# SOCIAL MEDIA AND EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

Social media has begun to play such a significant role in the crisis ecosystem, that we need to think about how it plays out across the 9 Supporting Competencies that make up the James+Wooten Effective Leadership Framework. The chart below uses the lens of social media to outline some opportunities to build effective crisis leadership skills before, during and after crisis.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRISIS

| EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY | BEFORE | DURING | AFTER |
|---|---|---|---|
| SENSE-MAKING is the ability to take in a broad set of information and synthesize it into meaningful and relevant action. Sense-making includes being able to see systemic inequities and imbalances that can lead to a crisis. | Have a social media scanning and signal-detection process so you are alerted about smoldering crises, changes in the ecosystem, and anything affecting your organization – both opportunities and threats. | It is important to show that you have the capacity to make sense of the situation even if you do not currently have all the answers. Create trust and confidence by sharing what you do know quickly. Be sure to show sympathy towards any victims the crisis may have created and offer assistance and support. | Conduct an after-action review to debrief what happened and what you learned. |
| PERSPECTIVE TAKING requires being able to hear and incorporate into your thinking other peoples' viewpoints and perspectives. | Make sure planning included communicating with compassion, concern and empathy. | Understand that you will have to engage with people from a variety of perspectives online, including those who may be saying abusive things about you. Acknowledge but don't respond negatively to comments on social media. | Check in with everyone who was affected by the crisis. This is a good chance to see the experience from different perspectives. Don't limit conversations only to those directly involved. See what lessons you can learn across stakeholder groups. |
| INFLUENCE often includes being able to express ideas and requests effectively to multiple groups and stakeholders; to be inspiring; and to be creative in analyzing and solving problems. | Collaborate and coordinate with credible sources and experts. Know who is influential among your stakeholders. Create collaborative relationships. Recognize that Twitter is a means of influencing journalists – 59% are active on Twitter.* | Social media can be a tool for collaboration and mobilization. Know that everything you communicate on any channel could end up on social media in some form. Try to move longer, more nuanced conversation to other channels. | Building trust with stakeholders is key to developing influence. They expect expertise and authenticity. Be sure to review actions taken during the crisis through these lenses. |

\* Columbia Journalism Review reports that 59 percent of journalists are on Twitter.

| EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY | BEFORE | DURING | AFTER |
|---|---|---|---|
| ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY starts with boundary-spanning knowledge of how things are being done coupled with the ability to get a system or organization to respond to new situations and quickly change course. | Build a skillset to accept and address ambiguity and uncertainty. The media and general public become involved in crises. Add them to your stakeholder map and strategic plans. | Know your social media system and adapt quickly. For example, stop pre-scheduled posts – they will be out of sync with what is happening and often will be insensitive. | Update your social media and crisis communication strategies to include lessons learned. Leverage any positive outcomes and shore up ways to prevent a similar crisis in the future. |
| CREATIVITY, in this context, is the ability to recognize vulnerabilities to a crisis and plan for multiple contingencies in ways that go beyond traditional planning. | The defining characteristic of Twitter is that users create content. Creatively consider opportunities to collaborate in your planning and preparation. | Issuing PR statements will probably not satisfy stakeholders active on social media. You will need to be creative. | 62% of Americans say they get their news from social media.*  As this percentage increases, organizations will need to be creative in response. |
| COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY Communicating Effectively is the ability to relate to multiple stakeholders, convey strength of purpose, inspire confidence and connect to the emotional needs of people. | Develop your social media plan and presence before a crisis hits. Social media are high volume platforms, but they are personal experiences. Make sure your tone and messaging aligns with stakeholders. | Tie social media to other communication efforts e.g. creating a quick response information website where stakeholders can get answers and keep up with what is happening related to the crisis. | Social media adds complexity to crisis communication, but does not transcend effective communication practice. Make sure to review best practices. |
| RISK TAKING is the ability to take action and try new things during times of extreme uncertainty. | Discuss how you will balance acknowledging risk with candor in your social media strategy. | Always respond. Because Twitter accelerates in about 15 minutes and Facebook 30 minutes, you will have to take a risk with your response. There won't be time for extensive message crafting and editing. | Post-crisis, social media users expect to see change. It will be important to be transparent and address issues and opportunities raised by the crisis. You will have to take risks to address systemic issues raised by crises. |
| PROMOTING RESILIENCE is one of the defining characteristics that determines survival and successful adaption versus failure. | Make sure that your plan recognizes and supports the individuals who are your social media vanguard. They need to know that they will be protected from things like doxing and abuse. | Make sure to build in regular breaks for those in the social media tsunami. Mistakes are easily made when people are under severe stress. | The culture of social media is one of transparency. People need to fee supported and that they have the opportunity to bounce back in an environment of such open vulnerability. |

* Pew Research Center

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| EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY | BEFORE | DURING | AFTER |
|---|---|---|---|
| INDIVIDUAL & SYSTEMIC LEARNING work together to realize potential opportunities. At its core, learning generally involves acquiring new skills and information and implementing a change as a result. These changes may be individual or systemic. Effective crisis leadership requires the integration of the two. | Integrate social media into risk and crisis training and development efforts. | Keep a detailed record of everything you are doing so that you can learn from it during and after the crisis. Hashtags help organize information and allow people to follow along and learn as events unfold. | Use social benchmarking to learn, not to copy. Determine your own social media platform needs based on your stakeholders and strategy. Don't assume what works for someone else will automatically work for you. |

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What technology tools do you have available to connect with people during crisis?

- What gaps are there in your technology and social media crisis platform?

- How are you and your team building social media and technology skills with crises in mind?

- How can you make sure that you and your team are not seeing technology is not a panacea, but are realistic about its opportunities and challenges?

## SIDEBAR: ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR LEARNING AND SKILL BUILDING:

1. DATA ANALYTICS: gathering, organizing, and analyzing data to help with decision-making and taking action.

2. DATA VISUALIZATION & JOURNALISM: communicating and displaying information to a variety of stakeholder groups.

3. CODING: create information-rich websites, connect with stakeholders, gather information, coordinate donations, manage people, and build out product and service offerings.

4. DEVELOPING APPLICATIONS: customize specific, focused apps to quickly address needs during crisis.

5. LEARNING & COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS: there are a variety of technological platforms that leaders and stakeholders can use for virtual learning and communication before, during and after a crisis.

6. DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING: connecting with stakeholders to build and maintain relationships before, during and after a crisis.

7. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & ROBOTICS: using robots and drones to provide services and take on jobs that are risky for human beings especially during a crisis.