



ECLIPSE COMMUNICATIONS
TREND TALK
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THE NEED TO PLAN...

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in widespread shock and disbelief around the globe, with major economic fallout and unpreparedness visible on many levels. A crisis can have a devastating impact on business reputation if not handled correctly. If handled superbly, it provides an opportunity to build brand equity. In this edition of Trend Talk, we discuss the need for a comprehensive crisis communications strategy.

This pandemic magnified the need for business to prepare for all possible crises and eventualities, knowing what to say, when to say it, how to say it and where to say it. In our second edition of Trend Talk, we, looked at cause marketing where leading brands gained brand affinity for supporting the cause of combating Covid-19. Equally, we showed you some examples of how proactive communications backfired on McDonald's and fueled a crisis around its employment conditions.

Protecting your reputation, especially in times of crises, requires quick decision-making and effective communication. Being unprepared heightens the risk of poor decision making, while mixed messaging or conflicting statements from unapproved spokespeople may lead to reputational and legal fallout.



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Barack Obama and Bill Gates are just two well-known leaders to have said in the past that simulations have shown that a respiratory virus pandemic was not only possible but probable. It required being prepared, without knowing when it would strike.

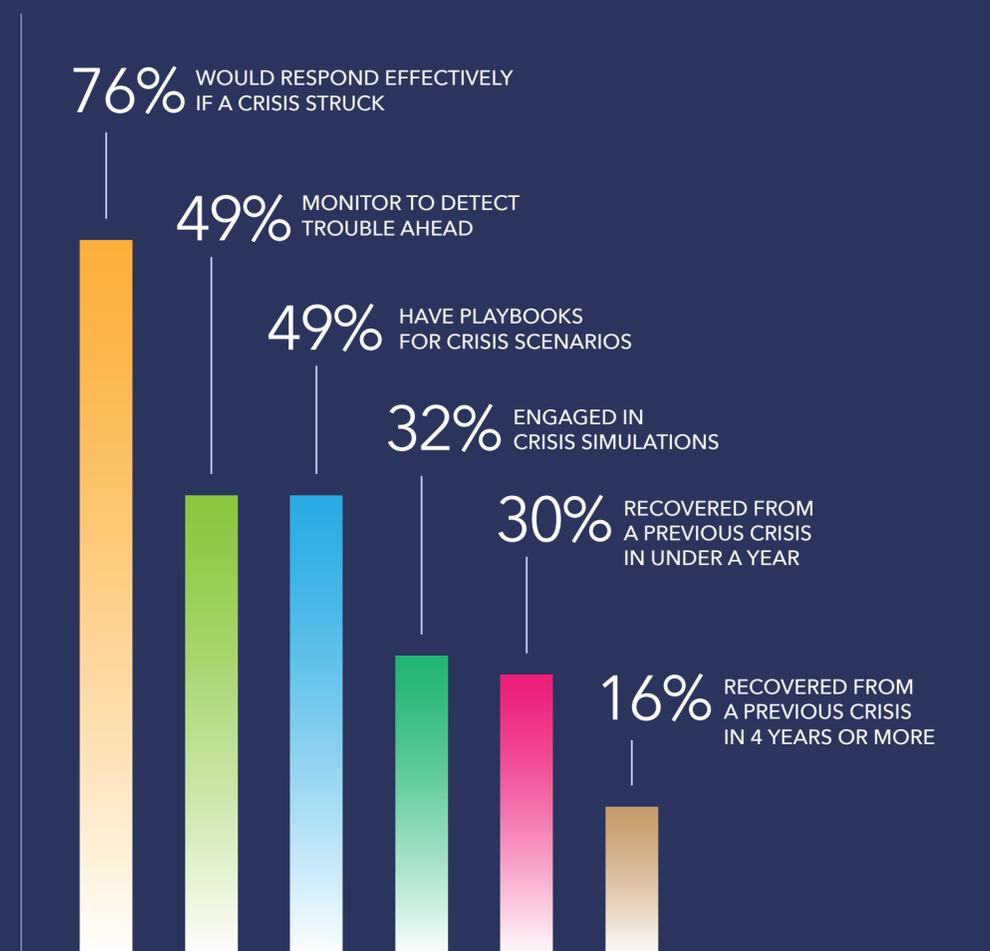
Companies can prepare for crises including deaths at work, strikes, viral videos, crime and customers suffering as a result of poor products and services, among many more. However, sometimes the unexpected happens.

P&G's Tide laundry detergent pod product came under scrutiny in 2017. A viral internet trend called the "Tide Pod Challenge" saw participants eating the pods and becoming ill. Tide paired up with former NFL player and celebrity Rob Gronkowski to release a public service announcement to its customers, taking the form of the actual challenge. It's hard to "expect the unexpected," but when the unexpected does occur, your team needs to act swiftly to resolve the issue. [See the public service announcement here.](#)

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

Deloitte's *A Crisis of Confidence* report published in 2016, polled more than 317 global companies and identified a broad vulnerability gap between a company's awareness of potential threats and the preparation and confidence to tackle them when they arise. These staggering statistics are still relevant today as we navigate ourselves out of the crisis.

- 76% of board members believe their companies would respond effectively if a crisis struck tomorrow, however, only 49% of board members say their companies engage in monitoring to detect trouble ahead
- Only 49% say their companies have playbooks for likely crisis scenarios
- A mere 32% say their companies engage in crisis simulations or training
- 30% of board members who had experience in past crises said their reputations recovered in less than a year, while 16% said it took four years or more.



ACT TODAY TO PREPARE FOR TOMORROW

PwC's *Covid-19: Confidently navigate through the Coronavirus Crisis* report, highlighted key findings from a 2019 survey on crisis management, with the aim of providing a framework on how to navigate a crisis. PwC writes about its interactions with companies while compiling the report:

"These discussions revealed that some companies emerge stronger and even experience revenue growth after a crisis, while others falter."

What must you do to be one of the companies to emerge stronger from a crisis? PwC says:



**CREATE
A DEDICATED CRISIS TEAM**
Everyone must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.



ESTABLISH THE FACTS
Trustworthy data is essential.



**COLLABORATE
INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY**
PwC says there are three key stakeholders in every crisis:

- Public relations agency and communications team
- Legal and regulatory teams
- Operational response teams who manage everything else, including gathering of data to ensure the first two can do their jobs properly



**CRAFT A STAKEHOLDER
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**
This is what we call a crisis communications framework, where you define your key audiences, define the messages you wish to communicate and execute your plan.

ASSESS

A crisis can unfold in an instant or over days or weeks. Its effects, and a business's recovery, can take months and in some instances, years.

As our government plots a risk-adjusted lifting of the lockdown, take the opportunity to assess your business's preparedness for potential future crises.

IDENTIFY:

- Risk areas
- How information should flow
- Key messages and spokespeople
- Stakeholders and audience, including employees, customers, media and financial markets
- How to measure the efficacy of your communications
- A framework to analyse, learn and adapt



If you would like to set up a brainstorm with us to discuss how to improve your crisis framework and chat about current best practice, email us at info@eclipsepr.co.za.

As we slowly emerge out of Level 5 lockdown and all hands are on deck to revive businesses and the economy, *Trend Talk will now be distributed monthly to our valued readers.*

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