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Mini Crisis Management Toolkit Leading Boldly When the Storm Arrives

Your Message is Your Armor & Lifejacket

Small businesses can survive a crises as it's a leadership opportunity to share your deep commitment to customer engagement and service.

The tools that will anchor you during a crisis include preparation, swift action, and honest communication.

1. Your Mantra: Voice Check

"You believe your voice more than anyone else — so what are you telling yourself?"
Tamekia (Ashford) Nixon

- In every crisis, check your inner voice first.
- Confidence and calm start with how you speak to yourself before you speak to the public.
- Remember, the guiding principles and mission/vision of the organization stand as the support mechanism for the important work you're leading.

2. What Is a Crisis?

A significant disruption that threatens trust, reputation, or operations.

Question: "Does this situation threaten our trust or reputation?" If yes, treat it as a crisis.

3. Architect Your Crisis Response Framework

The foundation of effective crisis management starts with a clear framework. Start by identifying your three most likely crisis scenarios – these typically include customer complaints going viral, product failures, or local emergencies affecting operations.

Create a simple one-page response template for each scenario. This template should list key decision makers, immediate action steps, and pre-approved messaging frameworks.



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4. Your Response = Armor & Lifejacket

Armor (Protection): Shields your reputation and leadership credibility.

Examples: Owning responsibility, apologizing (if in fact, an apology is warranted), protecting stakeholders and reiterating your deep commitment to providing best of class customer service.

Lifejacket (Survival): Keeps your organization afloat in chaos.

Examples: Timely updates, clear instructions, consistent voice.

Action Step: Write 1 way your response can act as armor and 1 way as a lifejacket.

5. The 3-Point Focus Framework

Say the Right Thing. Do the Right Thing.

1. **What to Say:** Short, clear, human message (your “headline”).
2. **How to Say It:** Tone = calm, empathetic, accountable.
3. **Who Needs to Hear It First:** Internal → Stakeholders → Media/Public.

Please do not run from the problem and/or ignore media phone calls.

It may be helpful to create a message template for different scenarios, in advance of a crisis.

5. Mini Crisis Checklist

- Identify the storm (crisis or issue?).
- Gather key facts quickly.
- Draft 1-sentence message (3-Point Focus).
- Notify internal audiences first.
- Deliver updates consistently.
- Monitor and adjust — stay transparent.



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Crisis Communication Response Template

Message (1 Sentence)	Key facts (2-3 Bullets)	What actions are you taking?

Please note the examples below to get you started:

- **Message (1 sentence):** “What is the one reassuring statement you want people to remember?”
(e.g., “We take the protection of customer data seriously and are taking immediate steps to secure systems.”)
- **Key Facts (2–3 bullets):** “What facts can you confirm right now?”
(e.g., “Issue detected last night, limited to 200 accounts, no evidence of financial theft.”)
- **Proof / Next Steps (1–2 bullets):** “What actions are you taking?”
(e.g., “Independent security team investigating, affected customers notified, hotline opened.”)