CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

Prepared for DORO Limited

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1.0 Background

Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization, its stakeholders, or the general public (Bundy et. al, 2016). Doro recognizes the need to have in place a Crisis Communication Plan to prepare the organization's response to any crisis in its daily operations in dealing with the general public, stakeholders, staff in the rearing and handling of chicken products to ensure immediate and coordinated action during such times.

2.0 Introduction

The primary role of the Doro Limited Crisis Communication Plan is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and protocols that will be used by the organization as a guideline for promptly sharing information with all stakeholders in the event of an emergency or crisis (Zaremba, 2014; Hope, 2014). For the purpose of this plan, a crisis is defined as follows: a significant event, such as an emergency, dangerous situation or disturbance in the organization's activities that prompts vital, often sustained, public scrutiny and news coverage that has the probability of damaging the institution's reputation, image or financial stability. Emergencies are typically events that present a direct threat to life or property and involves a response from authorities such as the police, fire department, or emergency medical personnel. However, a degree of judgment may be required in each situation to determine whether any one or more of such events are serious enough to be classified as a crisis.

The audience for this plan include all current and prospective clients to the organization, staff, directors, neighbors, local government, the Kilimambogo community, and national and international bodies that deal with disaster management and response. The plan is designed for the entire organization and acknowledges that specific departments within the company may have their crisis communication plans based on their specialties. As such, this plan will be designed and implemented in close coordination with respective departments to align messages and operations, thereby promoting effective communication across the entire facility.

3.0 Objectives of the Plan

The guiding principle of this plan is to communicate factual information as fast as possible while constantly updating the information as circumstances change to facilitate the safety of

the Doro Limited staff and general public together with the continued operation of essential services. Effective communication planning in times of crisis is critical as it helps to mitigate the impact of the crisis (Cahill, 2017; Coombs, 2014). The most important elements of communication in this instance are honesty and speed, which also avoid lasting damage to the company and misinformation to the public. Basically, a good offense is the best defense. At the same time, the public's immediate access to accurate information, which may not be available on demand. Consequently, it is important for staff and other individuals involved in the crisis to speak with accuracy about what is known, and not speculating about details that are not supported by evidence. Multiple mediums will be used to relay accurate, timely information to as many people as possible. This is especially critical in the initial hours or days of an emergency or crisis. The goal of the organization is, to be honest, accountable, and accessible to all audiences, while also taking into consideration the legal and privacy issues associated with the situation.

4.0 Pre-crisis Activities

Doro Limited will carry out the following activities throughout the organization's operations before occurrence of any crisis:-

4.1 Selection of key members of the crisis communication team

In case of a crisis, a core group of representatives will constitute the company's crisis communication team. These include:

- General Manager – will act as the principal liaison between the company and external parties such as the media. The general manager will also communicate the state of the emergency to the board of directors and other senior management officials.
- Public Relations Manager – will be responsible for compiling and verifying information prior to forwarding to the general manager for reporting.
- Communications Manager – will be responsible for relaying accurate and updated information to consumers and other partners through the established media channels.

In the event that any of these individuals are not available, their deputies will take up their particular roles in the team. The general manager will be at liberty to add other team members as necessary based on the circumstances. The general manager will notify

the other members of the team directly by phone, message and/or email immediately the crisis occurs and ask them to convene as quickly as possible. The location for the emergency response meeting by the team will be at the organization's boardroom. Once the team has convened, the members will assess the situation and determine whether the current event meets the criteria for a crisis or not. If it does, the team will assess the scope of the event and the extent, legally and financially, to which the company is in a capacity to control the situation. If the scope of the situation is beyond the jurisdiction or capability of the company, external assistance will be sought immediately.

4.2 Education and Plan maintenance

The Communications Department, headed by the department manager, will be responsible for educating the staff on how and when they will get messages from the organization during an emergency. According to Sellnow & Seeger (2013), constant education and training is a critical component of crisis communication planning. Also, the company's primary communication tools during the emergency such as the public address system, siren, email, website, text messaging, and phone lines will be tested at least twice annually to confirm their readiness in terms of an emergency. The company will also perform an annual drill of emergency management where all key members of the emergency response and crisis communication teams will be required to participate. Both the emergency response and crisis communication plans will be tested for effectiveness during these times.

