

# A GUIDE TO BEING MEDIA SAVVY

By Ryan Jacobson

## Best Practices to Safeguard Your Public Image

One of the most valuable assets your business controls is its public image. But between online 'review' websites, around-the-clock press coverage and countless social media platforms, your brand and reputation are harder to manage than ever before. Sufficient preparation and alliance with an experienced media professional are essential to combatting unfounded attacks or negative publicity.

### What "Situations" Require A Rapid Response

- Federal Investigations (OSHA, SEC, FDA, CDC, EEOC, IRS)
- Local Government Audits, Health Inspections and Recalls
- Harassment and Discrimination Claims
- Class Action Lawsuits and other Litigation
- Foodborne Illness and/or Adulterated Food Products
- Employee/Partner Misconduct including Fraud and Embezzlement
- Data Security Breaches including Loss or Release of Confidential Information
- Other Public Scandals involving Key Personnel
- Political Opinions or Social Commentary

### When Is It Time To Strategize?

**When...**an internal "situation" has a likelihood of public exposure via litigation, the press, social media, review sites or word of mouth;

**When...**public exposure of that "situation" could reasonably impact your company's brand, reputation, and/or seriously interfere with operations; and

**When...**details (accurate or inaccurate) could spread to other employees, affiliate vendors, customers or investors.

## DO'S + DON'T'S

### A CHECKLIST TO COMBAT NEGATIVE PUBLICITY

- Anticipate your company's risks, educate your workforce, communicate policies in writing and reinforce during training.
- Realize that not all incidents elevate to "crisis level."
- Carefully consider and designate a company spokesperson.
- Lawyer up (and coordinate with any existing marketing/PR Professional).
- Employ a "Triage" process: Prioritize Discovery, Communication, Solution, Accountability, and Recovery.
- Stay composed and consistent with your message.
- Expect and plan for Media Coverage and Requests for Comment.
- Monitor company website, review sites, social media and press.
- Lay low and "weather the storm" after the first wave of publicity.
- Address the matter internally and externally with succinct, carefully crafted, consistent statements.
- Use the opportunity to educate, not debate.
- Do NOT respond directly to critical posts or engage in a back-and-forth on social media or in the comments section of any article.
- Do NOT hide behind the phrase "No Comment" or become unavailable or non-responsive.
- Do NOT post clarifications or updates; it will only serve as fuel to a headline you want to be yesterday's news.
- Do NOT consult people outside of your trusted circle.
- Do NOT give in to emotion or offer up your personal perspectives.
- Do NOT speak off the cuff.
- Do NOT be reactive – be proactive.
- Do NOT issue a denial before you have all of the facts.
- Do NOT try and discredit the accuser, or seek to minimize the claim as false or blown out of proportion.
- Do NOT reiterate the allegations in your statement.
- Do NOT speculate or assume facts; perform a thorough investigation and recognize there are 3 sides to every story.
- Do NOT retaliate against the accuser.



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