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A Workshop for Transit Crisis

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Workshop for Transit Crises

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Abstract

Crises can cause immediate chaos within any organization they touch. It is imperative that the individuals tasked with responding to crises are knowledgeable enough to communicate using a variety of methods and practices. Transit agencies task Transportation Managers and other key personnel to effectively communicate with frontline employees before, during and after a crisis. In order for transit managers to effectively communicate during crisis it is vital they are provided the necessary training relating to crisis communication. The purpose of the project is to develop a workshop for transit managers, stakeholders, and key leadership that are tasked with the responsibility of communicating to frontline employees during transit crises and crisis management. The workshop will first introduce the importance of crisis communication and examine definitions related to crisis communication. Then the workshop will further discuss transit manager’s roles and responsibilities within crisis communication. Next, the workshop will provide crisis strategies that transit managers can use to build a relationship with frontline employees to establish effectively communication. Last, the workshop will explain the Coombs Crisis model and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory as a reference that transit managers can use to assess how to respond to the variations of crises.
A Workshop for Transit Crises

Each year in Chicago, Illinois, millions of residents, tourist, students, and employees use public transportation entities such as the Chicago Transit Agency, Pace, Metra, and Amtrak as a mode of safe and reliable public transportation. Although public transportation remains one of the world’s safest modes of transportation, media outlets such as Chicago Tribune Newspaper and Chicago Sun-Times along with a host of social media outlets seek to broadcast all public transportation connected crises. Transit managers and Front-line employees have a critical role in the crises response process. It is important for organizations to invest in training for management to communicate effectively with frontline employees so that they will be prepared at the onset of crises.

Public transportation agencies such as the Chicago Transit Agency, Metra, and Pace frequently handle hundreds of minor transit related incidents every year. Due to the high frequency of crises, transit agencies face the assumption that maybe that transportation agencies have extensive experience in crisis communication with employees, stakeholders, media outlets and customers. Usually, media outlets are the first to call attention to how the transit agency has failed to communicate internally and externally about the crisis effectively. Media outlets often focus on the miscommunication of information regarding the reporting of the incorrect location of an accident, reporting of a late notification to medical personnel, and the reporting of false injuries (Coombs, 2015). Since crises require an abundance of information through several channels, inaccurate information is often communicated. False information shared between
frontline employees and management obviously highlights the lack of effective communication during a crisis.

Within transit agencies, the frontline employee such as a Bus Operators, Rapid Transit Operators, and Customer Service Agents are some of the first employees within the organization to receive information about transit crises (Coombs, 2015). It is when the information is passed from the front-line employee into the hands of the next person in charge that the information begins to lose accuracy. The Transportation Manager’s role within crisis management includes knowing if employees are informed about what procedures to follow in the event of a crisis. Transportation Managers are also tasked with providing information to employees about what information is needed to communicate to management during crisis. This topic is important because a lack of accurate, adequate and timely information dramatically affects how employees respond to the crisis (David, 2011). The purpose of the project is to develop a workshop for transit managers, stakeholders, and key leadership tasked with the responsibility of responding to the crisis, crisis communication strategies to communicate with frontline employees during transit crises.

**Literature Review**

Crises can arise at any moment within an organization. Crises are complex in nature and can occur in a variety of types and at different times. According to communication scholar, Timothy Coombs, the term crisis is defined as "unpredictable but not an unexpected event" (Coombs, 2011). Leeann Bell (2010) explains, "Crisis can be viewed as a threat to an organization's image" (p 145). There are several definitions of a crisis used by communication scholars, but what is similar is that crises present a disruption that is unwarned and unplanned to the operation of an organization. More recently, transit systems have encountered an increase of
crises due to terrorism, sabotage, and trespassers. Within the workshop, transportation-related communication language associated with crises along with crisis communication procedure using a radio will be discussed in the workshop. For example, transit agencies communicate over a radio using a 10-code that describes the nature of the event.

Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and tornados are also examples of transit-related crises that affect agencies on the west coast of the United States. Dimensions of crisis range from environmental crisis such as a drought affecting portions of California to a large-scale foodborne disease affecting a large part of the world. Several well-known examples of crises are natural disasters, industrial disasters, conflict, acts of intentional harm, and human error (Ruff, 2003). On July 24, 2016, the Chicago Transit Agency experienced extreme periods of heavy rain and thunderstorms. This natural disaster resulted in CTA service being disrupted for several hours due to a severely damaged canopy, several downed trees hanging over the third rail, and large amounts of debris scattered on the transit property on the Red, Brown, and Blue rail lines (Chicago Tribune Staff, 2016). Each one of these is well-known examples of crisis, and they serve as a reminder that a crisis is complicated and can cause chaos almost immediately.

