

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

CRISIS PLANNING WORKSHEET

Built for the reality of reputational risk.
Designed to help you lead through it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Reputation isn't lost in the crisis. It's lost in the lead-up when risks go unspoken, protocols are untested, and stories are told by others. This worksheet helps you:

- Name the uncomfortable truths before others do.
- Strengthen your proof points and comms armoury.
- Empower your people and community before it hits the headlines.

Better to be prepared and not need it, than need it and not be prepared.



STEP 1: GET REAL

RISK EXPOSURE & REPUTATIONAL READINESS

This exercise is a reality check. It's where you name the things people usually avoid: the elephants in the room, the fragile optics, the practices that feel fine inside the industry but would trigger outrage outside it. Don't wait for social media to surface your reputational blind spots. Think in headlines - not hypotheticals.

1. What incident are we most afraid will become a headline or go viral?

2. What historical incidents could be weaponised if they happened again?

3. What operational practices feel 'normal' but would shock the average person without context or education?

4. What is the most vulnerable part of our public image: welfare, integrity, finance, behaviour, transparency?

5. Where are we most at risk of being misunderstood?

6. What might a critic, activist, or journalist say about us tomorrow, and would we have a comeback?

7. Who in our system might be exposed to criticism if things go wrong?

8. Are there any truths we're avoiding because they're uncomfortable?

9. What are the biggest 'don't talk about it' topics internally?

10. What would the average person assume if they knew nothing and saw a single photo or headline about us?

STEP 2: GET ORGANISED

SYSTEMS, SPOKESPEOPLE & PROOF POINTS

Know your playbook before you need it. A strong response isn't built in the moment; it's built in advance. This step maps your readiness: who speaks, what proof you can show, what questions you'll face, and where the gaps still are. Because when pressure hits, you fall to the level of your preparation.

1. Who leads our response if a crisis unfolds? Do they have training and support?

2. Do we have a chain of command and approvals for emergency comms?

3. What pre-approved content (statements, graphics, data) can we deploy immediately?

4. Do we have video content or real-life visuals to show what happens behind the scenes?

5. Have we pre-briefed key subject matter experts on how to speak under pressure?

6. Have we identified our most credible external voices — and built trust with them ahead of time?

7. Are our internal teams aligned on language, facts, and values?

8. Have we mapped out which media, influencers, or stakeholders will need direct outreach during a crisis?

9. What policy documents, research, or reforms demonstrate our credibility?

10. Do we know where our communications gaps are — and do we have a plan to fill them before we need them?

STEP 3: GET LOUD AND PROUD

PREVENTATIVE AWARENESS

You can't be invisible until there's a crisis then expect people to trust you. This step shifts you from passive to proactive. Make your progress visible, your values consistent, and your people equipped to speak with confidence before the narrative is written without you.

1. What stories are we telling now that show change, care, or accountability in action?

2. What words, phrases, and proof points do we want our staff and supporters to know by heart?

3. How are we activating our community (participants, fans, partners) to speak up with us?

4. What behind-the-scenes content are we sharing to build visibility and trust?

5. Who are our everyday ambassadors; — grooms, vets, rehomers, stewards — and are we showcasing them?

6. What media or digital platforms are best suited to show our credibility and care?

7. How are we reusing success stories and reforms to create content with long tail value?

8. What positive engagement campaigns can we run now to fill the lolly jar before it's needed?

9. Have we created messaging toolkits (bridging phrases, cheat sheets) for internal or external supporters?

10. What future perception do we want to earn — and what stories will get us there?
