

The image features a white background with decorative gears. In the top right corner, there is a small red gear and a larger, semi-transparent light red gear. In the bottom left corner, there is a large semi-transparent light red gear and a smaller red gear. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

# *Social Media Crisis Management Plan*

**Grass Roots Media**

**Crisis:** A 'crisis' has long-term repercussions on your brand's reputation if you don't act accordingly. There's also often a loss of money involved and you must respond within 60 minutes. These include natural disasters, plant explosions, lying executives or even a global pandemic.

**Problem:** Most difficult scenarios you'll face will be problems. The challenge then is to not let a problem become a crisis that affects your company's bottom line. The next sections of this Crisis Management plan will dive into how you can become an expert problem solver, and what to do when a problem does escalate into a crisis.

## Holding Messages

If you are not sure what to say immediately, a neutral holding message is always helpful. You may have to prepare more than one. Creating a holding statement that mentions you're aware of the issue and you are looking into it shows you're compassionate. Promise real-time updates with a date and time when you'll be providing that update.

If you are facing a complaint, the first response should be a holding statement, which your business has prepared and agreed on based on scenario planning. If the response requires a more detailed response you can always use a holding statement to inform the complainer that you'll have an answer to them within 24 hours.

## Escalation Process

Implement the concept Red Light, Orange Light, and Green Light system.

Check out our blog '[Crisis Management 101](#)' for more on developing an escalation process.

## Monitoring

Not every conversation online you are privy to as a company, so ensure you have excellent monitoring services in place to monitor everything from hashtags to search engines (in real-time). This will allow you to identify the red lights, and assign someone (or a team) to the task. In a crisis you'll need to stop all promotion including ads, social media posts, emails ... everything!

## Top Tips about social media crisis management

1. Become an expert problem solver
  - a. 'Calm in the Crisis.' Answering enquires increases customer advocacy, while not answering them decreases customer advocacy. You should be answering every message, on every channel, all of the time.
2. Answer a query within the hour
  - a. By not answering the query within the hour, it can end up hurting your brand because when people's emotions are heightened, it can escalate and put it at risk of becoming a crisis.
2. Be human and use empathy to answer the complaint

- a. When it comes to a problem where you or your company were in the wrong, it's important to apologise quickly and sincerely. Don't take it personally, apologise, and take it offline. Use statements such as, "We apologize for X," or "We are very sorry for Y."
- b. You might even turn that complainer into an evangelist who promotes your brand or becomes a customer on the spot!

2. Take the complaint offline

- a. If you can't answer the complaint publicly, then make sure to use a holding statement to respond to the complaint, stating when you'll reply and how. This way your onlookers see you're dealing with the complaint and it should help defuse the situation vs fuel it. For example, you could say, "We are looking into the issue and will update you by 12:00PM," or "Moving forward, we will put our time and resources towards educating people on this problem so we can change it for the better."
- b. Secondly, if you're not monitoring social media all the time, put an estimated response time as a line in your social profile bio, so you're clearly setting expectations for the public. This is especially beneficial for businesses with a heavy online customer service presence e.g. Telecommunication companies.

2. Use an appropriate tone of voice

Ask yourself how you can be MOST helpful in this situation. This doesn't mean being taken advantage of, and be careful about being "over-salesy" but genuinely helpful in a way that aligns with what your small business has to offer - even if it is an empathetic nod or a shout out to someone doing something awesome.

## **Crisis Management Plan Essentials**

- Chocolate
- Wine
- Coffee
- Chocolate Chip Cookies