



## CRISIS STOP™

*A crisis conversation with former FEMA Executive, Ken Burris*

*March 2017*

Firestorm Insights  
March 2017





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March 2017

A crisis conversation with former FEMA Director, Ken Burris. [Watch the recorded webinar.](#)

## Session Presenters:



**James W. Satterfield**  
Firestorm President, CEO  
and Co-Founder



**Kenneth O. Burris Jr.**  
Managing Partner – Thornhill, LLC  
Strategic Risk and Crisis Management  
Former FEMA Executive

Firestorm President and CEO, Jim Satterfield, sat down with Ken Burris to discuss all things crisis. Ken, a former FEMA executive, is a Managing Partner at Thornhill, LLC. With decades of experience, Ken brings knowledge in the fields of strategic risk and crisis management, business continuity, crisis communication and emergency response. This paper reviews key points discussed throughout the conversation, including the Firestorm methodology of Crisis STOP™.

## Crisis?

Crises present themselves in a variety of ways, one example is a cyber breach and attack on a company.

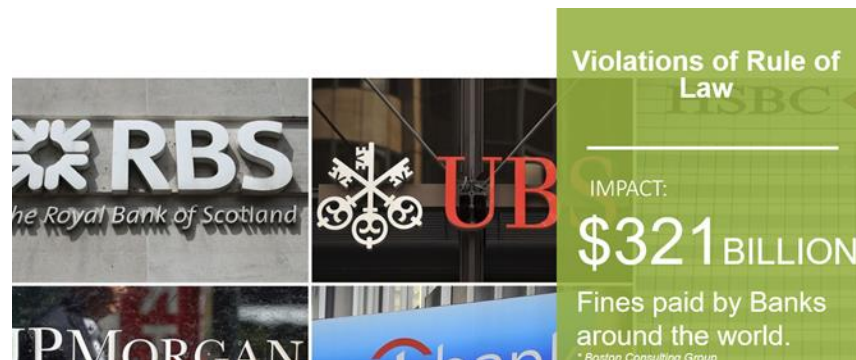
**Example One:** Target endured a security breach which resulted in 40 million credit card details stolen, among other losses.



**Example Two:** When then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, tweeted about a company in a negative way, repercussions should have been expected. President Trump published a tweet in December of 2016 regarding Boeing stating: *“Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control, more than \$4 billion. Cancel order!”*



**Example Three:** Violations of Rule of Law constitute as a crisis. Organizations now want to identify their ‘Wells Fargo Exposure.’ Wells Fargo collected unauthorized fees from millions of users in 2016, resulting in lawsuits against the company. Long-term strategy and reputation is in danger when your company becomes synonymous with legal violations.



Incidents of workplace violence can affect an organization long after the act occurs. The responses and actions taken in the first minutes will define the outcome of the event and future of the organization.

**Example Four:** The state flower of Colorado is a Columbine; however, most associate the word *Columbine* with the school shooting of 1999, not a flower. As this paper progresses, think about what comes to mind when you read the word ‘crisis.’



## When You Think of 'Crisis' What Comes to Mind?



**Crisis:** a crucial or decisive point or situation (*a turning point*) creating a condition of *instability* and/or *danger* leading to an abrupt or decisive change at which **the trend of all future events is determined.**

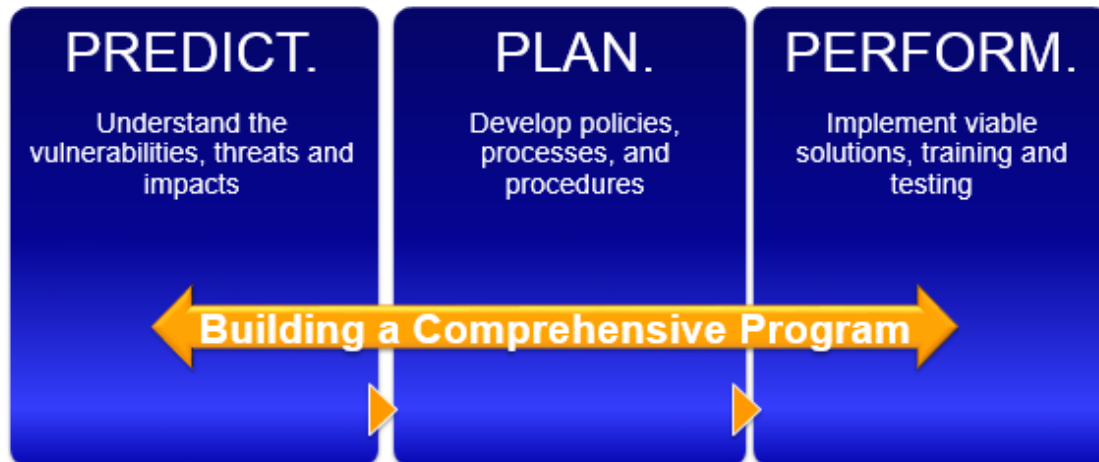
A crisis can occur at any moment. Crises range from an isolated event that is difficult to understand and plan for, to a risk that can be identified through strategic risk analysis and subsequently prevented. Most crises, however, end up being incidents that **are not** planned for by organizations. Therefore, surprising management teams when they occur.

