

# UNPACKING 2020:

## Lessons Learned in Crisis Communications

Prepared for clients of:



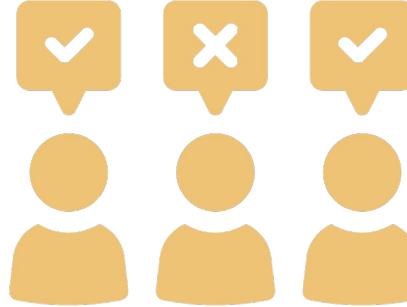
MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

# NICE TO MEET YOU



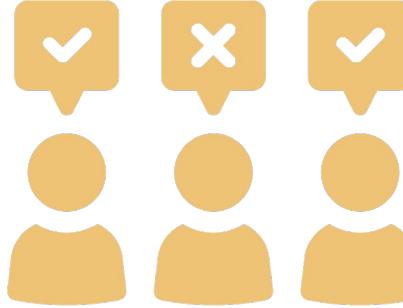
LORI RICHARDS  
CEO

# POLL:



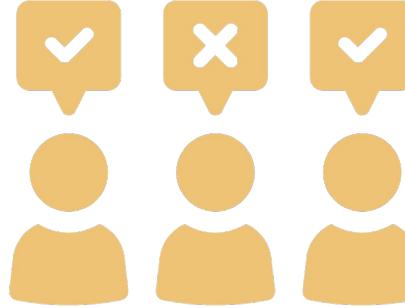
DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A CRISIS  
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

# POLL:



IF A REPORTER WALKED INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION  
TODAY, DO YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE ABOUT HOW IT  
WOULD BE HANDLED?

# POLL:



IF SOMEONE MADE ACCUSATIONS OR DAMAGING STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION ON TWITTER, WOULD YOU FIND OUT ABOUT IT WITHIN A DAY?



# ABOUT US

TEAM MUELLER



WE ARE A  
**360°**  
COMMUNICATIONS FIRM

AT OUR CORE. WE ARE STRATEGIC PROBLEM SOLVERS

# CAPABILITIES



MEDIA TRAINING



MEDIA RELATIONS



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS



PUBLIC AFFAIRS & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS



SOCIAL MEDIA



CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DIGITAL + MARKETING



# CLIENTS

A SAMPLING OF WHO WE WORK WITH



# AGENDA



Ask questions as we go using the Q&A feature at the bottom of your screen.



The importance of planning



What to do when a crisis hits



Lessons learned: case studies

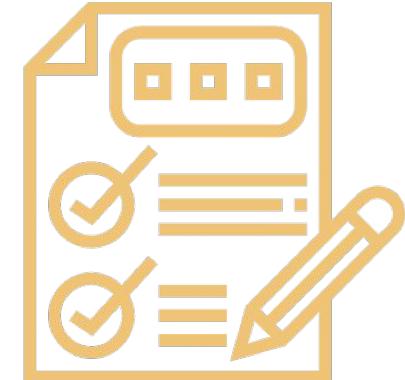
Resources available at [muellercommunications.com/league](http://muellercommunications.com/league)

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

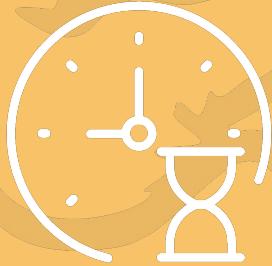
# HOW DID YOU RATE?

## ANY “NO” RESPONSE IS AN AREA OF VULNERABILITY.

- If you do have a crisis plan in place, make sure:
  - It is up-to-date
  - Team members are ready
- Put two simple tools in place:
  - Free media/social monitoring
  - Media protocol



# CRISIS



Crisis severity is tied to the “lead-time” you will have in preparing your response and the likelihood that a member of the media will show up on site.

# SEVERITY

## LEVEL 1: MOST SEVERE

Workplace homicide, accidental workplace death, serious injury, violence

## LEVEL 2: SEVERE

Major damage, building accident, weather disaster

## LEVEL 3: MODERATE

Breach of confidential information, personal / sexual assault allegations, major burglary

