



NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Transportation

Reputational Risk and Leading the Charge with Effective Communication

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Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina

Why Reputational Risk Matters





Reputational
crisis often
begins
operationally.



Information
spreads at
light-speed.

Someone
else tells your
story for you
first.



Three Types of Situations

Emergency

- Physical events
- Requires cross-team coordination

Crisis

- Reputational (sometimes physical)
- Impacts Mission

Issue

- Proactive
- Minimize impact

Where Organizations Get Into Trouble



Trouble Spots

- Information silos: teams working independently without a shared understanding.
- Delayed decision-making (nothing is ever perfect!).
- Misalignment across agencies, departments or partners.
- Communication treated as an afterthought instead of a leadership function.

A Better Model: Communication as Coordination

- Establish a shared understanding:
 - What happened?
 - What do we know?
 - What are we doing?
- Create clear information flow.
- Align leadership early.
- Communicate early, clearly and often.



A Better Model: Communication as Coordination

Plan ahead.

- Establish the importance of communications with colleagues.
- Identify a crisis communication team.
- Compile your available resources.
- Think through the implications of events, actions and words (forecasting).
- Develop messaging for situations ahead of time.



Consensus Building



Consensus Building

- Identify decision-makers early.
- Create a single source of truth.
- Establish expectations for regular information sharing.
- Focus on shared outcomes.
- Trust is central to the process.



Keys to Success



Five Things to Help us Navigate Tough Situations

- **Be Prepared:** Spend time familiarizing yourself with any guidelines, policy and the response teams across your organization.
- **Be Thoughtful:** Place those impacted at the center of any actions and messaging. Think about the broader audience and how to share information with empathy and respect.
- **Be Clear and Consistent:** Review everything carefully and stick to the key takeaways you need audiences to remember. What you share initially and as a situation unfolds will be critiqued extensively, both internally and externally.
- **Be Timely:** Inform the right teams and leaders promptly to build consensus quickly and move forward strategically. Balance speed and accuracy.
- **Be Reflective:** As the situation unfolds, are there any past experiences to guide you? As you release information and learn more, are there adjustments that need to be made? Reflect on how things went once the situation has passed.

The 'No Surprises' Rule



Key Takeaways

- Define the situation.
- Know your resources.
- Have a plan in place.
- Forecast what you can, reflect afterward.
- Keep your cool.



Thank you!

