

### Why Plan Ahead?

A crisis can escalate within minutes, affecting a business's reputation, operations, and employee morale. Whether it's a product recall, cyberattack, misconduct allegation, or supply chain failure, having a structured crisis communications plan is <u>essential</u>. Without transparent processes, misinformation, speculation, and public backlash can quickly spiral out of control.

A strong crisis communications plan should cover internal and external audiences, ensuring that employees, stakeholders, customers, and the media receive consistent, accurate, and timely information. It must also consider modern communication challenges, including social media, citizen journalism, and real-time mobile reporting.

Your employees are your first line of defence during a crisis.

They may spread misinformation or feel disconnected from leadership if they aren't properly informed.



## Internal vs External Crisis Communications

Key elements of internal crisis comms:



#### Define a chain of command -

Employees should know who to turn to for information.

Pre-written templates for emails, memos, and intranet updates – Ensure swift internal communication.

#### Confidentiality guidelines –

Employees must understand what they can and can't share publicly.

#### Regular updates -

Employees should receive frequent, factual briefings.
A centralised crisis response team (CRT) –
This team manages internal messaging and ensures alignment with external communications.

Internal vs External Crisis Communications

External Communications: Managing Public & Media Relations

Businesses must control what, how, and when information is shared to prevent reputational damage.

Key elements of external crisis comms:

A designated spokesperson – Ensure all external statements come from an authorised individual (CEO, PR Head). Also, identify who should not speak choose your best, not the most senior.

Monitoring & fact-checking -Misinformation spreads quickly; businesses must correct false narratives.

**Proactive vs reactive** approach – Depending on the situation, decide whether to pre-emptively address the issue or respond only when necessary.

A media holding statement -A short, factual response acknowledging the issue while confirming a full investigation is underway.

External communication channels:

Press releases & media briefings – Traditional channels remain critical for official statements. Social media – X, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook provide instant updates but require

Company website/blog - A dedicated crisis real-time management. response page can provide FAQs and the

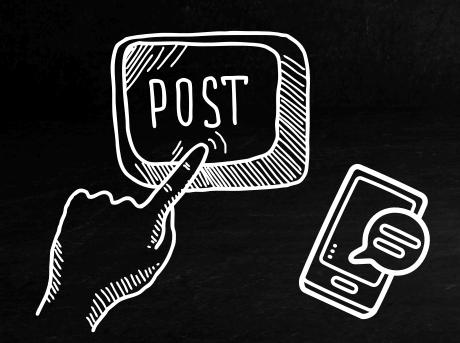
Direct customer emails - Ensures transparency with affected customers.

### Challenges posed by social media & citizen journalism:

Rapid spread of misinformation – False narratives can go viral before businesses even respond.

Loss of control over messaging – Users may share screenshots of internal emails or misinterpret statements.

Public backlash & trending hashtags – Negative sentiment can damage brand perception within hours.



### The Role of Citizen Journalism & Social Media in Crisis Response

Today, anyone with a smartphone can become a journalist. Social media platforms amplify crises in real-time, making speed, transparency, and accuracy more critical than ever.

### Best practices for handling social media crises:

**Monitor in real-time** – Use tools like Brandwatch, Hootsuite, or Google Alerts to track discussions.

Acknowledge quickly but carefully – A brief holding statement buys time to formulate a detailed response.

**Engage appropriately** – If necessary, provide factual updates without fuelling negativity.

**Prepare social media FAQs** – Quick-response templates for anticipated questions.

Essential Actions to Prepare a Crisis Communications
Plan



To ensure a business is crisis-ready, follow these key steps:

Before a Crisis (Preparation)

- 1. Identify potential crisis scenarios Cyberattacks, data breaches, product failures, legal issues, etc.
- 2. Assemble a Crisis Response
  Team (CRT) Include PR, HR, Legal,
  and senior leadership.
- 3. Develop a crisis escalation framework Define levels of severity and response procedures.

- 4. Create pre-approved templates For press statements, internal memos, and social media posts.
- 5. Conduct media training
- Ensure spokespeople are prepared for interviews.

6. Establish monitoring tools – Use Al-driven analytics and social listening tools.



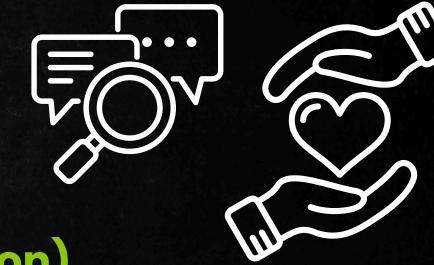
# Essential Actions to Prepare a Crisis Communications Plan

### During a Crisis (Response & Execution)

- 1. Activate the CRT & implement the plan Ensure coordinated action.
- 2. Communicate internally first Employees should hear the news directly, not from social media.
- **4. Monitor online conversations –** Identify misinformation and correct where needed.

- 3. Issue a holding statement Acknowledge the situation and commit to providing updates.
- 5. Be transparent but strategic
- Balance openness with protecting business interests.

Essential Actions to Prepare a Crisis
Communications
Plan



After a Crisis (Recovery & Evaluation)



1. Debrief & analyse response effectiveness – What worked? What didn't?

3. Continue monitoringsentiment – Some crises have a long-term effect on reputation.

2. Update crisis protocols – Incorporate lessons learned into the next crisis plan.

**4. Rebuild trust –** Implement customer reassurance campaigns if needed.

Final
Thoughts:
Be
Proactive,
Not
Reactive

A crisis isn't a question of if—it's a question of when. The businesses that survive and recover are those with a structured, well-rehearsed crisis communications plan.





By integrating clear messaging, strategic media handling, and real-time social listening, UK businesses can navigate crises effectively, protect their reputation, and maintain stakeholder confidence.



Preparedness is keyplan today, so you're ready tomorrow.