## LEVEL 4: MILD

Scandal, malicious rumor or slander, vandalism / theft

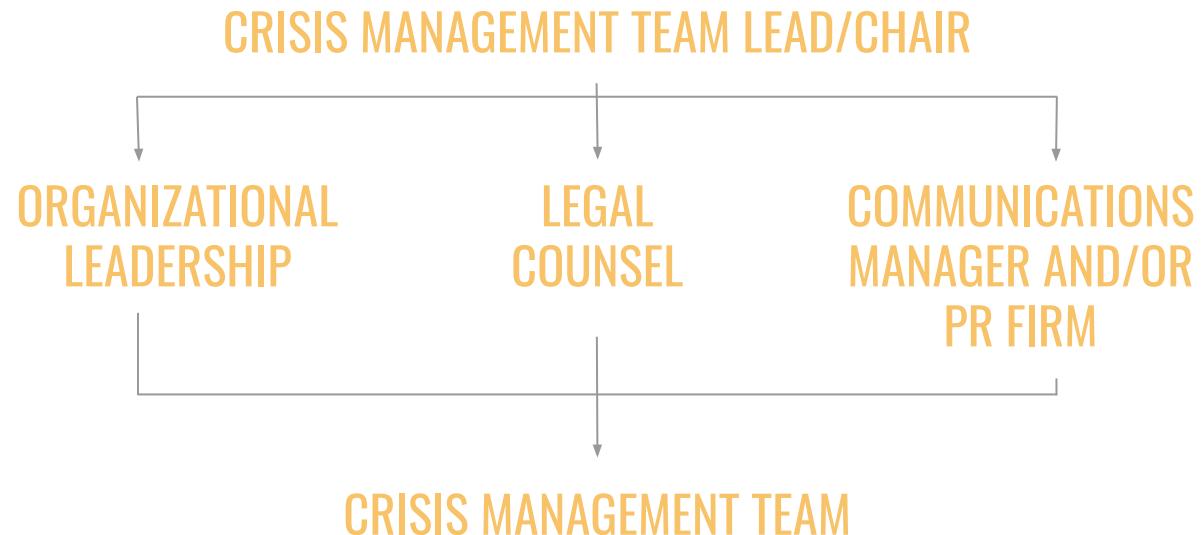
## LEVEL 5: LOW

Delay in delivery of services / products, leave of absence, loss of equipment

A vertical decorative element on the left side of the slide features a stylized, abstract orange brain graphic. Overlaid on the brain is a white warning sign icon, consisting of a yellow triangle with a black exclamation mark inside, enclosed in a white border with a dashed top edge.

# CONTACT TREE

CRISIS SITUATION OCCURS



# OTHER

# PLANNING ELEMENTS



Template  
communications  
materials



Stakeholder  
contact  
information

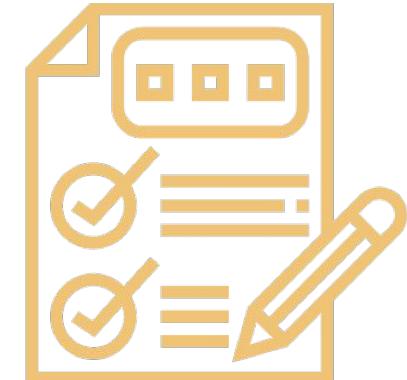


Account information

# HOW DID YOU RATE?

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# MEDIA PROTOCOL



A media protocol is not mean to stifle an employee's right to speak to the media, but is designed to ensure that comments made to the media are timely and accurate.

Media inquiries must be responded to in a way that is clear, concise, accurate and timely to help ensure the media reports accurate information and offers a balanced view of the issue.

To ensure an accurate and timely message, statements should *only* be made by designated and trained individuals.

## **What to do if you are approached by the media:**

- Ask for the names and affiliations of the individual
- Say: "I am sorry, the person you should speak with is not available at this time. Please give me your name and number and the appropriate person will get back to you promptly."
- Report the contact to the appropriate spokesperson

Download a sample media protocol at [muellercommunications.com/tricor](http://muellercommunications.com/tricor)



# SOCIAL MEDIA

## Key Considerations:

- How are you monitoring social media mentions?
- Do you have a protocol in place for when and how to respond?
- Who has control of your platforms?
- Are you taking simple steps to protect your accounts from hijacking?

Download a sample media protocol at [muellercommunications.com/tricor](http://muellercommunications.com/tricor)

# QUESTIONS?

Use the Q&A Function to Submit Questions



# WHEN A CRISIS HITS



# CRISIS IN 2020

## THE COVID-19 CRISIS

- Safety, flexibility, empathy

## BLACK LIVES MATTER AND SOCIAL UNREST

- Is your position genuine, and consistent with your policies and actions in the past?

## NO WIN SITUATIONS

- Can't we support both teachers AND parents?

