is vital

Acceptable use policies (AUPs) to manage social media use

Developing an AUP to cover social media

- Review all privacy settings on social media sites that contain your corporate profile. Educate staff about privacy settings too. Opting for minimal settings can expose your network to malware directed at popular social media sites
- Consider developing multiple AUPs for globally distributed staff, to cater for the laws of different countries
- Once you have taken these first steps, technology then can be used to remind employees of their responsibilities to protect company reputation and information. Rulesets within your email and web content management can then be used to enforce the social media AUP

Acceptable use policies (AUPs) to manage social media use

Basic content filters that can be used to enforce your social media policies include:

- Preventing the posting of inappropriate language or brand names to social media sites
- Preventing inappropriate images from being posted
- Blocking of incoming or outgoing file types over social media (e.g. Excel spreadsheets and databases)
- Blocking access to dangerous websites, such as gambling sites, that are known to be hosting malware
- Dividing websites into work-related and non work-related sites, to track usage
- Dividing social media access by job description, to manage non work-related usage

Acceptable use policies (AUPs) to manage social media use

Basic content filters that can be used to enforce your social media policies include:

- Applying social media controls, such as read only rules on the corporate Facebook account, depending on employees' roles. Look for social network controls that can be set by network
- Enforce AUP by allowing timed access to social media sites during working hours, to maintain productivity
- Enforce AUP by allowing timed access to non-work related sites and webmail during lunch breaks, before 9am and after 5pm
- Limit the installation of plug-ins such as games on social network sites, as these can impact productivity and network security. Look for social network controls that can be set by network

Factors to Consider Before Posting



T - is it True?

H - is it Helpful?

I - is it Inspiring?

N - is it Necessary?

K - is it Kind?

Factors to consider before posting

1. Identify the message goal

It is counterproductive to create social media messages that do not have a specific goal. Furthermore, **social media message goals** should **reflect** the organization's overall **mission**. Message goals can include increasing **brand awareness**, **creating a favorable perception** of an organization, and **convincing the audience to buy a product**. The goal should be **clearly articulated** in the content. Also, select the social media platform that would be the **most effective** in accomplishing the message goal. Each social media tool has specific characteristics and audiences, which will affect whether the message goals are achieved.

Factors to consider before posting

2. Identify the target audience

Similar to public relations writing, **social media messages** need to be **targeted**. After identifying the **key audience**, examine what they're talking about: **their interests, attitudes, and beliefs**.

Social media content should reflect audience analysis research findings. As you **tailor the content of the message to this audience**, do not exaggerate attempts to be interesting or relevant. Because social media messages are audience centered, they're not necessarily grounded in what you personally think is appealing.

The lack of attention to audience analysis can have serious consequences.

Factors to consider before posting

3. Identify the organization's social media approach

Communication choices should reflect organizational strategies. Wilson et al. (2011) identified **four general ways** in which companies use social media. They are determined by the “company's tolerance for uncertain outcomes and the level of results sought”.

The “predictive practitioner” approach uses caution when sending out social media messages. Instead of launching a social media strategy that involves all departments in a company, only a specific department (example: marketing or human resources) uses its social media platforms. This allows more control of social media messaging and guarantees some level of certainty in accomplishing the stated objectives.

Factors to consider before posting

3. Identify the organization's social media approach (Cont'd)

The “creative experimenter” approach accepts **uncertainty** and deploys small social media “**experiments**” to **learn and improve** overall business functions. Sometimes, businesses will take to Facebook or Twitter to receive feedback on products or business practices from internal (example: employees) or external (example: customers) audiences. The overall goal is to listen and learn from interactions; therefore, **unpredictable results** are accepted.

Factors to consider before posting

3. Identify the organization's social media approach (Cont'd)

The “**social media champion**” approach takes strategies to a more advanced level. A designated team is in charge of the organization's overall social media presence. The team also creates an official social media policy and guidelines for the organization. Larger social media projects typically use this strategy. Unlike the predictive practitioner strategy, this approach does not confine social media use to a particular department and considers social media messages across various functions.

Factors to consider before posting

3. Identify the organization's social media approach (Cont'd)

The “social media transformer” strategy targets both internal and external audiences by launching large-scale projects that involve multiple departments. As with the social media champion approach, a team is devoted to planning, creating, and launching the organization's social media projects. However, these projects are usually larger and more advanced than those using the social media champion approach. This strategy specifically considers how social media can influence business strategy, brand, and culture.