Disaster denial plays a significant role in the lack of crisis planning. Common denial phrases include:

- It won't be so bad.
- I'm smarter than everyone else.
- It's not going to happen to me, it's going to happen to *them*.
- We'll make a difference here.

In crisis management and response, it is not about what happens. What matters is how an organization handles the situation and prevents further crises from occurring. Risks can be identified by using the Firestorm PREDICT.PLAN.PEFORM.® methodology.

### PREDICT. PLAN. PERFORM.® METHODOLOGY



The Firestorm PREDICT.PLAN.PEFORM.® methodology aims to understand vulnerabilities and threats and identify the impacts and triggers. Establishing an open source intelligence program will help detect and monitor those vulnerabilities. It is important to identify the risks, plan action-steps for when an event occurs and perform in real-time during a crisis.

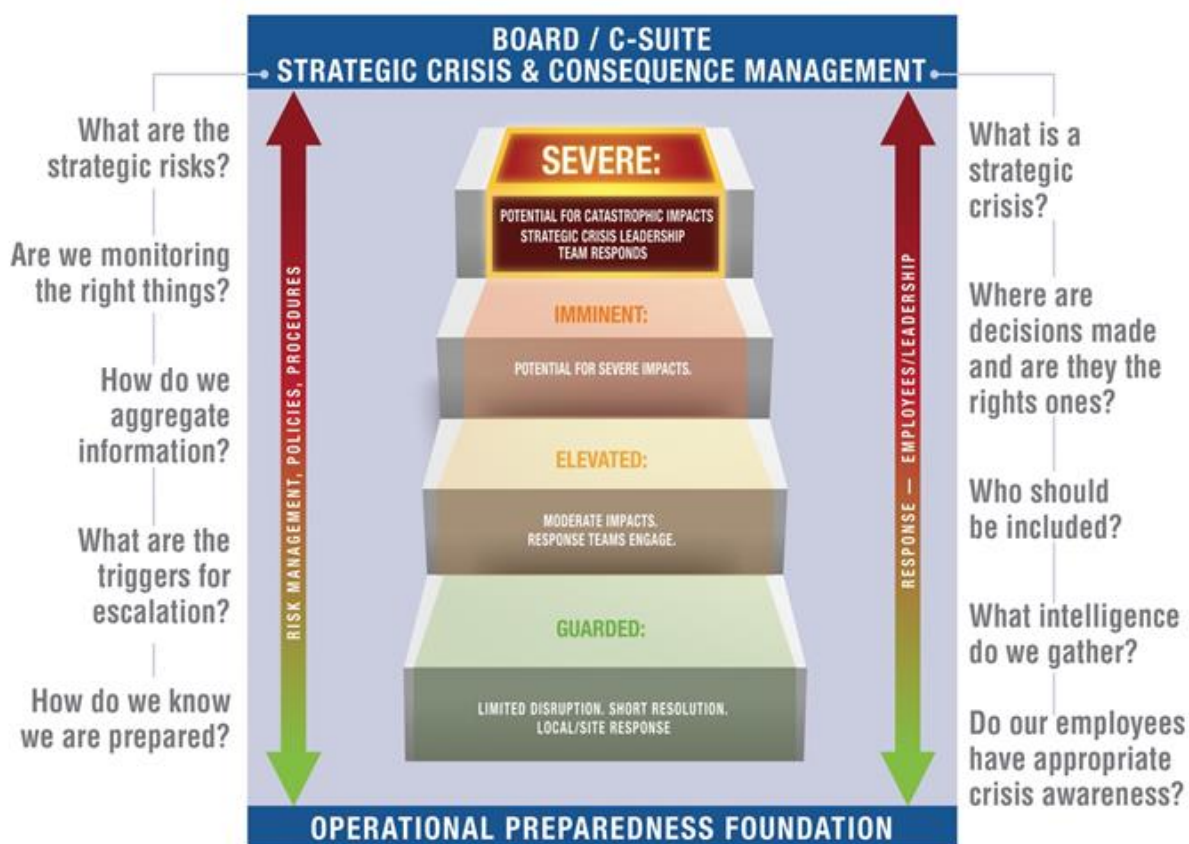
The decisions made, the actions taken and the words communicated during a crisis will determine whether the situation will stabilize or escalate; especially in the first hour.