## “CANCEL CULTURE”

- What is it, and what you can do



# LEADERSHIP MATTERS

- Surviving the first hours of a crisis or high publicity incident sets the tone
- When poorly handled, it can destroy reputations
- Handling a situation insensitively or not at all can escalate visibility, costs or damage
- How you handle a crisis has a residual effect on every aspect of your reputation – now and in the future
- Outsiders, not you, will control the perceptions of how you handled the situation



# WHAT TO EXPECT



Uncertainty is high and  
information is in high demand



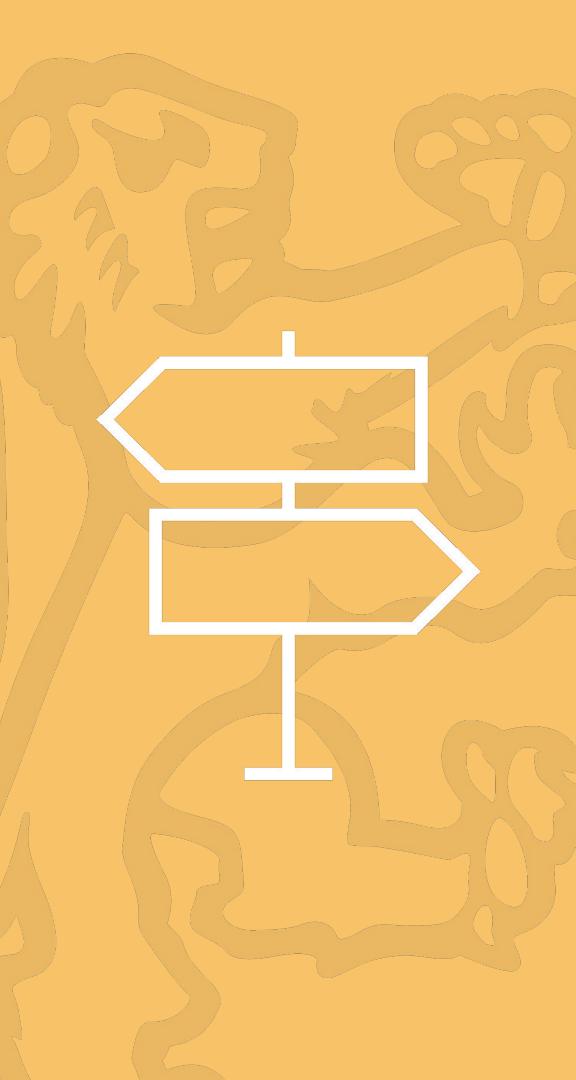
The “facts” may change rapidly



Resources are directed away  
from day-to-day operations



Stakeholder trust is threatened



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Put people first
- Respond quickly and accurately
- Show empathy and compassion
- Be as transparent as possible
- Become the trusted source of information – let all audiences hear from us first
- When appropriate, follow the authorities' lead
- If you don't have well-articulated positions on COVID-19, Diversity/Equity/Inclusion and other unique challenges to face your organization in 2020, develop them NOW!



# WHAT TO DO

## COMMUNICATION DO'S

- Show concern
- Speak with one voice
- Take charge quickly
- Be open and responsive
- Stick to the facts
- Share important information in simple, declarative sentences
- Keep your cool
- Correct your mistakes
- Address the perception
- Clearly state actions being taken



# WHAT NOT TO DO

## COMMUNICATION DON'TS

- Say “no comment”
- Speculate, predict or answer hypothetical questions
- Give long, rambling answers
- Lose your temper
- Get into a debate
- Say anything “off the record”
- Evade, cover up or block access to other sources of information
- Try to answer a question if you don’t know the answer
- Assume anything

# THE CHANGING MEDIA

Journalists are  
**OVERWHELMED**  
& **OVERWORKED**

GLOBALLY,  
**33%** OF  
JOURNALISTS  
Publish  
**7+** ARTICLES  
a week

JOURNALISTS ARE MAKING  
METRICS-BASED DECISIONS

**65%**

agreed that the availability of  
audience metrics like views and  
engagement has changed the way  
journalists evaluate their stories

# QUESTIONS?

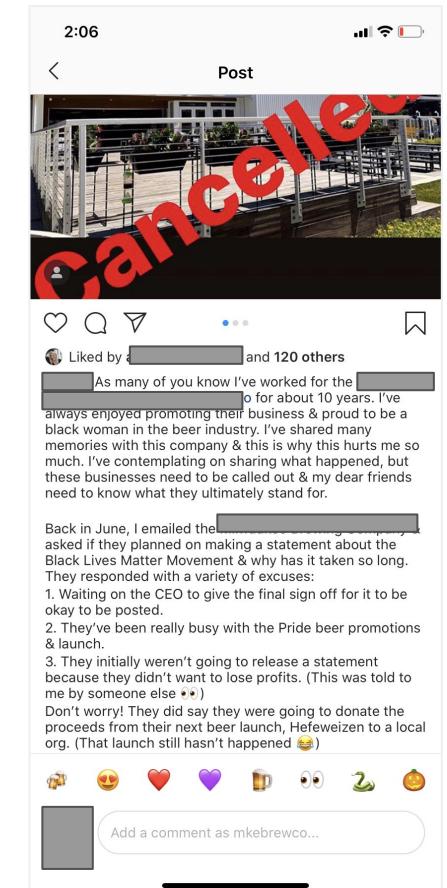
Use the Q&A Function to Submit Questions