Organizations can use multiple approaches when designing a social media message. What is important is that they carefully consider their approach before posting any content to social media platforms.

Creating Social Media Messages



Creating social media messages

The goal of creating social media messages is not only **to reach your audience**, but also **to achieve an intended effect**.

Proper **grammar and punctuation** are important in social media writing, as is **accuracy**.

A careless error could undermine the credibility of your brand. Here are a few other factors to consider when creating social media messages.

1. *Engagement, engagement, engagement*
2. *Consistency*
3. *Concise writing*

Engagement, engagement, engagement

More than many forms of communication, **social media messages** need to **motivate the audience to engage with the content**. Several **strategies** can encourage engagement, **such as responding quickly to feedback** from audience members, **creating contests**, and **inviting the audience to respond to a question**. Including **photos and videos** in social media posts substantially increases engagement, as does **integrating trending topics**.

This requires careful consideration and research that will pay off if the trending hashtags are chosen wisely.

Hai Poke, a startup restaurant in Columbus, did this by tapping into the Pokemon Go craze in the summer of 2016. The restaurant launched a social media contest and created a fun, timely, interactive message.

Creating social media messages



Hai Poké

July 14 · 🌐

Yes, we are a part of the craze! Come on, how could we not be with a name like ours?!

Snap a photo of a poké bowl along with a pokemon and use the hashtag **#pokebowlgo** to be entered into a raffle for free Hai Poké merchandise!

... See More



“Poké” social media campaign image from Hai Poké’s Facebook page.

Consistency

The **core message** needs to be articulated **across all social media platforms** in a **consistent way** that conveys **a unified voice**.

The message also needs to **reflect the brand image**; in other words, it should **reinforce the brand “feel” or personality**.

Concise writing

Similar to news writing, social media writing is straightforward. Because you're competing against countless other messages in the social media sphere, you do not have much time and space to capture the audience's attention.

This is especially the case with Twitter, with its current 140-character limit. You have to think carefully not only about what the message will say but how to say it in a concise manner that has the intended effect.

Creating a plan



Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

1. Create a crisis communications team
2. Be prepared for different crisis scenarios
3. Develop your crisis assessment criteria
4. List communication and notification steps
5. Determine account access, policies and procedures
6. Get team and leadership buy-in for your plan

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

1. Create a crisis communications team

- **Crisis communications team leader (CCTL):** Responsible for coordinating the team's response, overseeing message development, scheduling crisis communications team meetings and facilitating approvals with senior leadership. This may be a senior communications leader within your organization.
- **Crisis communications coordinator (CCC):** In the event of a larger crisis, this person will assist the CCTL with prioritizing the team's responsibilities and project managing a response. They will liaise with all of the communications team leaders: social, PR, internal communication, investor relations, customer marketing, etc. This may be a communications manager from any discipline or your social team lead.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

1. Create a crisis communications team (Cont'd)

- **Final approver:** This person is a high-ranking executive and will provide final approval on all publicly disseminated information. They will also act as a spokesperson when necessary, whether in media statements or social content **that's part of your response.**
- **Legal counsel:** This team member's role is straightforward—they provide legal advice on communication strategies and the business impact of a given situation, and they approve formal company statements and/or the company's messaging.
- **IT and/or security:** This person will coordinate any technology needed to manage the situation and lead the investigation of any physical security issues.

Of course, add other roles or executives from other functions as it applies to your organization. Your plan should include each team member's name, role, contact information (work and home/personal) and who will serve as a backup if they are unavailable.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

2. Be prepared for different crisis scenarios

It's impossible to know exactly what crises may come up. **The way** every company had **to handle communications** over the last few years **differed between industries, locations, products** and more.

That's why it's beneficial to you and your company to prepare for different potential crisis scenarios.

Identify what types of scenarios might emerge that could adversely impact your business. **List the types of events that could cause each type of crisis**, as well as the right member of your executive team to help your crisis communications team leader run point.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

2. Be prepared for different crisis scenarios (Cont'd)

Here's an example of how you might list this information.