## Where Do You Start?

Recognize a crisis is ***not*** business as usual. A crisis is business as ***unusual***.

## Strategic Crisis Management



What happens when a severe exposure first surfaces at the local level?

Crises follow a predictable timeline of: Guarded, elevated, imminent and severe. When a crisis occurs, will it be defined by the client, vendor, regulator, first responders, shareholders, c-suite or a different group? Every audience is motivated differently and will view a crisis uniquely. Identify the key audiences and the questions that will be addressed prior to a crisis striking.

One objective in crisis prevention and management is recognizing crises early – in the guarded or elevated levels – when interventions have a greater ability to mitigate or prevent a tragedy from occurring. Identify when crises move through the guarded, elevated and imminent stages. The final stage a crisis can escalate to is severe. Once severe, the survival and future of the organization is in extreme danger.

The time to address the questions in the chart above is **now**– not during a crisis.

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*“What amazes many people is that crises follow a very predictable timeline. Crises progress to the severe level because the problem has not been mitigated within a specific time frame; a time frame that should have been identified early in the predicting process.” – Ken Burris*

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### The First Hours: WRONG



The information learned in the first minutes, hours or even days of a crisis is usually inaccurate or the first version of what people believe to be the truth. Acting upon incorrect facts leads to secondary crises and avoidable consequences.

On April 20, 2010, [The Deepwater Horizon oil spill](#) began in the Gulf of Mexico on the BP-operated Macondo Prospect. Early in the crisis, BP misstated the amount of oil that had leaked. They did not intentionally misstate, but their calculations at the time were incorrect. This error created additional crises for BP.

Understand every crisis presents an escalating flow of events. For a moment, the crisis may appear calm, but the next wave of challenges will arise when additional details are released. The escalation is amplified when the media obtains new insights and focus will surround speculation. The speculation

stems from the insufficient and inaccurate information. Countless times following an attack, for example, reporters or media personalities will speculate who the perpetrators were and the details of the crime. These speculations spread via radio, television and social media. In addition, the media will conduct 'live coverage' of an event with outdated information, or pre-recorded statements. This scenario increases the need to timestamp conversations with the public. For example, 'At 10:00 a.m. EDT this is the situation as we know...'

During and after a crisis, organizations are under intense scrutiny from people who may not be involved in the event. In addition, people who **are** directly involved in the crisis are examining each action taken. These people include senior leadership, board members, public officials, law enforcement, emergency management and students and/or employees. Due to the number of stakeholders involved, loss of command and control may occur. The response of an organization when command and control have been lost can create a secondary crisis. Open source intelligence becomes important during a crisis. Once additional information is discovered via monitoring, adjustments to plans can be applied.

Although the crisis itself may only last seconds, the consequences will last for days, months and years.