4.2.1 Media Training

Media training will also be offered to senior management officials as well as all other staff in positions that constitute the key members of the crisis communication team. After an initial training, sessions will be scheduled annually for staff who will have assumed these positions, and all staff will be required to take a refresher course in media training after every two years. The composition of the team may change depending on new information regarding crisis management and communication, and the CEO will be responsible for approving such changes which will be recommended by the disaster management department at the company. In the absence of new critical information, the management will perform a review of the plan after every two years to determine its effectiveness in managing crises in the current business environment.

Media training will include several components including best practices for using social media during emergencies, media policies and procedures, handling media interviews, and practicing difficult questions. While using social media platforms during a crisis, it is not advisable to post information on the crisis until official messaging is released from the company (Agozzino & Kaiser, 2014). The company will communicate through its official Facebook page and Twitter account. If staff or other third parties operate a social media page related to the company, they will be required to update their pages by directing their followers to the company's official social media pages rather than crafting their own messages or paraphrasing the official message. Other best practices for social media usage include:

- Refraining from posting additional messages after directing followers to the official posts or messages (Wendling, Radisch & Jacobzone, 2013).
- Limiting engagement with followers during this time unless absolutely necessary to avoid cluttering the timeline and giving important updates more chances of being seen (Patashnick, 2016).

4.2.2 Lessons in handling interviews

Practicing tough questions and using prepared statements helps to prepare one for media interviews that may be overwhelming. For instance, the staff can conduct several practice sessions where the key members of the team who will address the media can polish up their communication skills and build confidence. Practice sessions can be conducted alongside drills, although the employees can request for more practice until they feel that they are competent enough. Prepared statements also help to restrict the subject of the matter to the crisis and avoid speculation from the media and the public at large.

Handling oneself in the appropriate manner during interviews is also very important in crisis situations as it helps to get the right messages across while avoiding common interview traps posed by media personalities. While conducting an interview, the following actions are recommended:

- Use specifics, comparisons, and analogies
- Be enthusiastic and in your usual calm composure

- Listen actively and respond by providing correct anecdotal information
- If you are not aware of something or cannot answer a question, admit it and move on to another topic.
- Do not fall for the "either-or" dilemma, and reject speculative questions
- Be careful not to be off record
- You are not obligated to answer each question, and
- Do not speak for someone else.

4.3 Assigning audiences to the members of the crisis communications team

Each member of the team will be assigned the appropriate audience and tasked with relaying information to them using approved messages and templates. Whenever possible, the first recipients of the crisis message are usually internal audiences such as staff and the management. Other external sources such as suppliers, consumers, the community, and the media are notified next. The communication channels differ depending on the audience, so each team member will be required to develop a detailed plan of how to reach their designated audience. The following list provides the audience, designated team members, and the appropriate channels for the crisis communication exercise:

- Staff – department managers via email, text notification or verbally.
- Senior leaders and board of directors – chief executive officer via email or memo.
- Customers – the customer care representatives through email, text message and social media.
- Suppliers and other partners – relationship manager via email.
- Media – public relations manager via press briefings and interviews.
- Local and national government agencies – public relations manager via email or formal letter.
- Other audiences may be identified as the crisis progresses and appropriate team members assigned to them.

4.4 Develop several key messages templates

The team will also develop several critical pieces of information that will be included in all communications by the company. These messages should be revised as circumstances change but should be aimed at restoring and maintaining calm and confidence while

balancing a sense of concern with resolve and action. Structured messages are critical in a crisis as they guide the content of the message and avoid possible misinformation that may have negative consequences for the company. However, where necessary, messages will be drafted on-site and approved by the crisis communication team before dissemination to the appropriate audience. Examples of templates given by Bernstein J., (2016) in crisis communications are:-

i. "We have implemented our crisis response plan, which places the highest priority on the health and safety of our staff and the general public."
ii. "Our thoughts are with those who were in harm's way and we hope that they are well."
iii. "We will be supplying additional information when it is available and posting it on our website."