Transit agencies throughout the United States may encounter slightly different types of crises. Transit agencies commonly face various crises such as crime, bomb and poison threats, the right of way intrusion, collisions, fires, and a host of other events that may result in a transit crises. It is important that the participants will be able to identify the categories of crises so that they can associate the appropriate response to the crisis. According to Seeger (2006), "Distinguishing between various crisis and disasters is important because the type of event influences the requirements for effective communication" (p. 235). This article suggests transit agencies such as the Chicago Transit Agency should invest in training employees and
management annually on crises recognition and internal crisis communication strategies. The workshop will also introduce the participants to crises susceptible to transit agencies and compatible internal crisis communication strategies. The following section explains the significance for transit managers to examine the dimensions of crisis communication.

**Dimensions of crisis communication**

Organizational crisis communication and disaster crisis communication are two components of crisis communication (Coombs, 2011). Coombs (2011) explains organizational crisis communication is how organizations and key responders react to crises that are directly related to the internal organization. For example, disaster crisis communication is focused on the communication demands in public health crisis and natural disasters. Transit agencies often experience portions of each of the two components of crisis communication mentioned. Due to uncertainty and equivocality surrounding crisis, this may cause an overwhelming amount of communication demands on a transit agency.

It is not possible for an organization such as a transit agency such as CTA to completely avoid crises. Some accidents such as an injured employee are common, but a major accident involving a moving train coming into contact with a person is considered impossible to prevent. The Federal Transportation Agency regulates Transit Agencies due to the acceptance of federal assistance. The purpose of the FTA is as an oversight process to advance safe, reliable, and unbiased transit service throughout the United States (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). The CTA is not only regulated by the FTA but the Illinois Department of Transportation to provide oversight and guidance pertaining to policy improvement, hazard analysis, data analysis, risk analysis, oversight programs and information sharing (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). According to Coombs (2015), a Crisis Management Plan acts as a “communication
document that details important contacts in the event of a crisis" (p 92). Both agencies promote that effective internal communication using top-down approached within an organization is required in order of the organization stakeholders to successfully implement the appropriate plan of action in the event of crises.

Traditionally, most transit agencies adopt crises communication plans recommended by the FTA that is composed of four sections. The fist crisis communication section is the planning phase, which is known as a proactive process (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). During the planning stage, an organization is creating communication plans, and evacuation plans to distribute to employees and stakeholders in case of crises. The second communication section is the as response phase, which is a reactive process (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). Within the response phase transportation manager receive initial information about the crisis and works diligently to communicate with the public, stakeholders, management and to the affected personnel. The third section is the recovery phase, which is a reactive process. The recovery phase includes assessing the root cause of the crisis and conducting debriefs with stakeholders. The last crisis communication section is the restoration process, and this process is also known as a reactive (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). This restoration phase consists of key management restoring normal operation from the crisis while taking advantage of resources and programs to prevent a reoccurrence. During crises, the majority of the focus of crises communication for a transit agency is spent in the response section.

Depending on the crises an organization should implement either a reactive short-term or a proactive long-term crisis communication plan (Pratt, 1996). Pratt (1996) further suggests the use of a short-term crisis communication plan only if crises increase tensions with the public and media on an individual issue or concern. For example, the well-known coffee crisis in which
McDonald's found themselves in 1992 forced the company to implement a short-term crisis communication plan, due to the lack of customer safety regarding the sales of hot coffee (Pratt, 1996). McDonald's provided a much-needed response to the media claims that the coffee was unsafe, to the millions of customers they served each year this plan would be considered a short-term plan because it was a reactive response to the crisis that presented extensive media coverage. The plan included a statement of reassurance that the coffee temperature would be lowered to a safer drinking temperature for its customers.

Short-term communication plans are considered temporary quality solutions for the crisis. While long-term communication plans include permanent solutions that may include the implementation of new policies and procedures within an organization. According to González-Herrero (1996), short-term crisis communications plans should be not be used as a solution to a long term problem. Instead, a more robust long-term crisis communication plan should be considered first (p. 98). It is suggested that short-term plans offer some solutions depending on the crisis, but the organization should invest their efforts in long-term crisis communication plans. Long-term crisis communications plans are recommended because it is considered to be proactive to crises. Long-term crisis plans establish a positive relationship with the public and the media (González-Herrero, 1996). The Chicago Transit Agency like other transit agencies uses long-term communication plans recommended by the FTA to communicate ongoing safety issues on its buses and train using message boards and posters to the public, customers, and media outlets (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015).

For example, the CTA provides service disruptions, planned service outages, reroutes, safety alerts on its website. It is important that managers and stakeholders are knowledgeable of each plan and the implication each plan serve. The workshop will provide participants with an
example of the Chicago Transit Authority Crisis Management Plan. The following section explains the Situational Crisis Communication Theory as it relates to how the environment alters transit managers response to crises.

