



When all hell breaks loose

CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN A SOCIAL MEDIA WORLD

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My experience in a cross border crisis

- ▶ Citigroup USA parent company
- ▶ India's first product software maker
- ▶ Outrageously successful – 300 customers in 100 countries
- ▶ Chairman, CEO International Ops were based out NYC, CEO of Europe based in London and CEO India in Mumbai and led the 6000 employees
- ▶ With 650 million revenue and huge growth potential, i-flex was on its way to acquire “cult company” status
- ▶ A true garage company with highly motivated work force

The Wedding Crisis

- ▶ As a private, small company enjoyed notoriety but it was time to go big
- ▶ i-flex files for IPO – “In the cooling period”
- ▶ One Indian customer – goes to the media – threatens to file a legal suit
- ▶ All the stake holders – Investors, Employees, Government, Customers, Prospects in a tizzy, including competitors. Media was having a field day
- ▶ Do you call of the IPO Plans and revisit? Or Do you plough through and risk a pyrrhic victory?
- ▶ Do you attack, defend or retreat

A Diplomatic Hole

- ▶ The CEO of our Europe subsidiary is arrested. We get tangled in a four nation diplomatic crisis.
- ▶ Crown Police places in Brixton prison, Netherlands issues an extradition request to Britain. India is up in arms with the Dutch, US also at play because of parent company
- ▶ Employees concerned. All stakeholders including Customers anxious. Competitors trying to undermine a vulnerable situation
- ▶ How do you navigate such complex, international, fast moving crises when information is insufficient to make decisions?
- ▶ With stakes so high, what were the short term and medium term solutions we set out to achieve?
- ▶ Strategy, Results and Insights

When you go through Hell, keep going

- ▶ C – Communicate all the time – even if the information is scant
- ▶ R – Respond with emotional intelligence
- ▶ I – Initiate multiple channels of communication
- ▶ S – Soothe all fears, customers, employees, prospects – even competitors
- ▶ I – Involve all the Big Guns – Legal, Executive, Board level
- ▶ S – Stick to track record

Lessons learnt

- ▶ Crisis, unlike lightning can strike at the same place
- ▶ Crisis Management Plans are as critical as your Business Plans
- ▶ Communication plans even if they are sketchy are essential
- ▶ Culture determines Outcomes – Cross cultural nuances pose problems
- ▶ Hire pessimists to plan and Optimists to execute
- ▶ Templates are key

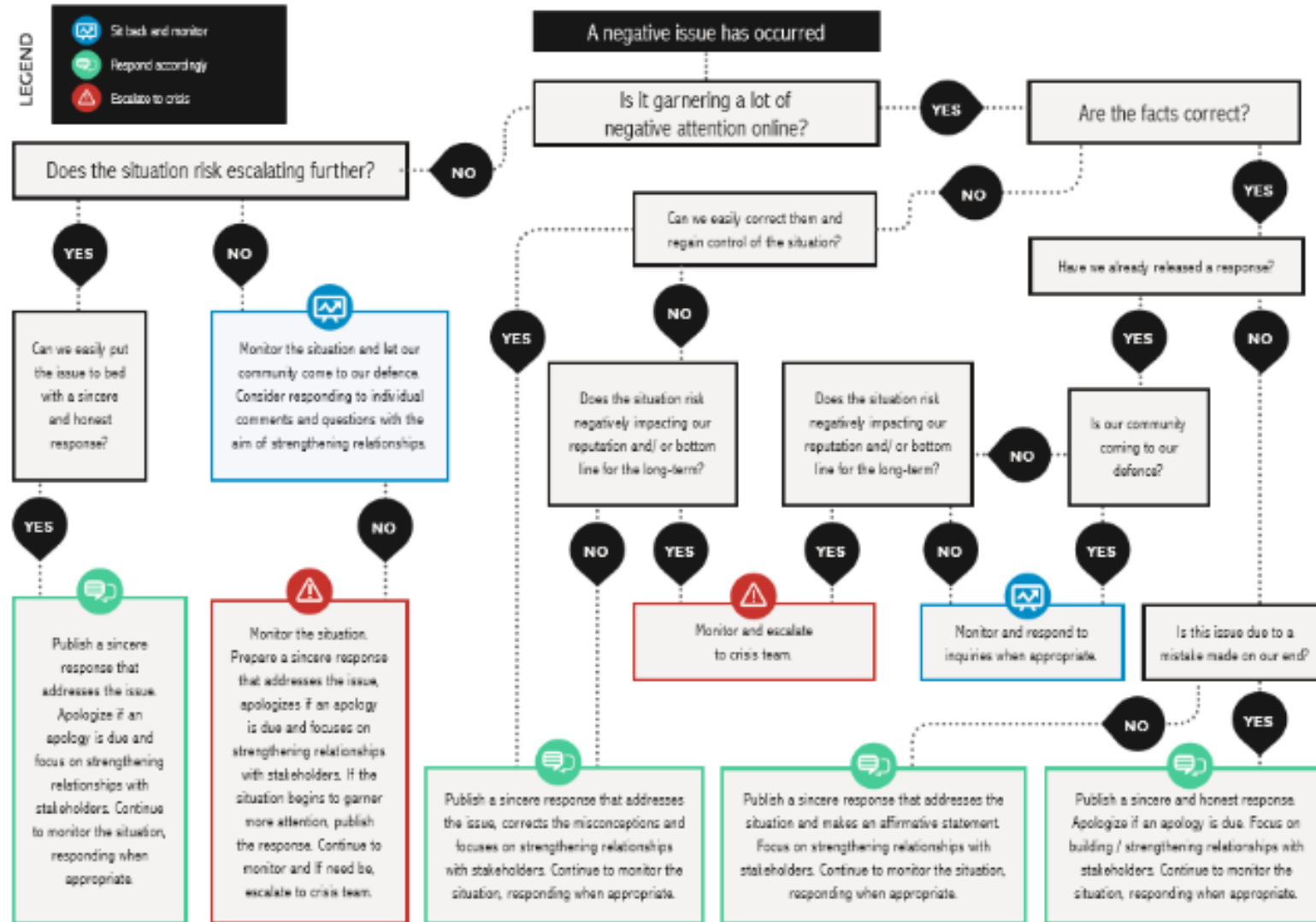
Tips to manage social media

- ▶ Truth always – Speed is everything
- ▶ Stakeholders care about what is being done – Not outcomes
- ▶ Crisis test a brand's resilience -We got scarred but not burnt
- ▶ Put the top guns in front – No one want's spin
- ▶ Acknowledge, Apologize and Act - Remove emotion from the dialogue with disarming language

It can happen to you

- ▶ Identity theft, hacking of your accounts
- ▶ Protect your reputation – your professional aura
- ▶ Digital imprints are forever – Anger is hard to cool in cyber space
- ▶ Try humor and sarcasm – Classier responses will get you far
- ▶ Life's too short to waste on revenge – Tread light, go fast!

Flow Chart



Thank You

- ▶ I am on LinkedIn
- ▶ Tweet @sunilrobert