



AI summary

It can't happen to me!

Paul Richardson (Managing Director, Vividink Ltd)

Moderator: Jill Hawkins (Director, Aniseed PR and Photography)



Summary

In this session moderated by Jill Hawkins, Paul Richardson discusses the intricacies of crisis management in public relations, especially within industrial sectors. Richardson explains that crises can arise from both internal and external factors, and each company must identify what constitutes a crisis in their context. He differentiates between incidents and crises, emphasising that the latter can potentially damage a company's reputation on a larger scale. He shares examples from his career, highlighting how even minor oversights can escalate, and underlines the necessity of a robust crisis management plan.

Richardson stresses the importance of having a dedicated crisis team, outlining the roles needed, from spokespeople to data gatherers. He recommends having multiple trained spokespeople to ensure coverage in the absence of individuals. The discussion touches on the importance of having a legal perspective within the crisis team to understand the implications of public statements. Richardson illustrates the need for a strategic approach to communication, including pre-prepared statements and understanding the media landscape.

The session concludes with practical advice on crisis planning. Richardson emphasises the need to continually assess potential threats, develop a flexible plan, and regularly test and update it. He advocates for real-life scenario exercises to uncover weaknesses in crisis plans and identify effective team members. He shares anecdotes about the unexpected challenges encountered during crisis tests, reinforcing the importance of preparedness and adaptability.





Key takeaways

Differentiate between incidents and crises

Understanding whether a situation is an incident or a crisis is crucial as it determines the level of response required. A crisis can damage reputation significantly, while an incident may not escalate beyond internal issues.

Assemble a skilled crisis management team

A well-rounded team with defined roles, including legal advisors and trained spokespeople, is vital. Having multiple representatives ensures continuity, and their preparedness can prevent missteps in communication.

Regularly test and update crisis plans

Conducting real-life scenario exercises helps identify weaknesses and improve response strategies. This ongoing evaluation ensures that plans remain effective and relevant, adapting to organisational changes.