**The Situational Crisis Communication Theory**

The preparation of frontline employees and management for potential transit crises requires the organization to provide adequate pre-planning, annual training, and reoccurring drills to reinforce previous crisis communication training. A large number of transit agencies may only require frontline employees and managers to attend one of three introductory courses into emergency preparedness (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). This one-time course leaves an organization open to organizational drift in standard operating procedures for crises response. Organization drift refers to the gradual deviation from an organizational approved stand operating procedural. (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). According to Coombs (2015) training helps reduce stress and reinforce open communication among employees during the crisis (p126). It is suggested when employees are frequently trained concerning crises, employees are less likely to forget procedures, ignore safety measures, and feel excluded from the process during the crisis.

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is based on the idea that the environment of the crisis can determine the most efficient approach to responding to the crisis at hand (Coombs, 2013). According to Coombs (2013), the SCCT incorporates the Attribution Theory to connect the crisis environment to the crisis response strategies. The SCCT provides steps in evaluating the known threat of a crisis by classifying crises into three subgroups. The three subgroups are the victim, accidental, and intentional (Coombs, 2013). In the event of a
crisis, transit managers using the SCCT will choose one of three subgroups to determine the best response.

In efforts to determine the best response to crises, it is suggested that managers choose one of three crisis response strategies. The three groups of crisis response strategy are to deny, diminish, and rebuild. If at any point an organization feels that they were attacked or decides to shift the blame to another person for the crisis they would refer to the deny crisis response strategy. The diminish response strategy is commonly used when an organization determines a crisis is an accident. The last crisis response is the rebuild phase. If an organization that has initially accepted fault for an intentional or preventable crisis, more than likely the organization would use rebuild strategies immediately. For example, managers would have to choose a crisis subgroup based on the traits of the crisis, and then select one of three crisis response strategies in efforts to minimize reputational damage (Coombs, 2013).

The Attribution Theory suggests that individuals search for the reasons for events, particularly negative events like crises (Coombs, 2013). Within the SCCT, stakeholders and management will make attributions about crisis accountability, and this will affect how stakeholders and management respond to the crisis (Coombs, 2013). Coombs (2013) further suggests that the causes of crises can be linked to either internal or external factors. The article suggests that internal factors such as individuals are intentionally causing chaos within an organization. The article also suggests that external factors are unintentional actions such as weather that creates a crisis within an organization.

The workshop will explain Coombs (2013) two-step process for evaluating the crises danger. According to Coombs (2013), the first process is to "identify the basic crisis type the organization is facing" (p. 22). Coombs (2013) further explains that the second process is to
"determine if any intensifying factors are present in the crisis situation" (p. 23). The workshop will identify the two-step process for evaluating crises in transit agencies, and the information will increase the knowledge of the participants on how to determine the crises threat. The following section explains crisis management strategies necessary for transit managers to implement during crises.

Crisis Management

Crisis communication is a component of crisis management and incorporates common practice and standards within crisis communication during crises. Managers and other personnel assigned to communicate during crises should require knowledge of crisis management strategies in efforts to communicate effectively during crises. Crisis Management Plans are what Managers any other key personnel use to determine when and to respond to crisis effectively. Crisis management houses the necessary functions for management and leadership to successfully respond to a crisis. Crisis management processes include proactive procedures, crisis management strategies, and post-crisis assessments (Coombs, 2011). The article suggests that Crisis management is a continuous process that an organization should invest in annual training to enhance the knowledge of its employees that are directly related to crisis management process.

The workshop will provide crisis management strategies for managers and frontline employees during crises. Strategies for crisis management will be adopted from Coombs (2007) three stages of crisis management which are the pre-crisis, crisis response, and the post-crisis. According to Pauchant (1991) identified six crisis management strategies that managers should incorporate during crises. The six crisis management strategies are media training, public relation building, increase communication to local communities, increased relationship intervening individuals, strengthen partnership with stakeholders, and the incorporation of new technologies.
(Pauchant, 1991). The workshop will provide strategies to improve internal communication within the crisis management process.

According to David (2011) "effective internal communication during crises aims to preserve own members' trust and loyalty" (p. 76). The article suggests that crisis management not only plays a decisive role in internal communication but it may enhance employee attitudes. Sometimes crises can provoke the spread of false information among employees concerning the crisis. A strong crisis management culture an organization can reduce that amount of false information being spread by employees within the organization. The workshop will include strategies for communicating with employees, public and media in the event of a crisis.

Within transit agencies, Transportation Managers and other lead managers are usually designated to participate in the crisis management process during crises. Those individuals are responsible for ensuring all information about the crisis is provided accurate and timely presented to the stakeholders of the organizations. It is up to management to make sure that employees are well informed. Their role also includes having the knowledge to understand the crisis, the ability to make well-informed decisions on the spot, and providing up to date information at all time. The following section explains characteristics internal communication important for frontline employees and management to implement during crises.

**Internal communication and crisis communication**

Two key factors of internal crisis communication are well-timed information and full disclosures of the crisis to all affected parties involved (David, 2011). Internal communication involves the process of receiving and giving information. According to Kurhjcova (2010), internal communication can be defined as the "process of transmission from one or group to another person or group" (p 229). The CTA employees over 11,000 employees ranging from bus
operators to executives of departments. Effective internal communication is vital to the daily operations of the organization. Internal communication can be given in several different methods to ensure effective communication. Within transit organizations, internal communication is a major factor for transit managers when communicating with frontline employees during crises.

