

# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE

A helpful tool to guide the crisis communications process.



**CONCILIUM**

© Scott Brawner. All Rights Reserved. [www.concilium.us](http://www.concilium.us)

CRISIS



# CONCILIUM

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS:

The process by which an organization the stewards well the dissemination of key information to communicate the truth and address the realities of a critical incident that impacts the organization's personnel, partners, stakeholders, or reputation.

### From the Author

This document is intended for use by those tasked with crisis communications for their organization. This document is not monolithic and the information provided should be tailored and customized to fit the specific needs and circumstances your organization may face during a crisis.

It should be emphasized that this document was created based on my personal experience in crisis management and experience in crisis communications in particular. It is both my intention and hope that this document will inspire you to develop your own crisis communication plans and resources that will help you and your organization steward well a critical incident and minimize the likelihood of a secondary crisis developing in and around public relations.

This document does not replace the need for crisis management training. It is highly recommended that you and those serving in crisis management for your organization seek training and sharpening in your crisis management roles so as to be prepared to steward well the emergencies, critical incidents, and other challenges that will invariably come against those who faithfully serve the Lord as they are called according to purpose. It is my prayer that this document helps you steward well your crisis communication responsibilities as you effectively mitigate the impact any emergency, critical incident, or crisis on your organization.

In Christ,

Scott Brawner  
Concilium President



# Executive Summary

Christian ministry today is taking place during a time marked by uncertainty and rapid change. As technology increases the speed by which we can communicate, that technology does not ensure that relevant information is communicated in a way that is clear, concise, or truthful. The ability to navigate the noise of information and effectively communicate during crises is paramount to an organization's resilience and reputation. This Crisis Communications Plan provides guidance and resources to address unforeseen challenges as the organization seeks to protect its people and reputation by building credibility and trust with stakeholders.

An Executive Summary for your crisis communication plan should provide a brief overview of the crisis communications plan and clearly communicate the key objectives and goals of the crisis communications plan.

## Key Objectives

The key objectives for a crisis communication plan include:

- **Rapid Response:** Establish a swift and coordinated response mechanism to address crises promptly and mitigate potential reputational damage.
- **Consistency:** Consistent messaging is critical. This includes developing clear and consistent messaging across all communication channels in order to avoid confusion, both internally and externally, as well as the spreading of misinformation that can damage credibility and reputation.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The crisis communication team must identify and prioritize communication with internal and external stakeholders, addressing their concerns and keeping them informed throughout the crisis.
- **Media Management:** A significant part of crisis management can include managing the media. Effectively manage media relations by designating spokespersons, cultivating relationships with key media outlets, and proactively sharing accurate information.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Implement a system for post-crisis evaluation, learning from experiences, and updating the plan regularly to enhance its responsiveness.

# Developing A Crisis Communications Team

A Crisis Communications Team (CCT) typically operates as part of a broader Crisis Management Team (CMT). While the CMT deals with the reality of the crisis, the job of the CCT is to manage the perception of that same reality. With regard to crisis communications, It does not matter what it is, ***it matters what it looks like...***

The role of a CCT is to collect information, create and disseminate messages, and collaborate proactively with key stakeholders and the media. Important characteristics for crisis communication team members:

- Ability to work well in a team and under pressure
- Resourceful
- Understands organizational values and goals
- Deep organizational knowledge.

## Key Questions in A Crisis

With regard to Crisis Communications, it does not matter what it is, it matters what it looks like. Therefore, be prepared to communicate:

- What do you know?
- When did you know it?
- What are you doing about it?
- What are you doing to ensure that it never happens again?

## Crisis Communication Planning

When planning crisis communication protocols, consider developing the following guidelines for a robust communication plan:

- Identify Organizational Stakeholders and Designate Communicator(s)
- Create a Crisis Communication Plan in Advance with pre-drafted content for different audiences and different scenarios
- Contract with a Crisis Consultant(s) in Advance
- Train your Designated Communicator(s) and Executive Leadership in Media Relations and Interviewing
- Practice Communication Exercises

## Identify Communication Channels

It is important to identify and designate primary and secondary communication channels in a crisis. This includes developing and listing primary communication channels (e.g., press releases, social media, website, email, etc.) and designating spokespersons or managers for those different channels.

## Stakeholder Analysis

Prior to a critical incident or crisis, it is important to identify and categorize key stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization. By identifying these stakeholders, the CCT can begin tailoring messages for each stakeholder group. Contextualizing messaging to stakeholders is a wise way to ensure that the message you intend to communicate is clearly shared with those groups, especially considering their experience, perspectives, and biases that guide their understanding of the current crisis incident.

## Media Relations

In the event of a critical incident or crisis that makes its way into the public spotlight, it is important to prioritize how the organization will communicate publicly. Ideas include:

- Establish relationships with key media outlets.
- Designate a media spokesperson.
- Prepare a list of media contacts.