# CASE STUDIES

# ISSUE:



# “CANCEL CULTURE”





# THE APPROACH

- Identify avenues of communication
  - Existing relationships: leadership, colleagues, mentors
- Monitor social and traditional media
- Put protocols in place
- Articulate positions
  - Key messages on D/E/I
  - Proactive effort to refute these claims online
- Diffuse traditional media investigation

## THE GOAL:

Diffuse the issue in person and online before it grew. Correct misinformation and try to repair relationships.



# THE RESULTS

## The bottom line:

This was not an issue of ill-intent, rather of poor communication from an industry that was struggling to stay alive, in addition to struggling with D/E/I issues.

No traditional media coverage ran, and we provided the foundation to minimize reputational damage and rebuild relationships

# ISSUE:



# NO WIN SITUATION

The year #2020 has put many organizations at the center of no win situations and are in situations where they feel the need to “choose sides.”

- School districts: teachers vs. parents
- Municipalities: police vs. citizens
- Manufacturers: employees (supply) vs. customers (demand)

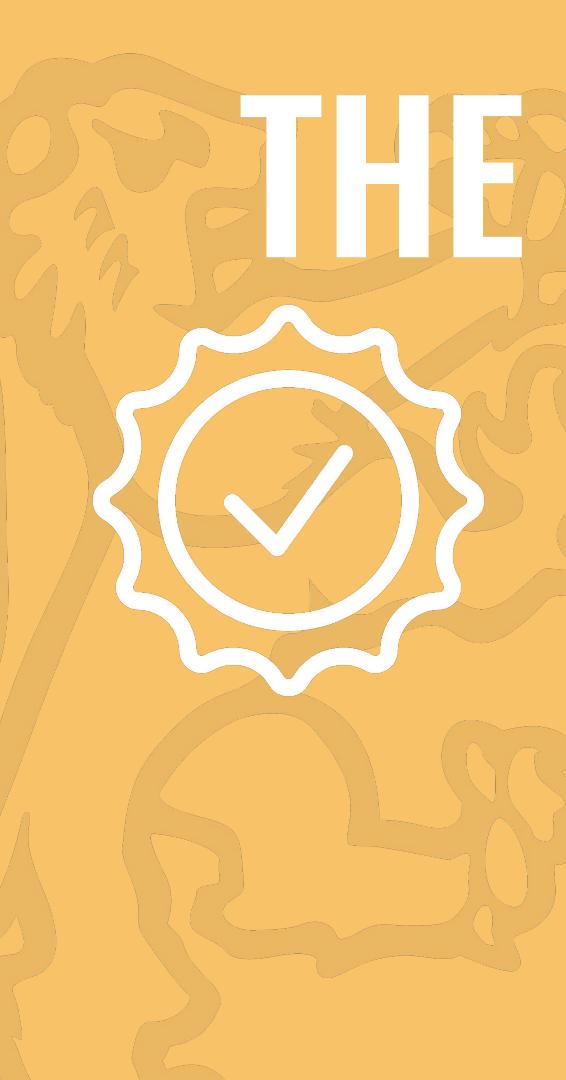


# THE APPROACH

- **Be the referee.**
  - Rather than take a side, can you be the trusted third party source of information?
- **There is a need for clarity and facts right now.**
  - Use your leadership platform to:
    - Provide access and data regarding COVID spread/risk within schools (school districts)
    - Explain policy and procedure, like the role of Police and Fire Commissions (municipal organizations)
    - Post your COVID policies and safeguards on your website and update regularly, making the case for transparency (applies to anyone).

## THE GOAL:

Change the game. Seeing this as traditional “offense vs. defense” puts you in a position to have to choose.



# THE RESULTS

- Leaders receiving recognition for leadership.
- Posting and updating COVID-19 policies, procedures and safeguards provides a clear, timestamped “trail” to employees, the public and the media to point to if there are accusations that an organization isn’t doing enough or the right things to protect safety.

# QUESTIONS?

Use the Q&A Function to Submit Questions

Learn more at:  
[muellercommunications.com/dspn](http://muellercommunications.com/dspn)