Crisis communication definitions vary from simple explanations to very broad addressing several types of fields. According to Struges (1994), crisis communication can be categorized into three sections which are instructive information, adjustive information, and internalizing information. Sturges also suggest that instructive information within crisis communication pertains to information provided to people with a focus on personal protection (Struges, 1994). The second section of crisis communication, adjective information deals with assisting people with the uncertainty of the crisis. While the third section, internalizing information pertains to information related to aid in the affected organization manage its reputation (Sturges, 1994). Each section provides internal strategies for managers to understand before communicating to frontline employees about crises.

Crisis have the potential to generate distinct communication demands within an organization. Crisis response strategies are considered the alternative for crisis managers have when responding to a crisis. Since there is not a crisis response strategy for every possible crisis, transit managers should incorporate their organization standard operating procedures and rules when responding to crises. According to Coombs (2015), crisis response strategies are separated into instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation repair. Coombs (2015) suggest by instructing information an organization is ensuring public safety. While providing information about the crisis, counseling, and providing action plans are all variations of adjusting information. Reputation repair is the reduction the adverse effects a crisis has on the
organization's image. Also, understanding crisis response strategies can significantly influence internal communication within an organization.

Transit managers will likely focus their efforts on improving internal communication with frontline employees within the instructing information and adjusting information section. Since transit managers are tasked with being first line managers to frontline employees, they will provide information pertaining to crises preparedness and communication method during crises. Transit managers will also provide ongoing communication sessions to ensure frontline employees are well informed pertaining crises and provide training to frontline employees.

David (2011) suggest that internal communication is better received from individuals if the information about the crisis is presented promptly as well as given to the correct individuals involved. Internal communication should not take hours to inform employees or to the stakeholders. The internal communication should also be obtainable by external and internal personnel while also including the most accurate and detailed information possible.

Internal communication within an organization not only increases the employee's trust in the organization but also establishes a perception of confidence in the riding public that depends on the transit system as a form of safe transportation. Another benefit of effective internal communication is that accurate information about a crisis can be provided to media outlets to inform the public. Contact with the media is unavoidable in times of crisis, and proactive communication can prevent potential negative information published by media outlets.

Maintaining trust throughout an organization during crises is vital. For this to occur, it is important that information is seamlessly provided without a delay or inaccuracies to maximize the effectiveness of an employee's response to the crisis (David, 2011). According to Mishra (2015), "an organization's communication practices may have a significant influence on the
The degree to which employees trust their managers and the organization's top echelon" (p. 187). The article suggests that internal communication expands beyond basic face to face communication but internally change how the organization is viewed as trustworthy among employees. More traditional forms of internal communication that promote a one-way communication are suggestion boards placed need common areas of the work location to promote unrestricted communication (Ruff, 2003). Prior communication research supports the idea that internal communication aids of positive feedback while also building employee commitment and trust with the organization and managers.

When employees feel involved in the communication process the more likely employees will share more information with the management staff in the event of a crisis. It is suggested that internal communication is vital for accomplishing that maximum amount of employee engagement (Welch, 2007). The purpose of those communication meeting is to maintain visibility among employee and management, trust building, and to provide a clear and open line of communication.

According to Balakrishnan (2013) "internal communication is operationally defined as the exchange of information both informal and formal between management and employees within the organization" (p 2). Balakrishnan (2013) further defines communication as technology coupled with systems to send and receive information. Ultimately it is up to managers to ensure that all possible measures are taken reduce the gap of internal communication with front-line employees. Balakrishnan (2013) suggest that managers following six strategies to increase internal communications which include "newsletters, circulation materials, surveys, emails, suggestion boxes, etc." (p 2). The article suggests that managers should conduct face to face communication sessions, provide employee newsletters, ensure Standard Operating Procedures
and bulletins are provided to employees in a timely manner and are kept up to date in efforts to increase internal communication. Within transit agencies, bi-weekly discussion meeting is held involving frontline employees and management to address any concerns or issues.

The workshop will identify internal communication strategies such as organizational charts, communication boards and employee newsletters that will promote internal communication among frontline employees and management. The following section explains crisis communication technologies available for transit agencies to utilize during crises.

**Crisis communication technologies**

Crises can happen at any moment, but most importantly can affect critical communication elements of an organization during the actual crisis. According to Chatterjee (2011) "online word-of-mouth, or eWOM, is information exchange is multi-directional, involving multiple audiences, and consumers can post or simply lurk" (81). With the increased methods to communicate during a crisis, information could be seamlessly be passed to a large number of employees by communicating using social network sites. Social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are assessable to any individual or organizations 24 hours a day. In this generation of instant information, social network sites are the go-to for instant information, especially during a crisis.

