



# Firestorm and Black Swan Solutions Presents: Communication Breakdown (It's Always the Same)

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How you respond and what you say will either incinerate or intensify the crisis that you are enduring at that point in time.

You can predict a crisis through creating an [intelligence network](#). You must monitor what is being said via social and traditional media. Failure to identify and monitor all threats and risks is one of the [five common failures](#) in a crisis situation.

You must be: aware, prepared and have a plan in place for a crisis or disaster.

*“In the days before social media, you had time to think about what to say before it got out to broadcast media. Now with social media, you’re talking seconds.”*

*-Michelle Colosimo  
Director, Black Swan Solutions*

The “golden hour” that once was, is now seconds. If you are not monitoring, you will find that you are responding to the old piece of information and not the current information that is out on social media.

If someone has ill intent, 80 percent of the time, someone else knows. Sixty-seven percent of the time, two or more people know. When two or more people know they talk. Where do they talk? They are talking on social media.

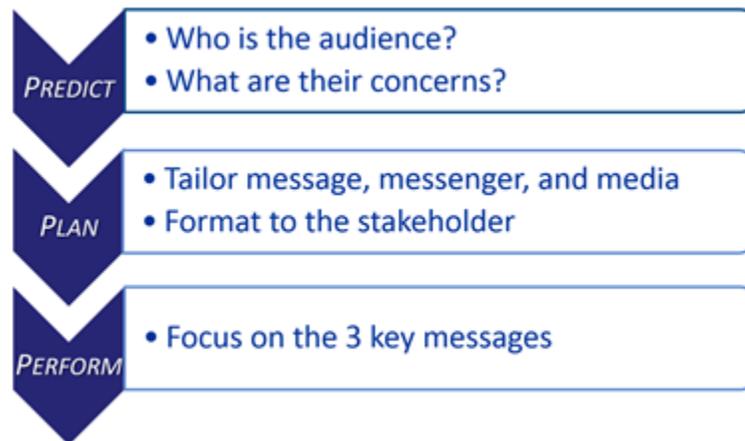
### Why?

- Until you’ve asked “why” five times, you are not going to fully understand “why” you must communicate in a certain way that helps your specific organization.
- The objective is to understand and establish the ‘Why’ of all communications. The value of any communication must be weighed against the potential exposure or liability created by these communications.
- When a crisis occurs, stop and figure out what will happen if you speak on the subject. Will an additional door be opened that will lead to additional comments, or potentially another crisis?

## PREDICT.PLAN.PERFORM.® Methodology



## Crisis Communications Approach



- Who is the audience?
  - Are you speaking to a board member or the public? That will determine how to construct a message.
- Always focus on the audience and their concerns during a crisis.
- We all act differently when we receive news via text, email and phone call. Sharing news to your audience at the right time and in the right way becomes very critical.
  - Failure to plan can result in additional crises.
- Your audience will not be able to understand a 15 or 20 point message.
  - Deliver one message at a time.

## Objectives

- Factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted at this time or ever.
- Implement immediate actions to:
  - **Identify** key audiences;
  - **Align** message maps (prewritten messages) to key audiences;
  - **Monitor** facts about the events (NOTE: much of what is learned initially in a crisis can be wrong);
  - **Communicate** to stakeholders, as required;
  - **Minimize** rumors;
  - **Conduct** debriefs, as needed;
  - **Ask** for assistance if needed and
  - **Verify** that your messages support your brand position.
- Ensure the people affected (as well as employees) by the crisis learn of updates through you, instead of via the media through leaked information.

## Event Activation Matrix

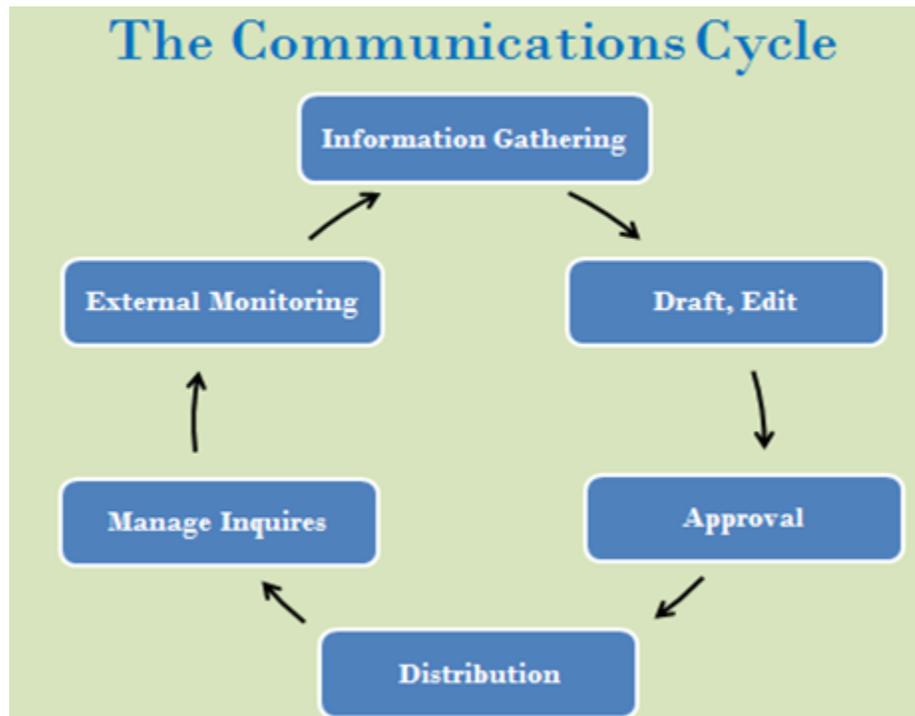
Event Activation Matrix				
EVENT	ACTION	MESSAGE	RESPONSIBILITIES	CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ <b>MINOR EVENT:</b> Low Impact Event</li><li>❖ <b>INCIDENT:</b> Significant, Adverse, Limited Impact Event</li><li>❖ <b>BUSINESS CRISIS:</b> Enterprise-wide Impact Event</li></ul>				