### The Following Years

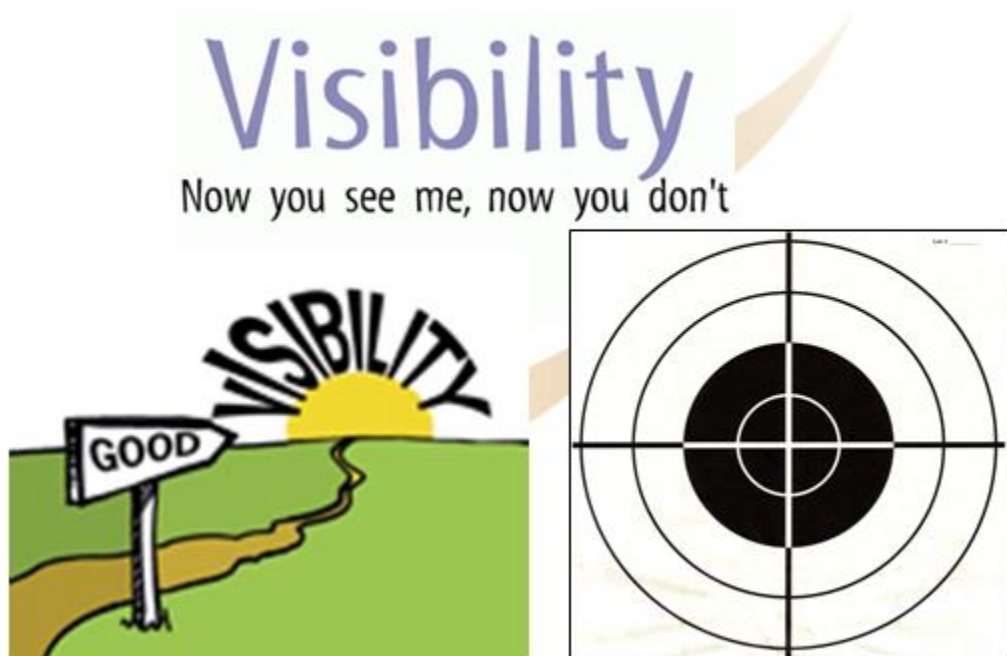


What are the consequences related to every group within your organization? Groups include employees, stakeholders, c-suite, the board, students, the public and many others. Identify the consequences during the planning stage, not as a crisis unfolds.

### Attributes of a Crisis or Disaster

- Escalating flow of events
- Insufficient and inaccurate information
- Intense scrutiny
- Loss of command and control
- How you respond can create a second crisis
- Brand and reputation are under attack
- Every crisis is a human crisis
- Silence = guilt
- Surprise

## Visibility Vulnerability



During a crisis, an organization and its leaders are visible to the public. Every statement will be magnified and analyzed. Although visibility on a school or company is clear, visibility of the crisis is not. If visibility regarding what is happening, or what will happen next in a situation is not transparent, the organization will be at a disadvantage.

### Decision Strategy: Identify the WHY – Actions or Communications

- **Predict** – Discuss what will happen next
- **Plan** – High-level view of plan and process
- **Perform** – Identify what to do/say now
  - **TAKE NOTES** of the **Facts** (Time/Source/Verified) / **Action Priorities** (Assign/Follow-up Time/Confirmed Completion/Pending Future Action)
- **QUICK TEST:** When you find yourself in a crisis:
  - What do you know?
  - Are concerned? If so, about what?
  - What is your strategy/plan?
  - What are you going to **monitor**?
  - What are you going to communicate to whom? How? **WHY**?



*“Transcribe everything that is taking place during a crisis. Take note of what is occurring in the operations room, the board room, the C-Suite and anywhere else decisions are being made. The person transcribing the events needs to be a member of the general counsel’s office. If and when litigation begins, the decision-making process will be questioned. Transcribe the events in order to back up **why** the decisions were made. Every detail cannot be retained to memory; take notes.”*

**-Ken Burris**

## **Crisis Decision Strategy Questions**

- What occurred?
- What is known?
- What will happen next?
- What are you concerned about?
- What is the plan?
- What is monitoring plan?
- What are the metrics?
- What are the three key messages?
- Who is the spokesperson?
- What training have they had?
- What are the threats/risks/vulnerabilities?
- Who are the internal and external parties?
- What are their agendas?
- Engagement by counsel?
- What is the Records Retention Policy to use during and after the crisis?

When discussing what occurred, many people have tunnel vision and focus on what occurred operationally; or what they believe took place. A holistic view of what happened must be used as opposed to tunnel vision because the perspective of a crisis differs from person to person.