More recently, large transit agency such as CTA, Metra, and Pace now include social network sites to provide instant operational messages. Those messages may include weather related delays, service interruptions, and planned service reroutes. In the event of crises, CTA uses its website to keep customers and employees update concerning service disruptions and unforeseen events. In conjunction with the website, CTA also sends short message service (SMS) to registered customer subscribers concerning crisis within the service area with
alternative route information. Crises communication technology is still in the beginning phase as a source of crisis communication, but in future technology better systems will offer more complex platform to expand beyond 160-character limit.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers a crisis communication technology that provides transit agencies a program to utilize during a crisis. The program is called the National Incident Management System. The system is a comprehensive national approach to incident management at all levels of government and across disciplines (U.S Department of Transportation, 2015). Transit agencies such as CTA uses the system for large scale transit crisis in efforts to reduce miscommunication by sharing information between Chicago Police Department, Chicago Fire Department, Metra, Pace and internal management in real time during a crisis.

The CTA is widely known in the transit community for the advanced communication technologies used to date (Hilkevitch, 2015). Recently, the CTA invested in an on board two-way communication system for its fleet of over 5,000 buses. The CleverDevice pairs with an on-board device with software at the transit agency's control center (Hilkevitch, 2015). Bus controllers located at a remote and management can communicate directly to a certain bus, a group of buses on a route, or the entire fleet concerning the crisis in real-time (Hilkevitch, 2015). The CleverDevice has additional security functions built into the program allowing a bus operator to silently request for immediate assistant from Chicago Police Department or the Chicago Fire Department.

Crises communication technologies are an important component to ensuring internal communication are maintained. Crisis technologies allow the organization to internally communicate to a large number of employees throughout different location all at the same time.
Crisis technologies also allow for rapid communication with internal and external personnel. The workshop will examine internal communication methods between front line employees and managers in efforts to explore an efficient way to communicate. The last section explains the purpose is to provide training workshop designed to increase internal communication practices among transit agency employees.

Conclusion

Within transit agencies, it is vital that frontline employees and managers receive the necessary recurring training in order to provide effective internal communication throughout the crises duration. The current training standards for transit employees regarding internal communication practices and crisis communication only require employees to attend one course at the beginning of employment. To better prepare transit employees to effectively communicate during crises, this requires training to be more robust and should be an annual training requirement. Additional training should include internal communication among frontline employees and managers.

The purpose of the project is to develop a workshop for transit managers, stakeholders, and key leadership tasked with the responsibility of responding to the crisis, to increase internal communication with frontline employees during transit crises by identifying the importance of crisis communication. The workshop will first introduce the importance of crisis communication and examine definitions of crisis and crisis communication. Then the workshop will further discuss transit manager's roles and responsibilities within crisis communication. Next, the workshop will provide crisis strategies that transit managers can use to build a relationship with frontline employees to establish effective internal communication. Last, the workshop will
explain the Coombs Crisis model and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory as a reference that transit managers can use to assess how to respond to the variations of crises.
References


The goal of this workshop is to provide participants with the introductory knowledge and skills to practice and determine appropriate crisis communication strategies to ensure a clear and concise response for transit crises.
WORKSHOP TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for this workshop is transit system employees that are senior managers and personnel assigned to communicate with front line employees in the event of a transit crisis.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

After completing the workshop participants will be able to:
1. Identify Dimensions of Crisis Communication
2. Identify Crisis Management Strategies
3. Define Crisis Internal Communication Best Practices
4. Identity Crisis Communication Technologies
Crises can arise at any moment within an organization. More recently, transit systems have encountered an increase of crises due to terrorism, sabotage, and trespassers.

Crisis communication provides resourceful strategies that you can use to communicate during crises.
ICEBREAKER EXERCISE

Communication Origami

Take the blank sheet of paper on your table, place it directly in front of you.

Now close your eyes and let the instructor guild you!
ICE BREAKER ACTIVITY RESULTS

- What did or did not work in the directions you were given?
- What would you do to communicate better during this exercise?
- What are some examples of good internal communication that is needed during transit crises?
- What kind of miscommunication could be avoided if clear communication were always possible?
What is your definition of a transit crisis?
How does your organization define a transit crisis?
Are they similar or different?
CRISIS DEFINED

The Transit Mindset

Communications scholar Timothy Coombs defines a crisis as "unpredictable but not unexpected"
The purpose of a crisis management plan is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and protocols that will guide the transit organization in promptly sharing of information during crises among employees, stakeholders, media and the public.
## EXAMPLE CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Communication by Everbridge Paging System</td>
<td>Page 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Communication by Radio</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<td>14.0</td>
<td>Control Center Incident Management Emergency Check List</td>
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*Exhibit 1 – Basic Model for Control Center Manager and Incident Commander Communication*

*Exhibit 2 – Field Incident Commander Roles & Responsibilities (CTA Only Incident)*

*Exhibit 3 – Local Unified Command*

*Exhibit 4 – Unified Command for Large-Scale Incident*

*Exhibit 5 – Initial Communication Response Checks*

*Exhibit 6 – Unified Communication Control & Recovery Checks*
Crisis communication is a component within the crisis management field.
Crisis management plays a vital role within crisis communication during a crisis.
Crisis management includes personnel responsible for response to crisis incidents.
According to Pauchant (1991) identified six crisis management strategies that managers should incorporate during crises. The six crisis management strategies are:

1. Media training
2. Public relation building
3. Increase communication to local communities
4. Increase partnership with stakeholders
5. Incorporation of new technologies
Whats my role within Crisis Management?