5.0 Procedures in the event of a Crisis

In the event of a crisis, the following steps will be implemented: -

5.1 Immediate response

The crisis communication team will implement the steps detailed below based on the nature and needs of the situation. Throughout the crisis, the team will meet regularly to review incoming information, assess whether the key messages are reaching the appropriate audiences, and determine if there is a need to change strategies. The success of the plan is based on open and frequent communication between the Doro Limited Emergency Response Team, the staff and other stakeholders involved in the crisis, and the crisis communication team. The initial response communication should be made within the first 30 minutes of notification of the event, with regular updates as they become available. Certain situations may even take less time. The following tasks will be performed immediately:

- Activation of public address system or outdoor sirens for immediate threats such as gun attacks or natural hazards such as poultry disease outbreak
- Activation of an automatic emergency emailing and text message system for any event that qualifies as a crisis.
- Immediate post notification on the company's website in the event of a confirmed crisis.

- Send a management memo to the relevant recipients regarding the occurrence of the crisis, and any other information available at the moment.
- Send a text notification to all department supervisors for dissemination as appropriate. Department heads will also receive copies of the message.
- Send a media alert if applicable. However, caution should be taken when communicating to the media as giving unverified or unauthorized information may negatively affect the reputation of the organization.
- Send notification messages and update content through the company's social media accounts, i.e., Twitter and/or Facebook and any other as appropriate.
- Create incident-specific blogs that will be used to convey information directly to particular audiences.
- Convene other communicators related to the event, such as reporters of local and national government disaster management institutions.

5.2 Secondary Response

Once the crisis communication team convenes, they will be obligated to perform the following tasks: -

5.2.1 Designate a secretary

The secretary will be liable for maintaining meeting notes, to-do lists, information files on the ongoing crisis and other items.

5.2.2 Review and write down known facts

The team will review all the information collected at the moment and determine those facts that can and those that cannot be released to the public, and whether a response is needed, and if so, by which audience. The facts will be instrumental in completing templates for news releases, text messages, and other items that will be used to disseminate information. New fact sheets should also be developed as more updates on the crisis emerge. These fact sheets will be used to update websites, news releases, emails, and other communication channels, in addition to guiding the overall strategy as events unfold.

5.2.3 Selection of Messaging

Key messages will be created using communication templates designed in the pre-crisis stage. The team already knows what type of information its stakeholders are looking for and what they should know about the crisis. If not all information is known, the team can give an undertaking to revert later when they have full details of what went wrong.

However, the team will have one message that will address what the company is doing to ensure the safety of the staff and other individuals in direct threat of the event, and a follow-up message that details future plans by the company to prevent similar instances from happening again. Structured messages are critical in a crisis as they guide the content of the message and avoid possible misinformation that may have negative consequences for the company. However, where necessary, messages will be drafted on-site and approved by the crisis communication team before dissemination to the appropriate audience.

5.2.4 Determine who will act as the company's spokesperson

This will be as much as possible those trained at the pre-crisis stage. The spokespeople should comprise both a senior management official and someone whose main responsibility in the company is communication. The senior manager will act as the face of the organization, while the spokespeople/communicator will handle media questions and run press briefings and one or more members of the crisis communication team will be responsible for gathering emerging facts and communicate them to the spokespeople. During emergencies, it is imperative for a high-ranking official to be the face of the institution and take the lead in communicating primary messages, as it assures the audience that the situation is under control and efforts are being made to avail information as soon as it emerges. In the absence of the designated spokespeople, their deputies will assume their roles in the team. The absence of the deputies may require other employees to take up the roles as directed by the emergency response department.

5.2.5 Assign communicators to handle the company's phone calls

The crisis communication team will assign communicators to answer phone calls during the crisis period as a higher number of callers is expected. The communicator will chiefly be the customer care representatives, although additional staff will be assigned as required in regard to the nature of the crisis. All staff handling phone calls will be issued with a script developed from the key messages and facts approved by the crisis communication team, which they will use to guide them in answering questions posed by callers. In addition, the team will record all calls and interview requests from members of the media. The company's policy is to ensure that it is always responsive to news media especially during a crisis to affirm that the public understands the key messages and facts in the same way as the organization. An employee of the company, preferably one who works in the communications department, will be responsible for monitoring information flow in the media and Internet. It is important for the management team to be aware of how the company is being portrayed in the media so that they can adjust the communications response as necessary to avoid instances of rumors, correct errors, and maintain confidence in the organization.