- How an event is categorized will change response levels.
- The Event Activation Matrix is always assigned for a specific organization.
- By using the above chart, crisis management can be simplified by listing: For this event, here is the action that needs to be taken, here is the message that needs to be distributed, here are the responsibilities that are assigned and this action is what the crisis management team will be doing during said crisis.

*“What you learn in the first 24 hours of a crisis is generally wrong.”*

*-Jim Satterfield  
Firestorm President*

## Communications Cycle



- The lack of an approval process creates another breakdown point; potentially causing an additional crisis.
- In addition, do not spend too much time during the approval process. Delayed approval processes result in a delayed message.
  - Test your plans.
  - Create pre-approved messages.

***Get the right message out at the right time, in the right way.***

## Intelligence Network

- Any newsworthy event that attracts traditional print and electronic media will also result in social-media attention.
- Firestorm recommends monitoring online news and social media for specific phrases, streams, key words, other issues, etc. before crises occur to establish a base line.
- Once a potential or actual crisis has been identified, ***monitoring is critical.***
- Reports should be provided to the Crisis Team on a regular schedule or immediately, if a posting of concern is identified.
- Careful monitoring of incoming inquiries as well as timely media and online monitoring will identify rumors, misinformation, emerging attacks or incorrect information.

## Crisis Communication Components

- Express Concern/ Support & Offer Condolences
- Suggest Experienced Crisis Manager Engagement by Counsel
- Establish 'Tell the Truth' Baseline
- Discuss Initial Theme/Message
  - **Not Defined by Event**
  - **Invent the Future**
  - **Embrace the Families**
- Focus on the: **WHY COMMUNICATE?** ↓ ↑
  - Internal and External Communication
- It's about the Listener/Reader

*"Generally, 'no comment' is interpreted as 'you're guilty' and you know it and you're lying at this point in time."*

*-Jim Satterfield  
Firestorm President*

## Home Bases

- Firestorm **HOME BASES** are well thought out and prepared themed-statements that can be used during ANY crisis.
- They are a safe place to go when you are asked a question that you aren't sure how to answer (gives you time to think about the actual answer you want to give).
- They also help you answer a question in a way that prevents you from turning your answer into the next crisis.
- Home Bases are developed during media training.
- For example, the Firestorm three home bases for Virginia Tech after the shootings were:
  - ***We will not be defined by this event.***
  - ***We will invent the future.***
  - ***We will embrace the families.***
- Through Firestorm experience, these three home bases can be used in ANY crisis, and serve as a theme around which to craft all your messaging.
- *We will not be defined by this event –*

*"Every crisis is a human crisis."*

*-Jim Satterfield  
Firestorm President*

- WHAT DOES DEFINE YOU?
- We will invent the future –
  - WHAT WILL you DO TO MAKE SURE THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN; OR TO FIX THE ISSUE?
- We will embrace the families –
  - WHAT WILL YOU DO TO SUPPORT THOSE IMPACTED BY THE CRISIS?

*"A crisis is not business as usual; it is business as unusual."*  
 -Jim Satterfield  
 Firestorm President

### Message Maps

- A key step in effective crisis communication is the development of clear, concise messages that address stakeholder questions and concerns.
- One of the most powerful tools for preparing clear and concise messages is the Message Map.
- A Message Map consists of detailed and hierarchically organized information that can be used to respond to anticipated questions or concerns.
- **Identify** what you most want the target audience to know.
- **Identify** what you need to do to correct misperceptions or erroneous information.
- **Prepare** three key messages that communicate your overarching (core) talking points.
- **Prepare** supporting message points for each key message.
- **Keep** messages simple and short.
- **Document** in writing the recommended messages and delivery channels/mediums.
- **Practice** delivery.