- Promote cohesion with front line employees
- Provide accurate and timely information
- Be knowledgeable about the crisis
- Be able to make well informed quick decisions
GROUP EXERCISE

Internal Communication

- Take the six toothpicks on the table
- Use the toothpicks to create four triangles
- Hint: What you need may be closer to you than you realize!
GROUP EXERCISE RESULTS

Internal Communication

- How many triangles did you create?
- Did you communicate with your entire table?
GROUP EXERCISE RESULTS

Internal Communication

The answer is simply to make a 3D pyramid with the six toothpicks, then you will have three standing triangles and one base triangle.
The three phase "approach provides a unified system for organizing and utilizing the varied insights crisis managers offer".

(COOMBS, 2007)
**Phase 1**

**Pre-Crisis**
Within the pre-crisis phase is dedicated to prevent of crisis. This phase is also divided into three subgroups: signal detection, prevention, and crisis preparation (Coombs, 2007).

**Phase 2**

The crisis phase is the period of time the organization suffers a crisis. Communication at this stage plays a vital role across the organization. This phase is divided into two subgroups: crisis recognition and crisis containment (Coombs, 2007).

**Phase 3**

The post crisis phase ensures the organization better prepared for the next possible crisis, ensure stakeholders are left with a positive impression of the front-line employees and management crisis management response was adequate, and last it ensure that the initial crisis is complete and do not cause a different crisis.
Two key factors of internal crisis communication are well-timed information and full disclosures of the crisis to all affected parties involved.
What are my role within Internal Communication?

- Promote cohesion front line employees
- Provide accurate and timely information
- Be knowledgeable about the crisis situation
- Be able to make well-informed decisions
- Conduct weekly face to face communication sessions
- Communicate frequently using the intranet, employee newsletters, and mailings.
- Ensure that Standard Operating Procedures and bulletins are provided on time and kept up to date
- Share and exchange information to support collective decision-making process
Module 5
Crisis Communication Technologies

Integrating additional communication tools during a crisis can reduce false information, and rumors associated with the crisis.

- **CleaverClad**: Communication System on board buses
- **SMS**: Communication that allows instant messages
- **Social Media Networks**: Communication using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter
Video Time

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEzHJZYDxcA
Module 6
Workshop Review

- Defined the dimensions of transit crisis
- Reviewed crisis management strategies
- Reviewed best internal communication practices
- Reviewed crisis communication technologies
Open Discussion & Questions

TRANSLIT CRISIS COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE TRANSIT COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP!!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO COMPLETE THE WORKSHOP EVALUATION
References


References


Transit Crisis Communication Workshop

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Capstone Project
Summer 2017
Master of Arts Communication and Training
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Introduction
The goal of this workshop is to provide participants with the introductory knowledge and skills to practice and determine appropriate crisis communication strategies to ensure a clear and concise response for transit crises.

Target Audience
The target audience for this workshop is transit system employees that are senior managers and personnel assigned to communicate with front line employees in the event of a transit crisis.

Objectives
At the end of this workshop, students will be able to:
- Define the dimensions of crisis communication
- Identify crisis management strategies
- Identify internal crisis communication best practices
- Identify crisis communication technologies

Workshop Outline
Module 1. Workshop Introduction
   Icebreaker Exercise
   Icebreaker Discussion
Module 2. Dimensions of Crisis Communication
   Crisis communications definitions
Module 3. Crisis Management Strategies
   Crisis communication roles and strategies
   Group exercise
Module 4. Internal communication strategies
Module 5. Crisis Communication Technologies
Communication technologies types
Video

Module 6. Workshop Review
Questions
Workshop evaluation
Module 1 Introduction

The Need for Crisis Communication within Transit Organizations

Crisis can arise at any moment within an organization. More recently, transit systems have encountered an increase of crises due to terrorism, sabotage, and trespassers.

In efforts to improve internal communication between managers’ and front line employees, it is vital that transit organizations personnel that are responsible for responding to a transit crisis understand the crisis communication strategies that provide resourceful information that you can use to communicate during crises.

Ice breaker Activity

Communication Origami (Arns, 2017)

The purpose of this icebreaker activity is to show how simple instructions maybe interpreted differently by different employees. This activity also highlights the importance of clear and concise communication.

First, take the blank sheet of paper on your table, place it directly in front of you.

