



## The Amazon intro to Reputation management

This short guide provides an introduction to planning for, and dealing with, situations that may present a risk to your organisation's reputation.



### Why should I worry about things that might never happen?

As the saying goes, failing to plan is planning to fail. The events that could pose a risk may or may not be within your control, but it is within your power to minimise the impact they have on your reputation, which is central to your ability to provide services, attract funding, win contracts and influence key stakeholders. Think about how much time and effort you invest in building and maintaining your reputation, and then consider how quickly things can spread in this world of 24 hour news, citizen journalism and social media networks.

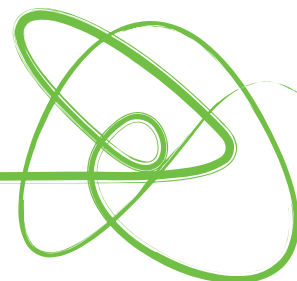
### How do I prepare?

- 1. List, or map out, the situations most likely to happen**, and that would have the biggest impact on your reputation
- 2. At the same time, think about the audiences** and stakeholders that would be involved, or that you'd need to engage with in those situations. Make sure you understand them – think about how they are likely to react and the impact of their actions and responses
- 3. Gather as much intelligence in advance as possible** – if you know there are difficult relationships or services with a bad history, explore them fully, so you understand the full picture
- 4. Identify ways to mitigate these risks** – do you need to improve communication with parents or with regulators, for example? Are there issues with union representatives or lobby groups that need to be addressed, to minimise the likelihood of problems in the future?
- 5. Create a crisis comms team** – agree who would take on responsibility for what during a situation. Who would be your primary spokesperson? Who will deal with media calls? Use a mix of expertise, but bear in mind the people in the team must be senior enough to make quick, informed decisions under pressure

### What constitutes a reputational risk?

Risks to your reputation can be posed by occurrences within your organisation – such as an event at a service or involving a member of staff.

Or they can be triggered by external situations – a new report on the impact of agricultural development in Africa, for instance. Essentially, they can be anything that may lead people to question how well run you are, the value of the services you provide, or the way that you work.





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**6. Media train all spokespeople** – depending on your work, they will probably need to be confident in TV, radio and print situations

**7. Create template statements** so you can react quickly and in the right way. This way, all you'll have to do is adapt a core set of messaging to the specifics of a situation

**8. Involve people** you can trust from outside the organisation, to help you make sure you have everything covered and that your template materials will do what you need them to

**9. Test everything.** Organise a day to run a crisis scenario. Check that everything can be done confidently and quickly. If there are sticking points or if there is any confusion, you'll then know what you need to tighten up ready for the real thing.

### What about if (or when) it happens?

- Acknowledge the situation – don't just hope it will die down
- Gather as much information as you can, as quickly as you can, and immediately brief and mobilise your crisis comms team
- Make sure you communicate as quickly and as openly as possible. Stick to the facts. Avoid 'no comments', but don't speculate
- Tailor your pre-drafted statements – don't get too diverted from your original key messaging
- Be available and work with the media, not against them – they'll just get their information from elsewhere if you don't help them understand what's happening
- Be consistent and confident in everything you say
- Keep a close eye on the situation and alter your response accordingly - don't get caught out because you've missed a development.



### And after it's all over?

- Evaluate how well you handled the situation, what can you learn?
- Be clear on the situation as it now stands – is it likely to recur or evolve? Update your plans accordingly
- Get back to business as usual as quickly as possible and talk about all the positive things that are happening.

We hope this guide has helped you understand how careful planning and preparation can help you handle reputational risks.

If you'd like to discuss reputation management, crisis handling or other communications support, please get in touch.

We work with clients in the voluntary and public sectors, and social enterprises, creating and delivering communications campaigns that raise awareness, transform the way people think and help to deliver real change.

### We'd love to hear from you...

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