5.2.6 Handling the Media

Media policies and procedures guide the interactions between the staff and the media. The first step in addressing the media is to select an appropriate place to be used as the media center. The ideal location should be situated a safe distance from the site of the crisis and provide a clear view of the incident is possible so that the media do not suspect that the management is trying to hide something. Also, the team should ensure that all the pre-established rules and regulations are not changed during the crisis to avoid suspicion or inefficiencies in emergency response operations. Although reporters have the right to interview anyone, it is best to restrict all media interviews to the official spokespeople designated by the crisis communication team. This helps to avoid instances of misinformation and facilitate a speedy crisis resolution process.

5.2.7 Update the company website

The crisis communications team will ensure that they post the details of the crisis on the company website as they emerge. The information will be based on facts collected at the site of the emergency and approved by the appropriate persons in the crisis communications team. Several changes may need to be implemented on the company website to facilitate effective dissemination of information to the public. The staff responsible for website maintenance in the communications department will create special pages to cover the crisis and other related information, including an FAQ section to guide viewers on the progress of the crisis. It is also expected that the crisis will result in more traffic to the company's website as more people seek information regarding the crisis. To optimize website effectiveness even as traffic demands increase, the team responsible for maintaining the website will remove flash features and high-resolution images. Also, the company will utilize its social media platform to share the information.

6.0 Post-crisis Activities

When the crisis is over, it is important to analyze what was done right and what was done wrong. Perhaps even look at what could be done better and how to improve various elements of crisis preparedness. The steps below will guide the organization in the post-crisis activities.

6.1 Fulfilment of promises made during the crisis

During the crisis, a lot of promises of reverting back to the public or media are made while establishing what went wrong. It is at this stage that the organization needs to fulfill those pledges and now provide the much-needed information when the spokespeople responded about carrying out investigations and reverting when they have the full details. This will of course be done once investigations are complete and the organization has had time to review all the messaging going out indicating the company position. It is important to revert to all stakeholders to eliminate further doubt and maintain integrity.

6.2 Evaluate how to help the community recover

Depending on the nature and severity of the crisis, the management may need to take extra measures to ensure that the community does not lose faith in the company after the trigger event of the crisis is over. Such measures may include town hall meetings, letters

from the CEO expressing reassurance, and detailed plans to avoid a repeat incident, among others. The management will work with the appropriate community leaders to implement any activities that would be deemed necessary to maintain a good reputation of the company. In case the effects of the crisis affected the community, the management will collaborate with its lawyers and government officials to determine the extent to which the company or government is accountable for the damage, and ways in which the matter can be resolved amicably. In any case, priority will be given to the company's reputation and its obligations to its stakeholders, including the neighboring community.

