

HAVING A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN...

**THAT YOU NEVER
NEED TO USE**

As I write this column, the smoke is still clearing both literally and figuratively from the awful mass shooting in Las Vegas. This one hits a bit closer to home for a lot of us, because it happened at the Route 91 Harvest Festival.

In the midst of this awful tragedy, we are also seeing example after example of the goodness in our fellow citizens helping one another at one of the worst moments in the victims' lives. Real life heroes, whose identities may never be known.

We are also seeing the benefits of having a crisis plan (including crisis communications) in place and ready to go. We have seen the benefits of not only having a crisis plan, but regular practicing of what to do in the event of a mass casualty event.

Just think of how many entities had to put their crisis plan into effect late on that Sunday evening. First, there was the Las Vegas Police Department. Not only did they have to deal with the deadliest mass shooting in modern history, they had to deal with literally thousands of inquiries from the news media, concerned family members and the public. And they had to try to continually get updates internally so they could intelligently inform the media and the public of what was going on.

Then there were the hospitals—several of them. They had to immediately implement their disaster plan. This, of course, included calling in all medical staff, making sure they were working in their proper places, triaging the victims and caring for all the patients. And, they had a communications portion of that plan so they could deal with calls from the media and worried relatives wanting to know if their loved ones were being treated and where.

The promoters for the Route 91 Harvest Festival had to put a crisis plan into effect. They were dealing not only with 22,000 concert goers, but had to think about their communications with all the musicians and event staff as well. Plus, at some point they had to think about their message in terms of future events.

Then there was the City of Las Vegas. While showing love and compassion for all of those who were killed or injured, they also had to be thinking about what kind of pall this casts on their city. How will this affect tourism and/or future events? A good crisis plan will help them through these tough times and ultimately work to continue to attract visitors to the area.

Don't forget all of the performers at the festival. I'm sure this is the last thing any of them had ever thought about. Still, on that Sunday evening, publicists for Jason Aldean and others had to jump into action. They had to ensure their musicians were safe, communicate this to their fans, and of course express their heartfelt sympathy and concern for all of those affected by this terrible event.

The Mandalay Bay hotel also would have had to implement a crisis communications plan. Because the shooter used the hotel to fire on the crowd, I expect many people cancelled their reservations for any number of reasons. This is a very tricky position for the hotel because in some ways they are a secondary victim of the shooting. However, they couldn't exactly portray themselves as such because many have questioned how this individual could get such an arsenal set up in his room.

There are more businesses and organizations that had to implement their crisis communications plan that night, but you get the picture.

By now, many of you may have reviewed your plans, updated them and made sure you are ready to go. Some of you may even be considering holding mock drills. Those in Las Vegas that had done so on a regular basis performed admirably that tragic night.

In fact, I can't point to any examples of where a business or entity did not do a good job with their crisis plan that fateful evening.

For those of you who have said you will get to this "someday", I hope you are rethinking your timetable. As the saying goes, "someday" is not a day of the week. Some of you have been brought to the stark realization that maybe it really is time to put a crisis communications plan in place, and practice it. Whether you are in a major metropolis like Las Vegas, or a tiny little hamlet, it CAN happen in your city or town at your event. And once you create your plan, test it, and find where improvements need to be made. Then revisit this plan every so often to see if it needs to be updated.

Remember, your goal is to have a nearly foolproof plan in place.....that you never need to use.

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