## **Initial Crisis Management Actions: PREDICT.PLAN.PERFORM.® Methodology**

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish what occurred</li> <li>• Identify key information contacts</li> <li>• Identify risks and vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Establish command and control</li> <li>• Establish predictive intelligence monitoring</li> <li>• Establish electronic and print media monitoring</li> <li>• Identify brand supporters</li> <li>• Identify brand detractors</li> <li>• Conduct investigation</li> <li>• Identify stakeholders</li> <li>• Create initial messages</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor</li> <li>• Identify spokesperson</li> <li>• Crisis communications and media training</li> <li>• Open 24/7 call center</li> <li>• Establish social media and internet sites</li> <li>• Update message maps</li> <li>• Identify future media triggering events</li> <li>• Establish press release and press conference strategy</li> <li>• Move forward plan</li> <li>• Update project calls</li> <li>• Determine who is going onsite</li> </ul> |
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## Why? Explaining Equals Losing

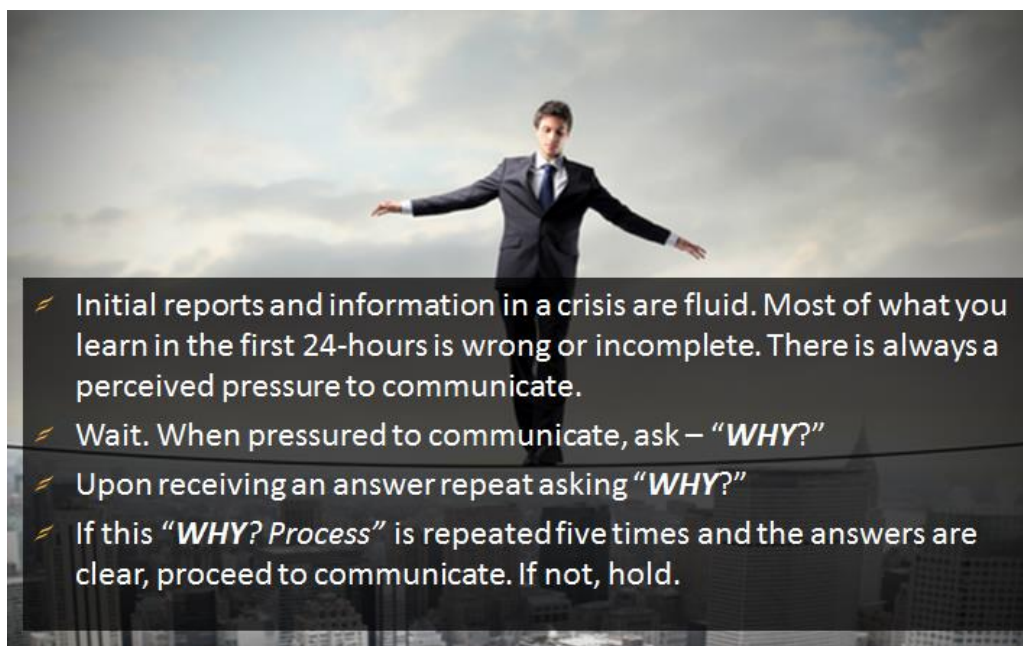
At any stage of a crisis, if you are explaining, you are losing. Prior to a disaster striking, identify the key facts that will be discussed. Within the first 24 hours, a board member or senior leader will suggest to frame the situation and step in front of the discussion by publishing a press release, holding a press conference or conducting an interview. Firestorm encourages you to ask yourself, why? Why communicate at the moment?

## The First 24-Hours Are Crucial

When a crisis unfolds, how do you balance the pressure to take immediate steps to communicate a response and the time needed to properly gather information? Ask yourself 'why' five times. For example, when a senior leader suggests speaking to the media, ask why? If an answer is presented, ask why again. Repeat this sequence five times. If why is answered five times, the appropriate response is to communicate with the audience.

**Why?**

Common practice has shown that around the third 'why,' reasoning becomes more difficult. If the why cannot be answered, the communication is not mission critical. Remember, the initial information learned in a crisis is wrong.



Asking 'why' provides the opportunity to be in control of messaging. Messaging must be framed around the three C's of crisis communications.

### Three C's of Crisis Communications

- **Coordination** - Communicate internally to direct coordination activities regarding response and recovery. Coordination communication must be released quickly. Is an evacuation needed? Is a shelter in place necessary? Messaging regarding life and health safety will be the first to be released.
- **Crisis** - Provide communications to address the potential crisis impacts on brand and reputation.
- **Compliance** - Meet communications responsibilities related to compliance notification to those parties who are impacted (or potentially impacted). These communications serve the dual purposes of notification and remedy actions to mitigate or prevent potential impacts.

