

Crisis Communication/Public Relations

Plan for

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

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North American Weekend Pillar

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

Contents

[Introduction](#)
[The Crisis Communication Team](#)
[Positioning](#)
[Designated Spokesperson](#)
[Media Policies and Procedures](#)
[Practicing Tough Questions](#)
[Prepared Statements](#)
[Sample News Release](#)
[Collateral Materials](#)
[Key Audiences](#)
[Contact Log](#)
[Speaker's Presentations](#)
[Handling Media Interviews](#)

Introduction

This crisis communication plan will outline a generic, basic crisis communication plan. It is not intended to answer all questions or fill all needs it is just a basic outline of options to be considered if and when WWME is in the midst of a crisis and need of help.

A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of WWME, usually brought on by adverse or negative media attention. These situations can be any kind of legal dispute, theft, accident, fire, flood or manmade disaster that could be attributed to WWME. It can also

be a situation where in the eyes of the media or general public WWME did not react to one of the above situations in the appropriate manner. This definition is not all encompassing but rather is designed to give WWME leadership an idea for the types of situations where they may need to follow this plan.

If handled correctly the damage can be minimized.

One thing to remember and that is crucial in a crisis is tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth. If WWME does this then we have done all that can be done to minimize the situation.

When a situation arises that may be a crisis the first thing WWME should do is contact either NASET, USET or CNET and the public relations leadership couple. The sooner WWME gets those two groups involved the sooner WWME can implement this plan.

The Crisis Communication Team

This team is essential to identify what actions should be taken. the team should be comprised of individuals who are key to the situation. They should include as a minimum the NASET, USET, CNET, the Public Relations leadership couple, the section or district leader, and the Area Leader from the area that was involved in the situation that has brought about the crisis, the WWME legal counsel and anyone else who might be able to shed some light on the situation such as eye witnesses.

The job of this team is to come up with a plan of action and decide who the spokesperson should be.

A copy of the management recall roster should be attached and updated immediately upon change of leadership and should include cellular phone numbers. As we all know a crisis is not always at the most convenient time and place. A complete leadership list is recommended as you never can tell who and when they may be needed

Once the crisis communication team is selected the list should be made of the people on the team and what each team member is responsible for. This document contains a sample form.

Sample form: 1. Names _____
home _____ cells _____

2. Names _____
home _____ cells _____

In addition to the crisis communication team the Public Relations leadership team should be supplemented with couples and priests who can answer phones and if required escort media. Having calls from the media answered promptly is essential. As soon as possible a prepared statement should be given to this staff. This statement should be something such as "Facts are still being gathered but there will be a press conference before 4:00, give me your name and number and I will call you back to let you know when."

One of the first responsibilities of the crisis communication team should be to determine the appropriate positioning or message to address the emergency. Things to think about:

This is where "Tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth" begins.

It is always best when a mistake has been made to admit it up front, and begin doing whatever is possible to re-establish credibility and confidence with internal and external audiences. This may be difficult for some to do, especially if the lawyers are involved since it is their job to minimize the eventual legal cost to the movement. However, if you do some homework you will find that following the advice in this plan will minimize the legal costs. Many Public Relations case studies are made of issues where the lawyers had too much say in what was done and upper leadership didn't get involved from the beginning.

The first and foremost goal is protecting the integrity and reputation of Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

Never try to lie, deny or hide your involvement.

If you ignore the situation it will only get worse.

Don't let the lawyers make the decisions. While they are good intentioned it may cause the crisis to escalate.

The cause of almost all crises fall into two broad categories:

Overt acts and acts of omission.

Issues of competence or lack thereof in matters of public perception.

Positioning

To decide on a position, it is important to step out of your role in WWME and put yourself in the situation of whom ever was involved in the crisis or try to view the crisis from the eye of the public. Ignoring the situation will only make things worse.

Examples of categories to consider for positioning are:

Human error

Clerical error

Unauthorized procedures

Inadequate supervision

Inadequate quality control

Misuse of confidential information

Errors of judgment

Inadequate standard operating procedures

As you are considering the position it is important to consider the wide range of consequences (e.g., legal, financial, public relations, effects on movement, effects on weekends, etc.).

Keep in mind that people tend to remember what they hear first and last.