## Monitoring and Analysis

Monitoring and analysis in crisis communications are crucial components that help organizations assess, understand, and respond effectively to a crisis. This process involves systematically tracking information, sentiment, and media coverage related to the crisis, as well as evaluating the impact of communication efforts. Ideas for monitoring and analysis in crisis communications include:

**Media Monitoring:** Keep track of news articles, social media posts, and other media sources for mentions of the crisis and the organization. Use media monitoring tools to scan various channels for relevant information and updates. Benefits of media monitoring include early detection of emerging issues, understanding public sentiment, and identifying potential misinformation.

**Social Media Monitoring:** Monitor social media platforms for real-time discussions, feedback, and sentiments related to the crisis. Employ social media listening tools to track mentions, hashtags, and trends. Benefits of social media monitoring may pay even greater dividends than monitoring the general media. These benefits include immediate awareness of public perception, identification of key influencers, and rapid response to emerging issues.

**Online Reputation Management:** Assess and manage the organization's online reputation during a crisis. This includes utilizing online reputation management tools to track online mentions and reviews. The benefits of staying on top of reputation management includes the ability to mitigate potential reputational damage by addressing negative content promptly and transparently.

**Debrief and Analysis of CCT Response:** During and after a crisis it is critical to evaluate the crisis communication response to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement. This includes mid-crisis feedback sessions, post-crisis debriefings, and reviewing performance metrics. By actively monitoring and analyzing various aspects of a crisis, organizations can adapt their communication strategies in real-time, address emerging issues, and continuously improve their crisis response efforts. This initiative-taking approach contributes to maintaining trust and credibility with stakeholders even in challenging situations.

## Crisis Communication Flowchart

Creating a crisis communication flowchart involves outlining the step-by-step process that an organization follows when responding to a crisis. Below is a simplified example of a crisis communication flowchart. Note that the specifics of the flowchart may vary depending on the nature of the organization, the industry, and the potential crises it may face. Customize this flowchart to suit your organization's needs.

(See Flowchart On Next Page)



This flowchart provides a general guide for the steps of crisis communication process. Keep in mind that flexibility is essential, and the plan should be adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of each crisis. It is also recommended to regularly review and update the flowchart to reflect changes in the organization or industry standards.

## Contact Lists

Prior to a critical incident or crisis, compile a comprehensive contact list for internal and external stakeholders, including media contacts. Remember: the more information you have collected BEFORE a crisis, the more effectively the crisis response can be managed.

## Pre-Drafted Crisis Communication Messages

Crafting pre-drafted messages is a crucial component of a crisis communication plan. The following are sample messages that can be adapted based on the nature of the crisis. Remember to customize them to fit the specifics of your organization and the situation at hand.

### **Initial Response/Acknowledgment:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*We are aware of the situation and are actively investigating the matter. The safety and well-being of our [employees/customers/community] are our top priorities. We will provide updates as soon as we have more information.*

*Thank you for your understanding.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

### **Transparency and Accountability:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Members of the [Community]/Customers],*

*We want to address the recent [incident/crisis] directly. We take full responsibility for what has occurred and are working tirelessly to rectify the situation. Transparency and open communication are our commitments to you.*

*We appreciate your patience and support during this challenging time.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*



**Steps Taken and Resolution:**

Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],

*In response to the [incident/crisis], we have taken immediate action to [describe the steps taken]. Our team is working diligently to resolve the issue, and we are committed to keeping you informed throughout the process.*

*Thank you for your ongoing support.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

**Apology and Corrective Actions:**

Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],

*We sincerely apologize for the [incident/crisis] and any inconvenience it may have caused. We are actively working to make things right and have implemented corrective actions to prevent such occurrences in the future.*

*Your understanding and continued support are invaluable to us.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

**Progress Update:**

Dear [Stakeholders/Members of the [Community]/Customers],

*We want to update you on the progress regarding the [incident/crisis]. [Provide a brief summary of steps taken and current status]. We appreciate your ongoing support as we work through this situation.*

*Thank you for your understanding.*

*Best,  
[Your Organization]*

## **Resolution and Moving Forward:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*We are pleased to inform you that the [incident/crisis] has been resolved. We appreciate your patience and understanding throughout this challenging time. Moving forward, we remain committed to [list any preventative measures or changes].*

*Thank you for your continued trust.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

## **Sexual Harassment:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*As a Christian organization, [Your Organization] believes that all employees should treat each other with love and respect. We stand with any individual who has the courage to speak out when those values are not honored. Our goal is to create a workplace that is Christlike and safe for all. In light of current claims, we are actively reviewing [this claim/these claims] to determine the appropriate next steps and are offering our full support to the [person/people] who came forward.*

*Thank you for your continued trust.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

## **Active Shooter and/or Violence on a Facility or Ministry Site:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*There is [suspicion/confirmation] of an [active shooter/bomb/other threat] onsite at [Your Organization]. Our priority is the safety of everyone onsite and in the surrounding area. We are communicating and collaborating with authorities to contain and resolve the situation and ask everyone to refrain from contacting or visiting our [address/specific] location until authorities confirm it is safe to do so.*

*We will provide more information as quickly as possible and as the situation dictates.*

*Thank you for your thoughts and prayers for our organization and personnel at this time.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

