SCORE ///
FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

CHECKLIST:

Crisis Communications Planning

During an emergency, you and your employees must be able to communicate effectively, both internally and externally. The following checklist will help you develop a communications strategy you can use during any crisis situation.

PHASE 1: DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

☐ **Start with a general risk assessment:**
  ○ Identify the top threats to your business and any vulnerabilities.
  ○ Analyze what business functions are critical to your operations.
  ○ Identify the resources needed to protect those functions, including people, processes and technology, and the communications needs associated with each.

☐ **Establish a crisis management team and choose someone in that group to be responsible for communications.**

☐ **Develop and regularly update an emergency contact list for all your employees that includes:**
  ○ Home phone
  ○ Cell phone
  ○ Personal email
  ○ Emergency contact information (family member)

☐ **Set up an alert notification system that can communicate to employees, stakeholders and clients via a variety of methods; test it regularly.**

☐ **Ensure that employee, vendor and supplier mobile phone communications don't rely on a single cellular network. Use multiple carriers and train all critical personnel on how to communicate effectively via text messaging.**

☐ **Establish a separate, formal notification plan for employees' immediate families and relatives in the event employees are injured, killed or missing. Make sure caregivers, day care operators and others upon whom employees may depend to care for their family members can be notified, too.**

☐ **Create a formal system to integrate new hires into your crisis communications plan.**

☐ **Consider establishing a public hotline or page on your website that community members with questions about your business can use to get information during an emergency.**

☐ **Establish an easily accessible database of information about the company that key employees can access in case of emergency. This should include company background information, critical documents, key contacts, passwords and other information necessary to keep the business operating during and after a crisis.**

☐ **Establish remote hosting for your company website.**
  ○ Ensure your site has enough bandwidth to handle the spikes in traffic that may occur during crises.
  ○ Designate a team to manage updates to the website during the crisis.

☐ **In case of evacuation, have a plan for redirecting phone calls to employee cell phones or a VoIP service to continue business operations.**

☐ **Establish a plan for what to do if you lose your internet connectivity.**

☐ **Coordinate all crisis communications planning with key vendors and suppliers to ensure seamless operations during a crisis.**

- [ ] **Develop and test your media communications strategy:**
  - ( ) Designate primary and secondary spokespersons.
  - ( ) Ensure all employees know who the spokesperson is.
  - ( ) Arrange for media to have 24-hour access to a spokesperson.
  - ( ) Give the designated spokespersons training in dealing with the media.
  - ( ) Establish a policy for all employee interaction with the media, both on- and off-site.
  - ( ) Maintain trustworthy, credible relationships with the media. If you do, the media will be less suspicious and more cooperative during a crisis.
  - ( ) Identify key audiences and develop a communications strategy for each.
  - ( ) Create key messages and talking points to ensure consistent messaging.
  - ( ) Create a media kit with information about your company or organization, as well as a list of approved contacts within your business.
  - ( ) Discuss possible problem areas and potential negative impacts and decide how to handle them.
- [ ] **Identify main media outlets through which information about your business will be disseminated (radio, TV stations, websites, print, etc.)**
- [ ] **Find a signage vendor with multiple regional locations to use for signage needs before, during and after the crisis.**

PHASE 2: DURING THE CRISIS

- [ ] **Have employee, vendor, client and media contact information on hand.**
- [ ] **Be the first to break the news about how your business is responding. Even if the situation is still evolving, begin with full disclosure. Always respond to media requests.**
- [ ] **Continue to communicate with all key audiences until the crisis has passed. Consistency is important.**
- [ ] **Continuously monitor online and offline conversations in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your strategy and messaging.**
- [ ] **Confirm facts, communicating openly and accurately about the situation. Your communications team must be fully aware of all the facts and know the proper, approved messages.**
- [ ] **Use an alert notification system to keep all stakeholders posted on status and next steps.**
- [ ] **In case of evacuation, designate a central point of contact for all employees, and ensure you know where your people are located.**

PHASE 3: AFTER THE CRISIS

- [ ] **Notify all critical people of next steps.**
- [ ] **Debrief staff on their experiences, praising people for what went well.**
- [ ] **Learn from the experience and anticipate the next crisis. Plan for likely and even unlikely scenarios based on this most recent crisis; know in advance what steps you'll take.**
- [ ] **Improve your plan as needed; aim to regularly update it.**

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