Designated Spokesperson

One individual and/or couple should be designated as the primary spokesperson to represent WWME, make official statements and answer media questions throughout the crisis.

A back-up to the designated spokesperson should also be identified to fill the position in the event that the primary spokesperson is unavailable.

In addition to the primary spokesperson and the backup spokesperson, individuals who will serve as advisors should be designated. These resources might include a financial expert, a past leader in WWME or anyone Worldwide Marriage Encounter deems necessary during a specific

kind of crisis. This will take some brainstorming by the crisis communication team since what is needed may not always be apparent. There should be an authority (could be priest or layperson) in their field and be available to supplement the knowledge of the spokesperson.

Criteria for the spokesperson, backup spokesperson and crisis communication expert is:

Comfortable in front of a TV camera and with reporters. Preferably, skilled in handling media, skilled in directing responses to another topic, skilled in identifying key points, able to speak without using jargon, respectful of the role of the reporter, knowledgeable about WWME and the crisis at hand, able to establish credibility with the media, able to project confidence to the audience, suitable in regard to diction, appearance and charisma, sincere, straightforward and believable, accessible to the media and to internal communications personnel who will facilitate media interviews, able to remain calm in stressful situations.

In addition to the designated spokesperson and backup, it can be anticipated that other parties involved in the crisis; police, fire department, health officials, etc., will also have a spokesperson. It is important to obtain the identity of that individual as early as possible so all statements and contacts with the media can be coordinated between the two individuals and their organizations/interests whenever possible.

Media Policies and Procedures

Select a place to be used as a media center. It should be some distance from offices of the crisis communication team, spokesperson and emergency operations center to ensure that media are not in the middle of the action if they happen to take the wrong turn or have to pass by those offices or areas on the way to the restrooms. If there is a visual (a fire or rescue operation) don't make the media center in such a remote site that they can't see what is going on because they may not show up and if they do you will lose their confidence and it may appear that you are hiding something.

Locations for interviews and press briefings will be decided by the crisis communications team.

Don't change the rules that you already have established for the media. If the media are currently required to be escorted then during a crisis they should be required to be escorted. These things should be considered and preparations made now to find people who can escort media during a crisis. If they are not required to be escorted now then don't require them to be in a crisis. If there are special circumstances that would require them

to be escorted such as a safety hazard, they should be advised of this up front. Any change in the way the media is dealt with during a crisis may change the views of the reporter. It is important that they feel that you aren't trying to hide anything.

Reporters may ask to speak to individuals who are involved with or have been affected by the crisis. It is best to restrict all interviews to the primary spokesperson, back-up spokesperson or expert. Controlling the interview process is key to managing the crisis.

However, remember that reporters have the right to interview anyone they want to and if they don't get the answers they want from you they will get them somewhere. They are all after the scoop. They all want a different angle than the reporter standing next to them. They will try for that scoop with you. If the possibility is there to provide them with what they want, consider it very carefully. All media should be treated equally. What is given to one (such as access to an area affected by the crisis) should be available to all media.

Practicing Tough Questions

A crisis situation is always difficult when dealing with the media. Therefore, tough questions and rehearsals are necessary to help the spokesperson prepare.

It is important, at the onset of the crisis, that the spokesperson, backup and advisors spend some time rehearsing prepared statements and answers to possible "tough" questions that may be asked by reporters. If possible, similar rehearsals should be conducted prior to each media interview, briefing or news conference. It is also important to anticipate and practice new questions as the story evolves.

It is better to over-prepare than to be surprised by the depth of questioning by the media. Be tough and be prepared.

The Communications/Public Relations staff should prepare questions and answers for the practice sessions. These questions and answers should be for internal use only and not for distribution outside of WWME.

Don't volunteer information unless it is a point WWME wants to make and the question hasn't been asked.

Don't talk off the record.

Prepared Statements

If you don't communicate immediately, you lose your greatest opportunity to control events. (Attached is a fill-in the blanks news release that can be used with little or no preparation as the first news release). The first news release should include at a minimum the who, what, when and where of the situation.

