

Leadership Communications: Making (and Breaking) Reputations in a Time of Crisis

Today, communications *is* leadership. With so many changes affecting us all during this global pandemic, communications has never been more important, and how you behave now will solidify your reputation for years to come. In our emerging new reality, we need leaders who are honest, transparent, compassionate and empathetic—who share the information they have and who aren't afraid to admit what they don't know.

These 10 best practices will help ensure that you're building your reputation and not breaking it.

1

LIVE YOUR COMPANY VALUES

If your company values are constantly reinforced and modelled, and used to develop talent and evaluate performance, they become your competitive advantage. If you don't yet have a set of clearly articulated values, now's a good time to create one. Look to other companies for some great examples—try [Broad Reach's charter](#) or [LinkedIn's six core values](#).

2

BRING HUMANITY TO YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

Now is *not* the time to hide behind corporate speak, spin or puffery. Speak from the heart, acknowledge how hard things are, demonstrate empathy for your people—and make sure they know how much you appreciate their efforts. For more on this, listen to Broad Reach's podcast, [On Point: Bringing Humanity to Leadership Communications](#).

3

ACT FAST

In a crisis, customers are very quick to form opinions, but if you act responsibly and quickly, any initial negativity can quickly fade into renewed loyalty. To enable a rapid response, be prepared: anticipate various types of crises, create and test a comprehensive crisis plan, draft statements in advance, and identify crisis team members and roles.

4

COMMUNICATE TRANSPARENTLY WITH STAKEHOLDERS

A crisis can test your relationships with all of your stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, board members and even the media, so communicate with them early and often. Use a variety of channels, be clear and concise, and always use a calm, confident, empathetic tone.

5

PRIORITIZE YOUR PEOPLE'S NEEDS

Encourage your team to prioritize family needs and self-care, letting them know you care about the value they add rather than the time they spend in their chair. As employees begin to return to work, provide protective equipment, put plans in place to keep people physically apart—and honestly consider whether they need to be back in the office at all.

6

LISTEN AND GET PERSONAL

Don't assume you know what's on your people's minds or how they're feeling—ask them. Listen carefully to what they want their new normal to look like. Respect each employee's personal situation, their anxieties and their fears, and ask how you can help them feel comfortable and safe.

7

INSPIRE YOUR PEOPLE WITH YOUR ACTION

Inspirational leadership comes from action. Consider how you can get into the trenches with your team. If your team is working outside their homes, make sure you do, too. That's what leaders do. Everything you say and do today will absolutely be remembered tomorrow—and long into the future.

8

DO YOUR BEST AND ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES

You won't always know what you're doing, and that's okay. This is uncharted territory for all of us. Don't beat yourself up if something doesn't work; just apologize when you need to and try something else. Do the best you can with the information you have in the moment.

9

TEACH YOUR TEAM HOW TO STAY HEALTHY

This crisis takes the discussion of wellness to a whole new level. Make sure your employees know that their health is your priority, and share helpful tips and links that highlight how they can boost their immunity through food, sugar reduction, exercise, and sleep. Great sources include:

- [Dr. Mark Hyman](#)
- [Tara Brach](#)
- [Dr. Michael Breus](#)
- [Yoga with Adrienne](#)
- [Dr. Rangan Chatterjee](#)
- [Kris Carr](#)

10

ENCOURAGE CONNECTION AND FUN

Help your team see the lighter side of things by sharing a regular dose of humour and fun. Team challenges or contests can be great stress-reducers. And checking in with the team once or twice a week with no business on the agenda (and maybe a funny image on your Zoom background) can go a long way toward maintaining connection.

This is your time to show who you really are.

How you communicate with your people, your clients and your other key stakeholders during this crisis will establish your—and your company's—reputation for years to come. When this pandemic is over, the leaders and companies who will have made a lasting impact, and who emerge far stronger than before, will be those who have shown they are *real people* who are unafraid of showing their humanity.