MESSAGE MAPS							
Before distributing any message, ask yourself "WHY" you are doing it.							
Depending on the Question/Concern, as well as the Stakeholder, one or more key messages may be needed. The order in which you use the Key Messages will vary, depending on the circumstances. When giving a key message, give them one at a time. Do not provide all 3 messages at once. Use them individually to respond to additional questions as needed.							
#	QUESTION/ CONCERN	IMPACT	STAKE- HOLDER*	KEY MESSAGE 1	KEY MESSAGE 2	KEY MESSAGE 3	MEDIUM

It's important to have messages prepared and planned ahead of time. It is, however, vital to be flexible because you never know how people will respond to your messages. You must be able to adapt to reactions.

Put yourself in the shoes of the affected; how would you react to messages? From there, plan your messages ahead of time. Planning keeps the event from escalating to a bigger crisis.

## Attributes of a Crisis

- Escalating Flow of Events
- Insufficient & Inaccurate Information
- Intense Scrutiny
- Loss of Command and Control
- How you respond can create a second crisis
- Brand & reputation are under attack
- *'Every crisis is a human crisis'*
- Silence = Guilt
- Surprise

## The First 24 Hours



- In the first 24 hours, almost everything you learn is wrong.
  - This is why you see retraction and statements being taken back once released.
- Be extremely cautious of any communication during that 24-hour time period.

## The Following Years



- A crisis is not over just because emergency vehicles have left the scene.
- If litigation is involved, the crisis will last for years.
- An event that occurs and is over within seconds or minutes could linger in your organization for years.

- The focus, from the very first response or emergency, must be ***what are the consequences?***

***“Crisis communication has a direct impact on consequence management.”***

*-Jim Satterfield*

*Firestorm President*

## **Why?**

- The objective is to understand and establish the ‘Why’ of all communications. The value of any communication must be weighed against the potential exposure or liability created by these communications.

## **Advantages of having someone on the outside help you handle a crisis:**

Internally, people want to help and be supportive before, during and after a crisis. People who are involved, however, are personally impacted by the events. Even if they were not necessarily hurt or injured, they are tied to that organization.

When organizations use their own internal resources to respond to crises, people do not come back to work because it creates a secondary trauma. You want to protect your employees, you want to help and support them. You want to make sure you have people who are trained and have expertise to be able to help employees and the situation.

Companies like Black Swan have the ability to respond instantly and give support to organizations in need. They ensure you get your organization’s message relayed to the public and stakeholders.

## **Firestorm Virtual Exercise:**

On August 26, 2015, Firestorm will be offering two Virtual Crisis Exercises: [one for businesses](#) and [one for schools](#). Gather your teams in a conference room and experience this valuable, 90-minute Virtual Crisis Exercise led by nationally recognized crisis expert, Jim Satterfield. This no-fee, national exercise will allow participants to experience a crisis environment, learn the how and why of actions and communications and see how other businesses are responding to crises and disaster.

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## **Who should attend?**

Senior Crisis Team Members, Emergency/Safety Teams, Communication Team Members and school leadership who wish to work together more effectively during a crisis or disaster. Or invite your Board to experience decision making in a crisis.

The Interactive Virtual Exercise will include:

- Crisis/Consequence Management Overview
- Exercise Structure, Objectives and Assumptions
- Crisis Scenario: Series of Escalations
- What Do You Know? Interaction
- Hot Wash Self-Review & Crisis Management Maturity Model Analysis
- Next Steps and Resources

If you are interested in participating in the virtual exercise, please contact Firestorm at (800) 321-2219 or by visiting our website at [www.firestorm.com](http://www.firestorm.com).

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Firestorm also encourages you to learn more about Black Swan Solutions by visiting [blackswancrisissolutions.com](http://blackswancrisissolutions.com) or contacting Michelle Colosimo directly at 888-723-2466.

## **Next Steps**

Do you want to know what will happen tomorrow?

Can you afford not to know?

Contact Firestorm to learn how to:

**Align** your plans to best practices.

**Create** your own *Intelligence Network*.

**Schedule** *CRISIS COACH*® training.

Attend any of our other webinars by [registering here](#).

View previous Webinars on our [YouTube Channel](#).

[Download a Brief](#) from previous sessions.

### **LET US HELP YOU IDENTIFY THREATS BEFORE A CRISIS OCCURS**

- Risk of Harm
- Compliance/Legal Risk
- Operating Risk
- Reputation Risk

## **Thanks to Black Swan Solutions**

888-723-2466

Blackswancrisissolutions.com

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## **No-Fee Self-Assessment**

Receive a no-fee, Self-Assessment & Expert Analysis (\$2,500 value).

Link: <http://www.firestorm.com/engage-us/contact-firestorm>

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## **Contact Us**

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