You must give the facts that have been gathered from reliable sources and confirmed. Don't over reach and don't speculate. There is a limit to your role. To exceed that limit is a mistake. If you do nothing more than show concern for the public and for those involved in your first press interaction, you are already on the right track. The corollary of expressing concern and generating good will at the consumer level is securing the loyalty of WWME couples and priests as well as future couples and priests by taking the initiative to share information with them. If the WWME doesn't feel like insiders, they are going to act like outsiders.

You must have a prepared statement on hand that can be used to make an initial general response to the media when knowledge about the crisis first becomes known on a widespread basis or by reporters.

As the crisis progresses and new information and facts become available, it is also advisable to develop prepared statements to be made by the spokesperson at the onset of any media interview, briefing or news conference.

These prepared statements also can be read over the telephone to reporters who call to request information but are not represented at news conferences or briefings. The statement can also be sent by FAX or e-mail upon request.

Sample News Release

A _____ at _____ involving _____ occurred today at _____. The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

A (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time). The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

For instance:

An explosion at 1210 Market Street, the hotel hosting a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend occurred today at 3 p.m. The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

You could put down a definitive time for the next news conference or release of information if you know it but it is not necessary. This will not solve your problems, but may buy you enough time to prepare for the next news conference or release.

You could also add information if it is available such as how many casualties there are known up to this point or any other pertinent information available. Once again, this information should be definitive and not speculative, verify everything you say. This will help your credibility in the long run.

Collateral Materials

Information brochures or fact sheets about WWME or the area in which the crisis has occurred are helpful in informing the reporters or anyone else seeking information about the WWME.

A generic fact sheet about WWME should be created and made available.

Always do what you can to make a complicated issue as simple as you can for reporters. If the crisis was caused by a piece of equipment consider bringing in a similar piece of equipment to show reporters. At the very least provide a schematic or drawing. If you give them a visual that may keep them from seeking one out themselves. Try not to use the actual piece of equipment that failed since that is morbid and allows an opportunity to an overzealous reporter to do some yellow journalism. It may also be traumatic to the relatives of victims.

Key Audiences

Below is a list of publics (these include couples, priests, religious other faith expressions.) When you are working on a crisis consider what the most effective method of communication would be for each group. Ensure that you communicate with each group that is part of your audience.

Community where couples live, neighborhood coalitions, community and church organizations.

Customer (Couples and Priests):

Geographical

Local, regional, national, and international

Functional:

Family Life offices etc.

Media:

General, local national and international; specialized including religious

Governmental:

Geographical

Local, state, regional, national, international

Special Interests

Church officials, church hierarchy, senior citizens, and religious. These could be local, regional, national or international.

Contact Log

A log should be established to record all telephone calls from the media or other parties inquiring about the crisis. This will help to ensure that the many callbacks required are not overlooked. It will also assist in the post-crisis analysis.

The contact log should contain the following information:

Date | Name of caller | Questions(s) asked | Telephone number
Person responsible for response | Additional follow-up needs

Speaker Presentations

CHECKLIST OF DO'S AND DON'TS

The Do's

When preparing to give a speech,

- Use a full script with LARGE TYPE for easy reading.
- Leave wide margin for notes to yourself.
- Leave pages unstapled for easier handling at podium.
- Highlight and mark your script to guide your delivery.
- Time your presentation to fit the program schedule of the group you will address.
- Practice: Read it aloud using a mirror and tape recorder until it sounds like you are talking, not reading.
- Be sure you have the facts about the number of weekend participants, contact person's name, facility, etc.
- Based on your audience and your presentation, determine what, if any, equipment you will use. If you are not familiar with the equipment, contact an experienced individual to arrange a briefing on how to use audio and visual equipment.

When you arrive at your engagement,

- Be at least 15 minutes early.
- Check equipment in advance if possible.

Audio and Visual Checklist:

- Check the lighting in the room to be sure presentation will be visible to

the audience.

- Check microphone (whether it is free standing or lavalier) before beginning- "Can you hear me?"

- Check lighting to podium to be sure you can read.

PowerPoint Presentations and Projected Screen Images

- Be sure the type of room and size of crowd are appropriate for the use of projector equipment.

- Be sure the words/graphics are large enough for people to read.

- Check to be sure you are situated correctly in the room with the projector, screen, microphone and audience.

When you are speaking,

- Stand erect and direct voice toward audience.

- Speak loudly, slowly and distinctly.

- Establish eye contact (or appear to do so) with audience from time to time.

