

DID YOU KNOW?

Companies that have successfully dealt with public relations disasters have done so by immediately responding to criticism. It is always better to directly engage with angry customers, otherwise your organisation will be seen as hiding the truth rather than stepping forward, acknowledging fault and working to correct it.



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Is Your Business Learning From Adverse Events?

Adverse events such as accidents, losses and disasters are always learning opportunities. Neglecting to glean anything positive from adverse events—such as strategies for avoiding them in the future—condemns you to repeat your mistake. It is not enough to realise your organisation's shortcomings that contributed to the adverse event—you must also learn from them.

For example, after any property damage or loss, your organisation should consider improving the physical standards of security. Or if there was a fire on your premises, you should undertake a thorough review of your fire protection standards, systems and procedures.

Learning from adverse events should extend beyond just the losses involving physical damage to your company. If a worker suffered an injury, research additional actions that could prevent a recurrence.

Taking these preventive measures helps keeps your employees safe and your costs down.

After a loss, regulatory bodies may require you to implement preventive actions. Show regulators that you take risk management seriously by identifying risk control improvements and implementing new plans before you are required. Not only does this confirm your dedication to risk management, health and safety, it can also help with the insurance renewal process.

Learning from adverse events convinces everyone—regulators and employees alike—that your organisation looks ahead, not behind.



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Handling Public Relations Disasters

Public relations disasters tend to sneak up on organisations—people do not expect to deal with a public relations disaster until they are in the throes of one. Your organisation will need to not only resolve the issue that sparked the crisis, but also handle the fallout stemming from news of the crisis. This could include responding to disgruntled customers or investigative reporters.

Public relations employees who are accustomed to doing little more than crafting marketing press releases may find themselves ill-equipped to deal with an onslaught of tough questions and false information from the public and the media.

The best way to handle a public relations crisis is by planning your response beforehand so you make sure you are never caught off guard.

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Are You Taking Advantage of Employee Feedback?

Soliciting employee feedback can be tedious but revelatory—especially if you have neglected taking advantage of employee feedback until now. Listening to your employees' opinions on important topics such as workloads, management structures and job security comes with numerous benefits.

By understanding how employees feel about certain key issues in your workplace that directly impact motivation and performance, you have a clear starting point to begin improving perception.

If employees are left to their duties, with no opportunities for voicing their opinions or improving conditions, they can quickly turn pessimistic. And this negatively affects job performance. Employees with a positive connection to their job, their colleagues and their employers are more motivated, more productive and happier.

By soliciting feedback, you gain an insider's perspective and the knowledge necessary to transform your group of disgruntled employees into a cadre of valuable, excited employees. Employee feedback can help you achieve these benefits, and more:

- An improved company reputation that attracts the best employees
- Reduced number of grievances
- Fewer absences
- Lower employee turnover
- Better relationships between co-workers
- Boosted productivity

But receiving honest, constructive employee feedback is not simply asking employees how they feel—it is much more than that. Follow these five steps to ensure you get the most effective feedback possible:

1. Be approachable and thank employees for their insights.
2. Keep asking—pursue feedback and remain constant in your pursuit.
3. Eat with your employees to encourage conversation.
4. Stay genuine—employees will only offer insight if they trust you.
5. Follow up with employees to ensure you are hearing their needs.

By maximising your employees' potential, you can gain invaluable benefits to your business.

Handling Public Relations Disasters

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Start by establishing a crisis communication team responsible for creating and executing the crisis response and managing the situation as it unfolds.

Once the team is assembled, prepare a list of contacts—such as reporters, investors and business partners—who should be notified during a crisis. Keep this list in an easily accessible location, along with contact information for your internal crisis team members, for immediate reference.

A crisis communication plan is only effective if you vigilantly maintain, update and rehearse it. Without constant readiness, you risk succumbing to the fate of some of these companies, now infamous for their public relations gaffes.

- **British Petrol** invited questions from its Twitter followers in 2013 over a price hike. The result? Almost 16,000 comments—mostly vitriolic—criticising the company for its perceived greed.
- **Tesco**, while in the midst of its horse meat scandal, tweeted a message to its followers saying 'we're off to hit the hay'. The tweet quickly went viral, followed by a barrage of responses containing criticism and terrible horse puns.