



DON'T MAKE IT WORSE: Tips for Working with the Media in a Crisis

1. **Be accessible to the media so they won't go to other (unreliable) sources.** Return calls, respond quickly, meet their deadlines. Don't treat the reporter like the enemy. Don't play favorites.
2. **Stick to the facts.** Say what you know and don't know. Don't speculate. Don't inflate, but also don't downplay. Ask regulatory agency to share their statement with you, in advance if possible. Don't repeat a negative, even to deny it. Don't say "no comment" or offer something "off the record."
3. **Have the owner or GM speak in the most acute situations.** Sends the message "I care and I am accountable." Remind the receptionist/front desk staff they should not speak to reporters but instead should direct them to the spokesperson.
4. **Show you care.** Be professional but don't be afraid to show emotion (distinct from admitting wrongdoing). Responding to emotionally heavy questions with facts alone is not enough. Show compassion and empathy.
5. **Work as a team with law enforcement.** Know when law enforcement should be the sole source of information. Ask them to assist in communicating your key messages – cooperating fully, thoughts with the family, etc.
6. **Tell the truth.** Report your own bad news. Own up to your mistake and offer an apology. If you lie to a reporter, it only creates another story.
7. **Tell it all at once.** Better than in multiple stories. If you don't know, say so and offer to get the information. Don't share information about people. Don't automatically send out a press release – may make it seem like a bigger story than it is.
8. **Provide sufficient evidence of statements.** Enlist credible third-party experts and allies when appropriate - health department, regulatory agency, fire and police, and trade associations.
9. **Pull advertising and social media promotions as appropriate.**
10. **Keep managers and employees informed to avoid panic and rumors.**
11. **Take action to correct the problem.** Make it visual if possible.
12. **Prepare for coverage on the anniversary.** Provide updates rather than waiting for media to call.
13. **Don't get pulled in to someone else's crisis.** Simply decline the interview.