- Stay within the allotted presentation time.

When you are answering questions,

- Remain friendly, cool-headed and confident.

- Answer only the questions asked and do so as succinctly and clearly as possible.

- Remember that you do not always have to know everything. You can say "I will have to check that out for you--please see me after the meeting.

- Avoid allowing one person to dominate the questions by moving on: "Thank you for your interest. I'll be glad to talk to you about your concerns after the meeting. Right now let's see if anyone else has questions for the group.

When you are finished with your presentation,

- Remain long enough to give individuals an opportunity to talk with you.
- See to it that arrangements are made for distributing information materials to the group, if requested/appropriate.

The Don'ts:

When preparing to give a speech,

- Assume that you can "wing it"-- almost no one can.
- Decide you are better "off the cuff"--almost no one is.
- Use type that is too small to read with a dim light and margins too narrow for notes.
- Leave too little time to practice adequately.

When you arrive at your engagement,

- Be late.
- Forget the group's contact person's name.
- Fail to check your equipment.

When you are speaking

- Mumble your remarks to the podium.
- Speak too loudly into the microphone.
- Allow yourself to wander away from your prepared text.
- Tell an unprepared anecdote or joke, or make "top of mind" remarks.
- Speak longer than time allotted.

When you are answering questions,

- Become defensive or emotional.
- Assume that tough questions are personal.
- Answer more than the question itself.

- Allow one person to dominate the question period.

Handling Media Interviews

Tips and Guidelines

How To prepare for Broadcast Interviews

- Prepare "talking paper" on primary points you want to make.
- Anticipate questions--prepare responses.
- Practice answering questions.
- Cover controversial areas ahead of time.
- Know who will be interviewing you, if possible.
- Determine how much time is available.
- Audiences often remember impressions, not facts.

Do's and Don'ts During the Interview process

- Do build bridges.
- Do use specifics.
- Do use analogies.
- Do use contrasts, comparisons.
- Do be enthusiastic/ animated.
- Do be your casual likable self.
- Do be a listener.
- Do be cool.
- Do be correct.
- Do be anecdotal.
- If you don't have the answer or can't answer, do admit it and move on to

another topic.

- Don't fall for that "A or B" dilemma.
- Don't accept "what if" questions.
- Don't accept "laundry list" questions.
- Don't go off the record.
- Don't think you have to answer every question.
- Don't speak for someone else --beware of the absent-party trap.

How To Handle Yourself During A TV Talk Show Interview

- Talk "over " lavalier microphone.
- Audio check-- use regular voice.
- If makeup is offered, use it.
- Sit far back in the chair, back erect...but lean forward to appear enthusiastic and force yourself to use hands.
- Remember... TV will frame your face--be calm, use high hand gestures, if possible.
- Keep eyes on interviewer-- not on camera.
- Smile, be friendly.

Tips On Appearance

- Avoid wearing pronounced stripes, checks or small patterns.
- Grey, brown, blue or mixed colored suits/dresses are best.
- Grey, light-blue, off-white or pastel shirts or blouses are best.
- Avoid having hair cut right before interview.

How To Respond During A Newspaper Interview

- Obtain advanced knowledge of interview topics.

- Make sure you are prepared in detail; print reporters are often more knowledgeable than broadcast reporters and may ask more detailed questions.
- Begin the interview by making your major points in statement form.
- Try to maintain control of the interview .
- Don't let reporter wear you down.
- Set a time limit in advance.
- Don't get so relaxed that you say something you wish you hadn't.
- Avoid jargon or professional expressions.
- Reporter may repeat self in different ways to gain information you may not want to give.
- Don't answer inappropriate questions; simply say it is "not an appropriate topic for you to address at this time," or "it's proprietary" for example.
- Be prepared for interruptions with questions...it is legitimate for reporters to do that.
- Do not speak "off the record."
- Remember, the interview lasts as long as a reporter is there.

After The Interview

- You can ask to check technical points, but do not ask to see advance copy of the story.
- Never try to go over reporter's head to stop a story.
- Do not send gifts to reporters--it is considered unethical for them to accept them.

Remember you have the ability to turn lemons into lemonade and make Worldwide Marriage Encounter known across the world – and turn a crisis situation into a positive for the movement.