Now close your eyes and let the instructor guide you!
The instructor will explain that this activity is listening to and following directions. As you hear the oral instructions, perform the requested task.

- No one may ask questions during this activity.
- You may use only the materials given to you for the exercise.
- You must close your eyes during the activity — no peeking!
- Fold your sheet of paper in half.
- Tear off the upper right-hand corner.
- Fold your paper in half again.
- Tear off the lower right-hand corner.
- Fold your paper in half.
- Tear off the upper left-hand corner.
- Fold in half a final time.
- Tear off the lower left-hand corner.
- Unfold your paper and hold it up.
- Last, open your eyes look at the finished origami and compare it with the other participants' origami.

**Communication Origami Discussion**

Now that you have participated in the Communication origami exercise, you have a reference to refer to when you are trying to communicate a message internally within your transit organization.

Now let us discuss the following questions:

- What did or did not work with the directions that you were given?
- What would you do to communicate the instructions more effectively in this exercise?
- Why are examples of good internal communications needed during a transit crisis?
- What kinds of internal miscommunication could be avoided if clear internal communication were always possible?

Notes:

**Module 2. Dimensions of Crisis Communication**

Crises can arise at any moment within an organization. More recently, transit systems have encountered an increase of crises due to terrorism, sabotage, and trespassers. According to communication scholar, Timothy Coombs (2011) the term crisis is defined as "unpredictable but not unexpected" (pg. 17). Another Communications scholar named Leeann Bell explains, "Crisis can be viewed as a threat to an organization's image" (pg. 142).

There are several definitions of a crisis used throughout communication research. However, what is similar to this research is the universal understanding that crises present disruptions that are unwarned and unplanned to the operation of an organization.

It is not practical for an organization such as a transit agency such as CTA to completely avoid crises. Some accidents such as an injured employee are common, where as a major accident involving a moving train encountering a person is considered impossible to prevent.
Understanding your organization's philosophy and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for responding to crises can ensure that along with your definition of crisis you can provide communication better during a crisis.

Discussion

Now that you know how Communication scholars define a crisis, now let us discuss the following:

- What is your definition of a crisis?
- How does your organization define a transit crisis?
- Are they similar or different?
- Do you know your organization crisis communication plan?

Components of a Crisis communication plan

The purpose of a crisis communication plan is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and protocols that will guide the transit organization in promptly sharing of information during crises among employees, stakeholders, media and the public. Below are the suggested components of a crisis communication plan.
No one plan fits every organization. It is important as a manager that you review your agency’s plan to ensure the proper protocols are being taken.

Module 3. Crisis Management Strategies

Strategies for internal crisis management will be adopted from Coombs (2007) three stages of crisis management, which are the pre-crisis, crisis response, and the post-crisis. According to Pauchant (1991) identified six crisis management strategies that managers should incorporate during crises. The six crisis management strategies are media training, public relation building, increase communication to local communities, increased relationship intervening individuals, strengthen partnership with stakeholders, and the incorporation of new technologies (Pauchant, 1991).

According to David (2011) "effective internal communication during crises aims to preserve own members' trust and loyalty" (p. 76). The
article suggests that crisis management not only plays a decisive role in internal communication but it may enhance employee attitudes. Sometimes crises can provoke the spread of false information among employees concerning the crisis, with a strong crisis management culture an organization can reduce that amount of employee backlash within the organization.

Within Transit Agencies, Transportation Managers and other lead managers are usually designated to participant in the crisis management process during crises. Those individuals are responsible for ensuring all information about the crisis is provided accurate and timely presented to the stakeholders of the organizations. It is up to management to make sure that employees are well informed. Their role also includes having the knowledge to understand the crisis, the ability to make well-informed decisions on the spot, and providing up to date information at all time.

Group Exercise

Internal Communication

The purpose of this exercise is to promote internal communication.

Directions:

1. Take the six toothpicks from the pile
2. Use the toothpicks to create four triangles

Group Exercise Discussion

How many triangles did you create?

Did you internally communicate with people at your table?
Group Exercise Answer

The answer was simple to create a 3-Dimensional pyramid with six toothpicks. The results were three standing triangles and one base triangle.

Do not forget that Mangers roles within Crisis Management are to:

- Promote cohesion with front line employees
- Provide accurate and timely information
- Be knowledgeable about the crisis situation
- Be able to make well informed quick decisions

Discussion

Three phases of crises

Stage 1
Pre-Crisis

Stage 2
Crisis

Stage 2
Post Crisis

Stage 1

Within the pre-crisis phase is dedicated to prevent of crisis. This phase is also dived into three subgroups: signal detection, prevention, and crisis preparation (Coombs, 2007).
Stage 2
The crisis phase is the period of time the organization suffers a crisis. Communication at this stage plays a vital role across the organization. This phase is divided into two subgroups: crisis recognition and crisis containment (Coombs, 2007).