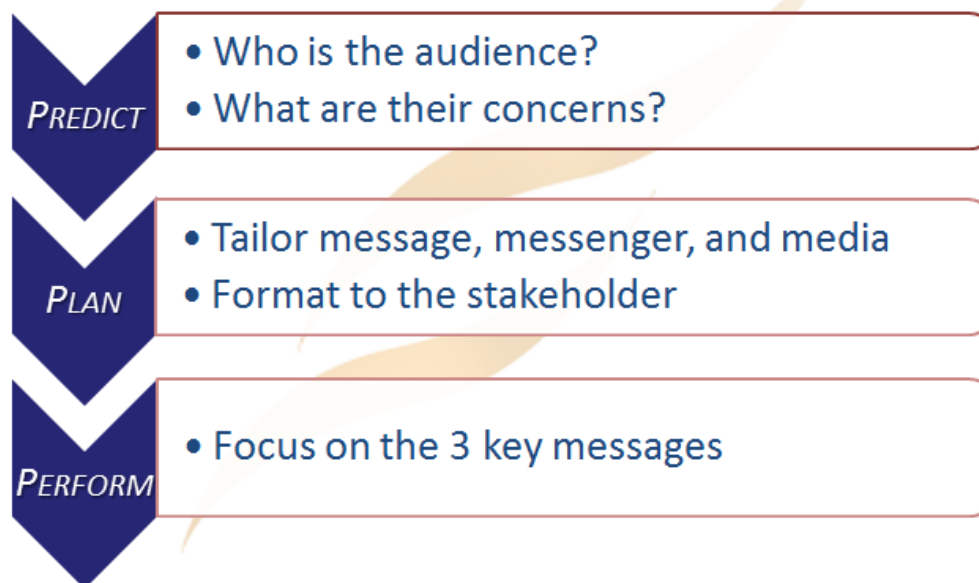
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*“Many companies are blindsided during crises due to lack of understanding compliance requirements. If a company spills 50 gallons of diesel fuel on the side of the roadway, in many states, it is a requirement to notify that state’s EPA. Companies do not know compliance obligations and as a result are fined.”*

– Ken Burris

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### Crisis Communications – Know the Rules



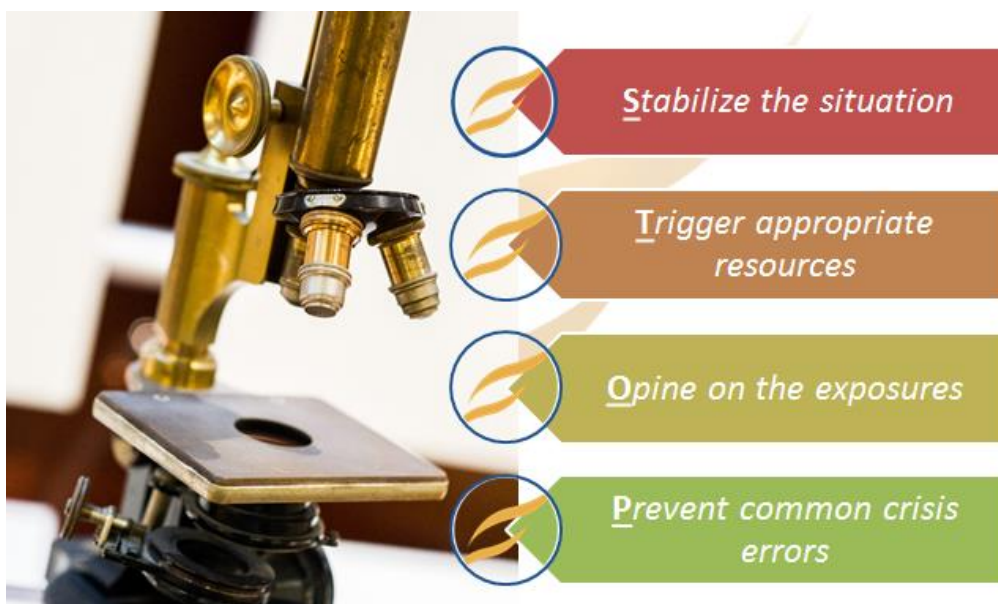
Identify the audience and messages that resonate with the audience. Speaking to a second grader is different than speaking to the CEO of an organization. Listening to social media conversations may glean insights on which key messages to use. Be aware of what is being said online about your organization and the crisis. Utilize open source intelligence monitoring to gain knowledge. If an organization releases

statements about issues that are not present in the eyes of the audience, additional crises will arise. Do not look for the objection and a problem that does not exist.