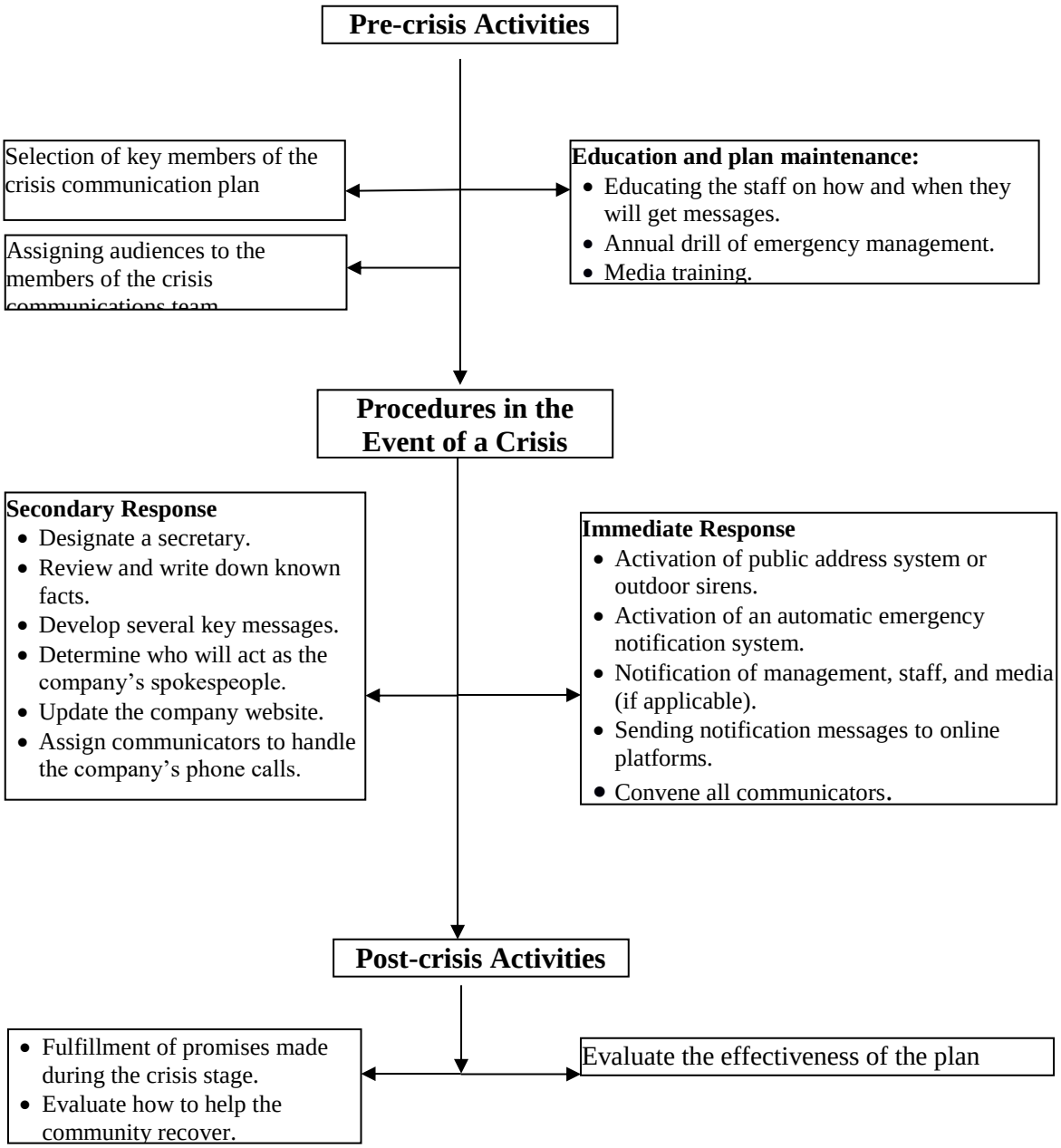
6.3 Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan

Within ten days after the end of the crisis event, the management team will assess how the plan functioned. This is mandatory as it ensures ongoing improvement of processes and procedures (Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2013; Fearn-Banks, 2016). Some of the areas that will be evaluated include the effectiveness of the plan in terms of communication, disaster management, and damage control. Communication will be evaluated based on several criteria including the ability of the plan to disseminate accurate and timely information to the appropriate audience, utilization of communication channels, and proper engagement of the media. Disaster management and damage control will be assessed by evaluating the impact of the crisis event on the company in terms of reputation and financial loss. Failure of the plan to prevent misinformation of the public can easily result in a bad company reputation, which is likely to attract financial losses through litigation or loss of esteemed clients. The plan will also be assessed with regards to its effectiveness in disseminating information to help contain the crisis. The crisis communication plan should ensure that individuals who are at a higher risk of being affected by the crisis are notified as early as possible and guided on ways of getting to safety. Also, the plan should ensure that individuals involved in mitigating the impact of the crisis are provided with accurate and timely information to complement their efforts.

7.0 Plan Workflow Chart

The workflow chart overleaf shows a summary of the crisis communications plan.

Doro Limited's Crisis Communication Plan



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