### **Kidnapping of an Organization Team Member:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*We are writing to inform you about a deeply distressing situation involving one of our colleagues, [Employee's Name]. At this time, we regret to share that [he/she] has been kidnapped. The safety and well-being of [Employee's Name] are our primary concerns, and we are working diligently with all relevant agencies to ensure [his/her] safe and swift return.*

### **Additional Points for Consideration in A Kidnapping Press Release:**

Statement of Incident Confirmation:

*We confirm that [Employee's Name] has been kidnapped, and the appropriate authorities have been notified.*

Statement of Collaboration with Authorities:

*We are actively cooperating with law enforcement agencies, and they are leading the investigation into [Employee's Name]'s abduction.*

Family Support:

*Our prayers are with [Employee's Name]'s family during this challenging time. We are providing them with all the support they need, respecting their privacy, and keeping them informed of any developments.*

Statement of Information Restraint:

*In order to safeguard [Employee's Name]'s safety and the integrity of the ongoing investigation, we will refrain from disclosing specific details about the incident at this time.*

Media and External Communication:

*We kindly request that all media inquiries be directed to our designated spokesperson, [Spokesperson's Name], whose contact information is provided below. This approach is crucial to maintain consistency and avoid misinformation.*

Spokesperson's Contact Information:

*[Spokesperson's Name]*

*[Title]*

*[Email]*

*[Phone Number]*

Statement of Next Steps:

*We will provide timely updates as the situation evolves, ensuring transparency and clarity. Additional support services for our employees, such as counseling and assistance, will be made available.*

*We understand that this news is deeply unsettling, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation during this challenging time. Please keep [Employee's Name], [his/her] family, and our entire [Organization] community in your thoughts.*

*Sincerely,*

*[Your Organization]*

### **Murder of an Organization Team Member:**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*It is with profound sadness and heavy hearts that [Your Organization] shares devastating news regarding our dear colleague, [Employee's Name]. We are devastated to inform you that [he/she] has tragically lost [his/her] life.*

### **Additional Points for Consideration in A Murder Press Release:**

Condolences and Sympathies:

*Our deepest condolences and prayers go out to [Employee's Name]'s family, friends, and loved ones. This loss is immeasurable, and our thoughts are with them during this unimaginably difficult time.*

Details of the Tragedy:

*[Employee's Name] was the victim of a senseless act of violence, and we are cooperating fully with law enforcement to ensure a thorough investigation.*

## Member Care/Grief Support Services:

*In the wake of this tragedy, we have arranged for member care and grief support services to be available to our employees. If you or someone you know needs assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.*

## Privacy and Respect:

*Out of respect for [Employee's Name]'s family, we will not be providing further details about the circumstances surrounding this tragedy. We ask for your understanding and respect for their privacy during this incredibly difficult time.*

## Memorial and Tribute:

*We are working closely with [Employee's Name]'s family to organize a memorial or tribute to honor and celebrate [his/her] life. Details will be shared at an appropriate time.*

*Spokesperson's Contact Information:*

*[Spokesperson's Name]*

*[Title]*

*[Email]*

*[Phone Number]*

## Next Steps:

*We will continue to provide updates and support as needed, keeping the lines of communication open.*

*Please be considerate and supportive of one another during this profoundly challenging period. The loss of a member of our [Organization] family is an indescribable tragedy, and we stand together in grief and solidarity.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

## **Unexpected Loss of CEO/Executive (Death):**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*[Your Organization] is saddened to announce that [name] has passed away. Amidst this time of loss, we rejoice that we do not grieve like those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). As of now, our focus is on supporting the people closest to [him/her], our employees, and all of*

*those affected by [his/her] passing. [Insert name], who had the benefit of working closely with [name], will be serving as interim [Title of deceased].*

*Thank you for your continued prayers and supplication on behalf of the family of [name] and [Your Organization].*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

### **Unexpected Loss of CEO/Executive (Unexpectedly Quits/Resigns):**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*[Name of employee] has resigned from [his/her] former position at [Your Organization] as [title], effective [date]. [name] will assume the position of [title] on an [interim/permanent] basis. We believe this transition will aid us in achieving our mission and calling as an organization called according to purpose. We wish nothing but the best for [resigned employee] and [his/her] successful future as they serve the Lord with gladness, and we thank [him/her] for [his/her] [months/years/decades] of dedicated service to [Your Organization].*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

### **Unexpected Loss of CEO/Executive (Removed from Role):**

*Dear [Stakeholders/Community/Media],*

*[Your Organization] can confirm [employee] is departing the organization as [title], effective [date]. [Optional: If this termination is due to a public crisis, such as harassment or illegal activity, mention that, as a Christian organization, his/her behavior was unacceptable. Likewise, to protect the integrity of Your Organization, he/she was removed from his/her position].*

*We have officially named [name] as [interim/permanent] [title]. We believe this transition will aid us in achieving our mission as an organization.*

*[Optional: If this termination is due to a public crisis, such as harassment or illegal activity, mention that Your Organization is actively reviewing the situation and what steps will be taken to ensure this does not happen again].*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Organization]*

**NOTE:** Remember to tailor these messages to your specific circumstances, and always ensure that the tone and content align with your organization's values and communication style.