

# THINK THIS CRISIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT? THINK AGAIN.

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When a crisis happens, many companies do not actually make mistakes, but they often generate much more severe crises due to inappropriate communications. Those enterprises often think to themselves, “I didn’t do anything wrong, so I don’t have to take the responsibility.” Because of this mind frame, they miss the crucial timing for delivering the proper messaging with a sense of responsibility. In other words, they usually argue that they are not the ones to be blamed, and they don’t understand why the media keeps asking them for explanations of the issues generated. But instead of taking an internally driven approach, let’s evaluate crisis management through a consumer-centric perspective.

When a crisis happens, general consumers and outside audiences don’t expect to hear enterprises arguing about whether the company is right or wrong. Rather, they hope that the organization will take the responsibility to resolve the concerns weighing on its consumers’ minds. Food safety issues and online wrong-price tagging issues are classic examples of problems where enterprises often dodge bullets.

Many enterprises that face a crisis portray themselves as victims. A food-packaging manufacturer whose food is found to be contaminated usually claims that its upstream suppliers must be blamed because the problem lies in the raw materials. However, from a consumer’s perspective, although the source of the problem is not you, you should have been my gatekeeper and examined your product carefully because you earn money from my pockets. Consumers do not care about whether you are a victim or not, but they care about how this issue will affect them and what the company’s solutions are. For example, if the food product is contaminated, the food company should take down the products from the shelves as soon as possible. Similarly, the seller should still acknowledge an order even if it has an incorrect price tag in order to keep its promise to the consumer.

All in all, no matter whether you are right or wrong, you are responsible for taking actions to investigate the problem and to resolve consumers’ concerns at any cost as long as the crisis that happened is related to your organization. The key to winning back consumers’ hearts depends on the company’s attitude toward the crisis, which may also become a turning point to make business better. After all, a crisis is also an opportunity.

Take, for example, a mineral water company that is doubted for its product quality. The company claims that the issue is slander raised by its competitors. Rather than save face, the company ends up drawing much more criticism because consumers don’t care about the business competition in the industry. Rather, they only care whether the company’s mineral water product is drinkable. If the company thinks it was blackmailed, as long as it shows a sense of

responsibility (for instance, by asking the authorities to examine its products again to resolve the problem or hosting a public cause-marketing event to show concerns about water quality), its actions will not only elevate the company’s prestige and favorability among media, but also show how the company cares about consumers in order to keep its brand promise. Through this approach, the company can turn a crisis into an opportunity.

A sense of responsibility, no matter whether a company is right or wrong, is the exact attitude that consumers always expect a company to demonstrate toward a crisis. ■



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