Type of crisis: Business reputation

- **Major product recall, failure or safety issue**

Point person: CEO, chief product officer or head of product development for that line of business

- **Leak of confidential information**

Point person: CEO or officer responsible for the relevant area of the business

- **Controversial statements** by leadership or employee (on social media or elsewhere)

Point person: CEO if C-level; CMO or head of communications otherwise

- **Offensive social media message** posted from brand account

Point person: CMO or head of communications

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

2. Be prepared for different crisis scenarios (Cont'd)

Consider creating **templates for social media posts** you can use and adjust for each scenario. **Speed** is everything when it comes to communicating in a crisis. You don't have to have all the information yet to put out a post that says, "We are currently investigating and will share more information as soon as we know more." Brands that wait too long to respond to a crisis, or say nothing at all, appear indifferent or as if they have something to hide.

While crisis scenario planning may not be a pleasant exercise, doing it when your business isn't at risk will give you one less worry in the event of an incident.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

3. Develop your crisis assessment criteria

The first step in managing a crisis is understanding **what happened and the severity** of the issue. Include a **list of crisis levels** and characteristics in your plan to help your team quickly ascertain the **appropriate level** of response when a crisis arises.

You might assign crisis severity levels ranging from level one (something that attracts very little attention) to level five (something that disrupts business and/or is an international news story). With this guidance, you can begin any crisis communications response planning by gathering the following information. This allows your crisis team leader to quickly identify the appropriate level and response.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

3. Develop your crisis assessment criteria (Cont'd)

- What happened and where?
- When did it happen?
- Who is involved?
- How did it happen?
- What is planned in response?
- How many people does this affect?
- How many people are aware?

An offensive Tweet may only rate a level one and require a smaller team with an appropriately scaled down response—but if social media alerts you to a dangerous product problem or food poisoning cases from one of your restaurants, you might be ringing the four- or five-alarm bell.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

4. List communication and notification steps

In this section of your plan, lay out what **the internal chain of communication** looks like when you need to activate your plan. Generally this would begin when a member of your crisis communications team is first informed of a potential crisis. They would notify the crisis communications team leader, and it would continue from there, depending on the type and severity of the crisis.

This can also include **best practices** for how the crisis communications team will stay in touch while managing the situation. For example, establish a daily stand-up meeting and create a temporary Slack channel or Meta Workplace Group that you'll use for real-time communication.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

4. List communication and notification steps (Cont'd)

Several types of common internal communication :

- Informational communications: These give employees context and insight into what is happening.
- Actionable communications: These share next steps needed from employees, from reminders to keep information confidential to reaching out to customers.
- Status update: These give employees an ongoing debrief on what is happening, as the situation unfolds.

Having a point person for employees helps keep conversations focused and reduces the risk of people turning to others or share information they shouldn't.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan

5. Determine account access, policies and procedures

Who has the password to your organization's Twitter account? What's the two-step verification code for accessing your Instagram natively? Where do you respond if your main communications channels are compromised?

As part of your social media governance model, you want to make sure others can securely have access to your core channels if you're not able to assist. Build a central repository of policies, procedures and other documentation for an extra layer of security. That way you aren't relying only on somebody's memory in a high-pressure situation and you aren't stalled if a team member can't be reached.

Develop an Integrated Crisis Communications Plan**6. Get team and leadership buy-in for your plan**

The final step of creating a plan is making sure that the right people are aware and on board for their roles in managing a crisis. Share your plan with your direct manager and determine the best way to share with your organization's leadership. Provide a window for feedback and, from there, make sure the plan is housed in an easy-to-access digital location like the policies and procedures section of your company's intranet, central server or Wiki. Finally, review this plan on an annual basis to ensure your protocols and contact information remain up-to-date.

Activate your social media plan



Activate your social media plan

When it's time to activate your plan, Remember, you're prepared for this—which gives you a strong foundation and clear sense of next steps.

Now, your job is to find a resolution and put your audience at ease.

1. Remain flexible

A social media crisis communications plan, of course, should cover the most crucial steps, but your team should also feel empowered to take actions that best suit the challenge at hand. Just keep all stakeholders in the loop if you deviate from the established plan.

This flexibility extends to how you handle your scheduled social messages. Many brands have their social posts queued several days or weeks in advance to promote an ongoing campaign or to provide a signal boost to evergreen content. When an emergency hits, turn off any scheduled messages. It doesn't reflect well on a business to share serious information about a product recall, then have a funny Tweet go out an hour later.