Stage 3
The post-crisis phase ensures the organization better prepared for the next possible crisis, ensure stakeholders are left with a positive impression of the frontline employees, and management crisis management response was adequate, and last it ensure that the initial crisis is complete and do not cause a different crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Module 4. Internal Communication Strategies
Two key factors of internal crisis communication are well-timed information and full disclosures of the crisis to all affected parties involved (David, 2011). David (2011) suggest that internal communication is better received from individuals if the information about the crisis is presented promptly as well as given to the correct individuals involved. Internal communication should not take hours to inform employees or to the stakeholders. The internal communication should also be obtainable by external and internal personnel while also including the most accurate and detailed information possible.

Internal communication within an organization not only increases the employee's trust in the organization but also establishes a perception of confidence in the riding public that depends on the transit system as a form of safe transportation. Another benefit of effective internal communication is that accurate information about a crisis can be provided to media outlets to inform the public. Contact with the media
is unavoidable in times of crisis, and proactive communication can prevent potential negative information published by media outlets.

According to Mishra (2015), "an organization's communication practices may have a significant influence on the degree to which employees trust their managers and the organization's top echelon" (p. 187). The article suggests that internal communication expands beyond basic face to face communication but internally change how the organization is viewed as trustworthy among employees. Effective internal communication can be considered a two-way communication, where both employees and staff communicate to each other Wright (1995). The article suggests internal communication works best when frontline employees and staff have an open line of communication between them.

More traditional forms of internal communication that promote a one-way communication are suggestion boards placed need common areas of the work location to promote unrestricted communication (Ruff, 2003). Prior communication research found that internal communication aids of positive feedback while also building employee commitment and trust with the organization and managers.

Research suggests that internal communication as vital for accomplishing that maximum amount of employee engagement (Welch, 2007). When employees feel involved in the communication process, the more likely employees will share more information with the management staff in the event of a crisis. Within Transit agencies, bi-weekly discussion meeting is held involving frontline employees and management to address any concerns or issues. The purpose of those communication meeting is to maintain visibility between employee and
management, trust building, and to provide a clear and open line of communication.

According to Balakrishnan (2013) "internal communication is operationally defined as the exchange of information both informal and formal between management and employees within the organization" (p 2). Balakrishnan (2013) further defines communication as technology coupled with systems to send and receive information.

Ultimately, it is up to managers to ensure that all possible measures are taken reduce the gap of internal communication with front-line employees. Balakrishnan (2013) suggest that managers following strategies to increase internal communications include "newsletters, circulation materials, surveys, emails, suggestion boxes etc." (p 2). This would suggest that managers should conduct face-to-face communication sessions, provide employee newsletters, ensure Standard Operating Procedures and bulletins are provided to employees in a timely manner and are kept up to date.
Discussion

To ensure effective internal communication with front line employees and management some communication efforts includes the following:
Each of those methods provides an opportunity where front line employees and management have a source of internal communication.

**Module 5. Crisis Communication Technologies**

*Crisis* communication technologies are integrating additional communication tools during a crisis. These new technologies can reduce the timing it takes to relay information, reduce the number of false information, and reduce internal confusion concerning the incident.

More recently, large transit agency such as CTA, Metra, and Pace now utilized social network sites to provide instant operational messages. Those messages may include weather related delays, service interruptions, and planned service reroutes. In the event of a crisis, CTA uses its own website in conjunctions to a short message service (SMS) to registered customer subscribers concerning crisis within the service area with alternative route information. This technology is still in the infant phase as a source of crisis communication, but in upcoming technology, better systems will offer more complex platform to expand beyond 160-character limit.
The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers a crisis communication technology that provides transit agencies a program to utilize during a crisis. This program is called the National Incident Management System. The system is a comprehensive national approach to incident management at all levels of government and across disciplines.

**Video Time**

The video below introduces crisis communication concepts with communication technology.

*YouTube: Crisis Commander: The Ultimate Tool for Crisis Management*

Check Here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEzHJZYDxcA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEzHJZYDxcA)
Discussion

In the event of crises, it is vital that the most effective communication technology is used to allow maximum internal communication. Below are several types of communication technologies used in Transit agencies:
Module 6. Workshop Overview

The goal of this workshop was to provide participants with the introductory knowledge and skills to practice and determine appropriate crisis communication strategies to ensure a clear and concise response during a transit crisis.

Objectives at the end of this workshop, students will be able to:

- Define the dimensions of crisis communication
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Questions

Workshop Evaluation

Thank you for attending the Transit Crisis Communication workshop!
Reference


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEzHUZYDxcA

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the information presented in the workshop. We value your feedback and will incorporate your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions into future workshops. Your feedback will be kept private and confidential.

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Thank you for completing the evaluation.
CERTIFICATE of COMPLETION

THIS ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

Recipieent Name

HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE

Transit Crisis Communication Workshop

AUG 7,
2017

SIGNED, Ashley Tillman, M.A Communication &
Training, Governors State University