

# The Dos and Don'ts of Communicating in a Crisis

*Even when you are able to plan for a challenge or difficult time in your business, there are always surprises turns or bumps in the road.*

Most of us today are dealing with drastic changes that we may not have planned for and have little control over. When things like cancelled events, shifting teams to working remotely and perhaps even a shuttered business become a reality, there are some best practices for talking with employees and customers that can help us keep others informed so we can weather this storm together.

## DO

Deliver consistent messaging from all of your emails, website, social media and spokespeople.

Be compassionate, empathetic, courteous and considerate.

Keep your communication factual, accurate and concise.

Keep trust front and center. Be honest and transparent. If you don't know the answer, say so.

Remember that this crisis won't last forever and it is possible for your company to come out of this stronger than before.

Respond to concerns as quickly as you can. Be open, willing and available to answer questions as they arise.

Keep employees informed – even if this means sending a daily update.

Acknowledge people's fears. It's natural for them to be nervous, anxious and even scared. These are not "normal" times we're living in right now.



If you misspeak or something goes wrong, address the mistake and do your best to make it right.

Express what you wish. Say “I wish we knew more” or “I wish I knew how long this is going to last.”

Be prepared to answer “what if” questions. People need reassurance from those with facts and expertise. Be ready to answer those questions so you can build trust and give them what information you can.

Don't give false hope or over-reassure. It's better to over-estimate the problem than it is to say that things are better than they actually are.

### **DON'T**

Don't “wing it” or ‘spin’ an answer. Be prepared with your responses or you may have to go back and do damage control.

Don't make promises you can't keep.

Don't blame anyone for anything or speculate about what you don't know for sure.

Don't decline to answer questions – it makes it look like you're hiding something.

Don't use the crisis to pitch products or services.

Don't ignore impact of crisis on employees or community. They are your support system and you will need them by your side to get through this.