Activate your social media plan**2. Develop a message protocol document**

A social media crisis communications plan, of course, should cover the most you work with other communications stakeholders or the rest of your social team to plan your response, an agreed-upon message protocol document will be an invaluable resource.

Focus your social approach on responding to your community's questions and fostering a sense of connection. Through this approach, you can position your brand as a leader, a pillar of support and source of helpful information—especially for larger, non-brand-specific crises.

This document should outline:

- Your brand's position, stance or formal response
- Your brand's messaging strategy
- Approved social media copy to publish
- Approved social media messaging or 1:1 responses

Activate your social media plan

2. Develop a message protocol document

This document should be approved by the crisis communications team leader as well as your company's legal team as needed. With your message protocol in place, you'll be ready to communicate with your audience as soon as you get the green light.

Pro tip: Having pre-approved social media copy for FAQs you receive during a crisis—even if a response just includes a snippet of copy and a link to a page that offers more information—is crucial. In Sprout, the Asset Library simplifies collaborative publishing by making all of your pre-approved, go-to answers easy to find.

Activate your social media plan**3. Set up your social media crisis communications operations**

Next, you'll want to establish your social media management plan and processes. On social, you'll need to consider several factors:

- How you will publish information and which platforms to prioritize
- Communications going out on other channels (e.g. customer emails) and timing
- How you will manage and respond to inbound messages
- What language you will use in outbound communications
- Whether you will monitor any specific influencers amid the conversation
- How you will assess the situation (at the outset and through the end) and provide insights to the rest of your crisis communications team

Activate your social media plan

4. Choose the right platforms

Depending on the crisis at hand and the field you're in, different social platforms may be better for distributing your messages. Know where your core audience is—and it may not just be on the biggest platforms.

The social platforms of choice should also make sense for the situation: a fire at one of your facilities may require immediate notification on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, whereas a response to an insensitive public comment about an employee might require messaging on LinkedIn and Facebook.

Activate your social media plan**5. Manage and engage with inbound messages**

Using the message protocol document you've developed, you'll know what types of messages you can and should respond to. But in order to find all of the relevant messages, you'll also need to be able to surface posts where people aren't tagging your brand.

To mitigate major issues before or as they arise, have a solid monitoring process in place.

In times of crisis, your brand's inbound message volume will likely surge. Determine what kinds of tools can help you provide swift and appropriate responses to people reaching out. Consider implementing or updating a social media chatbot to help get your community answers and resources as quickly as possible. Just make sure your chatbot is updated to reflect the current situation and questions being asked.

Considering more than 75% of consumers expect a response from brands in less than 24 hours, speed matters.

Activate your social media plan**6. Assess big picture insights for company leadership**

Use social listening to get a bird's eye view of the situation, understand the trajectory of the crisis and identify what specific issues are driving negative sentiment.

One of the first things to do is set up a Listening Topic in Sprout or your tool of choice to access insights from aggregate social data. This will enable you to see how fluctuations in the volume of messages and sentiment about the issue, what moments in the social conversation caused inflection points and what specific messaging is or isn't resonating with your audience.

With social listening, you can quickly export these insights as a report to share with your team and leadership. Doing this at the beginning of a crisis can inform a customer-centric messaging strategy and continuously empower you to adapt as the situation unfolds.

Activate your social media plan

7. Manage the aftermath

Whether you just went through a small hiccup or a major emergency, you should analyze your long-term audience response and the reaction over time on social. A comprehensive report that shows you impressions, shares, comments and sentiment, as well as internal metrics like average response time to critical questions, will help you to measure your success and outline areas for improvement moving forward.

Ideally, you will want to set the dates for what you measure so that you can compare your brand's baseline performance at a normal time against how data points changed at the beginning, middle and end of a problem.

Activate your social media plan

7. Manage the aftermath

Major impacts of how a crisis was handled might not show up until much later in the form of decreased revenue or customer loss. But a social savvy organization can track customer sentiment in real time and use analytics to show how well a situation was handled. Remember that your success isn't just about the numbers—it's how well you connected with your audience.

After your brand has hopefully mitigated the crisis, you'll also be able to report on the lifecycle of the situation and how your brand's response changed the tone of the conversation. These insights will give your crisis communications team information to improve or build on your plan for the future. Just in case.

Creating the right tone of communication

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Thank You