### What's Next? Consequences – The First Hour

When something dramatic occurs, whether a traditional exposure such as fire or flood, or something else like a brand and reputation exposure, **actions taken in the first minutes**, hours and days **will dramatically affect** the financial, emotional and reputational **outcomes**. When a crisis strikes, think *immediate action* – without rushing to judgement – by using the Firestorm acronym: Crisis STOP™.

### Visibility – CRISIS STOP™



First, stabilize the situation by slowing down; slow down the speed of conversation and lower speech volume. Second, Trigger appropriate resources. Resources may include filing a claim with an insurance company or contacting an attorney, counselor or security. Third, opine on the exposures and the consequences that will arise. Finally, prevent common crisis errors.

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*“Early in a crisis, do not be reluctant to call upon experts. The appropriate resources may not exist organically in an organization; you have to be quick to utilize external expertise.”*

– Ken Burris

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## CRISIS COACH® - The Do's

- **Determine** who is the general. CEO? Board Member? That person must give clear direction.
- **Ask** yourself 'Why' before every communication. Ask 'why now?' or 'why media?'
- **Know** most of what you learn in first 24 hours will be wrong or factually incorrect.
- **Document** media calls, but do not return them.
- **Make** sure all employees know there is only *one* spokesperson. Provide a talking point: *"I am not an authorized spokesperson for the company. I would be happy to take your information and pass it on."*
- **Anticipate**, in the event of injuries/fatality/criminal act, that first responders will take control of scene.
- **Determine** who will interface with first responders.
- **Stick** to themes: home bases and message maps.
- **Monitor** social media.
- **Develop** a 'victim' strategy. Victim's family has an impact on the overall consequences your organization will suffer.
- **Appoint** 24/7 family representative(s). Have back-ups.
- **Clear** all communications with victim(s) family, where possible.
  - Do not ignore the victim's family; whether intentionally or unintentionally. Plan strategies to communicate with families *prior* to a crisis occurring.

## CRISIS COACH® - The Do NOT's

- **Don't say anything.** Tell everyone they are not authorized to speak. STOP.
- **Don't talk through media.**
- **Don't give numbers, dates or times.** Don't fall into a numbers game.
- **Don't put anything in writing.** Meet face-to-face or telephonically where possible. (This doesn't apply to life safety notification and direction.)
- **Don't explain.** When you are explaining, you are losing. You can't change what happened. You can only discuss steps you will take to make sure it doesn't happen again.
- **Don't forget someone important** (donor, regulator, shareholder). Identify ALL constituents.
- **Don't succumb to the pressure of the moment.** If not a life safety issue, time is your friend — initially.
- **Don't turn over any documents or computers** (to law enforcement, regulators) until directed by counsel.
- **Don't take ownership of someone else's grief.**
- **Don't characterize someone else's feelings** or what the loss must mean to that family.
- **Don't talk about how the loss or incident makes you feel.** No word you choose will measure up to what the family would expect you to say. Instead, focus on the family. *"Our thoughts and prayers are with the family."*
- **Don't reply to anything on social media**—at least initially.
- **Don't communicate through a third party.** Communicate directly.

## Recommendations



Ensure your organization has plans in place before a disaster strikes. Not only have written plans, but train employees and test planned procedures. Utilize open-source intelligence network monitoring to identify warning signs and behaviors of concern.

Ask an insurance broker, in advance, to document how an insurance policy will cover specific incidents. This step will identify holes or misunderstandings in insurance plans. Many times, the phrase, “*I bought insurance for that,*” is stated. Plans, however, are not always fully comprehended by organizations, or brokers have not assigned the proper policy for an organization.

Related resources:

- [Behavioral Risk Threat Assessment – How do you stop bullying, suicide and guns before it’s too late?](#)
- [Cyber Crisis 2017 – The Heavyweights Weigh In](#)
- [Livestreaming, Sexting, Cyberstalking and Cyberbullying](#)

## Next Steps

**Predict:**

- Update risk and threat assessment programs.

**Plan:**

- Align crisis management plan with best practices;
- Develop a behavioral risk threat assessment program;
- Finalize a crisis communication plan with message maps.

**Perform:**

- Contact Firestorm for Crisis **STOP™** support;

- Analyze insurance and current response plans;
- Stress test your plan.

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](#).

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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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