

7 Tips to Run a Successful Crisis Simulation

To understand if and how your crisis communications plan will work, you need to put it to the test. Use the following tips to run a successful crisis simulation and see how your strategy plays out in a realistic scenario.

1. Conduct simulations regularly

With the understanding that your strategy, team, and messaging approach will evolve over time, conduct simulations on a regular basis – at least once a year, but preferably twice.

2. Choose an appropriate difficulty level

A challenging simulation can build your team's confidence and ensure they have a firm grasp on how to react in a real crisis. However, if the scenario is too difficult, they may instead experience a decrease in morale. Choose a simulation that challenges your team without pushing them past their breaking point.

3. Have a third party implement the scenario

Hiring a third party to plan and conduct the crisis simulation ensures that everyone is responding to an unknown issue. Third parties also typically have the resources to create more realistic and detailed scenarios, and host them across multiple cities, countries, and time zones.

4. Make the scenario as realistic as possible

The more realistic you make your scenario – including external factors and complications such as simulated news updates, social media commentary, government or regulatory inquiries, and share price impact – the more value your team will get from the exercise.

5. Reveal information on a rolling basis

The scenario should unfold on a schedule that mirrors the information phases of a real crisis, from initial confusion to information overload. This will mimic the stressful environment, along with conflicting or incomplete information, that an actual crisis would create.

6. Involve all relevant and affected stakeholders

The simulation should require participation from leaders and teams across the entire company. For instance, instruct the communication and PR team to respond by using templates to create messages, draft statements and press releases, compose social media updates, advise management, brief spokespeople, and take calls from journalists.

7. Simulate press conferences and interviews

Even if your spokespeople are experienced and well spoken, it is worth it to practice their communication skills through mock media events. It can be helpful to have outside trainers role-play journalists, so you can simulate press conferences and ambush interviews in real time.

With these tips, you can conduct a crisis simulation that effectively highlights your plan's strengths and weaknesses. Need help strengthening your plan or addressing any gaps in your strategy? **Get in touch.**