

72-Hour Rapid Response and Crisis Management Plan  
COVID-19 Outbreak on Cruise Ship

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## I. OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

Spartan Cruise Line (SCL) has reported a COVID-19 outbreak aboard the DriftAway vessel, which is currently out at sea. We have formed a First Line of Defense Team, also known as the Crisis Response Team, to effectively communicate and manage the emerging crisis. Each member holds different key communication roles and has collaborated to formulate a comprehensive plan for a rapid response to the crisis aboard the DriftAway vessel. The objective is to develop and implement the best crisis communication strategy that will allow us to successfully manage the situation, minimize damage, maintain the trust of our stakeholders, and protect SCL’s brand image. This plan details how we will respond during the first 72 hours.

## II. ACTIVATION CRITERIA

Figure 1

Spartan Cruise Line Activation Criteria Chart



SCL uses an activation criteria scale (Figure 1) to help determine the appropriate action plan based on the organization's risk level. We utilize a four-point scale that counts down from minimal risk (4) to high risk (1). The most frequently encountered risks are minimal and pose no long-term impact on the organization or its customers. A brief power outage and an angry customer online are examples of minimal risks. Level 3 minor risks are unlikely to pose any long-term impact. They do, however, require team alignment and communication. Examples of a minor risk are changes in executive leadership and rumors. Most Level 3 and 4 risks can be addressed with extra effort from managers and their staff.

Level 1 and 2 risks cause a greater concern for potential impact. Level 2 moderate risks could potentially have a long-term impact and involvement of the crisis communication team, referred to as the First Line of Defense, is needed. Examples of a moderate risk are an illness spreading on board a cruise ship or a

contained cyber security breach. Level 1 high risk events make an immediate impact and require an all-hands-on-deck response. Examples of high-risk events include terrorist attacks and executive misconduct.

The CEO is notified about all crises that have the potential for moderate risk or higher. When that happens, the CEO sends an immediate alert to the First Line of Defense (see Section V., Phase 1 - Alert).

**We are in a Level 2 crisis.** The activation criteria for a Level 2 crisis are defined as having a potential for moderate risk affecting business operations, customer success, or the organization's reputation. The state of Level 2 crisis activates the Crisis Communication Team, starting with the First Line of Defense and calling in the Greater Response Team as needed.

With the spread of COVID-19 on the DriftAway, SCL faces various potential risks, including:

- The contagious illness could spread to more people.
- People with vulnerable health could fall gravely ill or die.
- People on board could panic or become angry, threatening the safety of others.
- The ship could get stuck at sea if the disease is not satisfactorily contained.
- SCL employees could feel threatened and turn against the company or each other.
- The general public and the media could frame SCL badly and cause damage to our reputation.
- People could dramatize the situation online and cause damage to SCL's reputation.
- We could lose customers if future guests become fearful of sailing with SCL.

Successfully handling the operations and communications related to this crisis will be an opportunity to:

- Enhance relationships of team members.
- Build trust with employees, other stakeholders, customers, the media, and the general public.
- Learn from our actions and the crisis itself.

### III. CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM

The crisis communication team was assembled to ensure a thorough analysis of the situation, rapid response, and effective implementation of the crisis management plan. Each role has its unique responsibilities and will work in tandem to successfully execute key messaging through communication channels, both internally and externally. The purpose of a crisis communication team is to obtain information on the crisis, monitor as ongoing developments take place, remain flexible, and adjust tactics as the demand arises, while also determining the best course of action based on each of the stakeholder's needs. The team will remain committed to understanding their audiences' wants, needs, and feelings, so that their message can be effectively tailored to resonate with each unique group. The team leads SCL's crisis communication strategy from start to finish and is the main force behind the organization's ability to manage the crisis successfully.

The crisis communication team is comprised of SCL communication leaders who work in tandem as the First Line of Defense. The crisis communication team also includes stakeholders and knowledgeable experts who bring valuable perspectives related to the situation. This group, the Greater Response Team, is called on as needed.

## First Line of Defense

The First Line of Defense, also known as the Crisis Response Team, will include personnel from different communication departments within the organization that will work together to address, respond, and execute the crisis management plan. Each team member will be responsible for overseeing and implementing all necessary protocols. The First Line of Defense must gather information, put together an initial response plan, notify the necessary people within the organization, report findings to the Greater Response Team, and examine the situation closely to determine escalation level, in which the Greater Response Team would need to be more directly involved.

### The First Line of Defense Contact List

NAME	ROLE	EMAIL	MOBILE PHONE
Dan Olsen	Media Relations Manager and Spokesperson	<a href="mailto:Dan.Olsen@scl.com">Dan.Olsen@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5555
Allison Milke	Director of Digital Engagement	<a href="mailto:Allison.Milke@scl.com">Allison.Milke@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5556
Katie Bylin	Social Media Manager	<a href="mailto:Katie.Bylin@scl.com">Katie.Bylin@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5557
Julie DeCook	Director of Internal Communication	<a href="mailto:Julie.DeCook@scl.com">Julie.DeCook@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5558
Maya Jurayj	Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager	<a href="mailto:Maya.Jurayj@scl.com">Maya.Jurayj@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5559

\*Main Source of Communication: Group Email

SCL First Line of Defense/Crisis Response Team: [CRT@scl.com](mailto:CRT@scl.com) (for internal communication use only).

## Greater Response Team

The Greater Response Team will consist of key company representatives in each department that will step in as needed and when/if the crisis reaches certain escalation levels. It's vital that the Greater Response Team consists of members from each department to gain necessary expertise and unique perspectives, align on strategy, and to ensure the most effective approach is being taken. The activation criteria range from a level 4 (lowest threat) to a level 1 (highest threat). The Greater Response Team will be brought in when a crisis escalates to a level 3, level 2, or level 1 (Figure 1). It's important to remember that not all members of the Greater Response Team may need to be contacted at a level 3 escalation. However, in the case where an organization reaches a level 2 or 1, as in the crisis SCL currently faces, the entire team will need to be advised. It's also worth noting that there are situations where other members outside of the Greater Response Team may need to be brought in, such as when the situation extends outside of the organization's internal capabilities. The Greater Response Team for SCL will consist of the below personnel/departments:

### Greater Response Team Contact List

NAME	ROLE	EMAIL	MOBILE PHONE
Paul Sebring	Chief Executive Officer	<a href="mailto:Paul.Sebring@scl.com">Paul.Sebring@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5560
David Jones	Chief Financial Officer	<a href="mailto:David.Jones@scl.com">David.Jones@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5561

Justin Weller	Chief Medical Officer	<a href="mailto:Justin.Weller@scl.com">Justin.Weller@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5562
Patrick Walsh	President of Communication	<a href="mailto:Patrick.Walsh@scl.com">Patrick.Walsh@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5563
Sarah Hack	VP of Marketing	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Hack@scl.com">Sarah.Hack@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5564
Lynn Peters	VP of Human Resources	<a href="mailto:Lynn.Peters@scl.com">Lynn.Peters@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5565
Matthew Bates	VP of Engineering	<a href="mailto:Matthew.Bates@scl.com">Matthew.Bates@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5566
Kenneth Parker	Director of IT	<a href="mailto:Kenneth.Parker@scl.com">Kenneth.Parker@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5567
Barbara Heath	Director of Customer Support	<a href="mailto:Barbara.Heath@scl.com">Barbara.Heath@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5568
Sam Walters	Director of Restaurant Services	<a href="mailto:Sam.Walters@scl.com">Sam.Walters@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5569
James Ventri	Director of Operations	<a href="mailto:James.Ventri@scl.com">James.Ventri@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5570
Farrah Smith	Director of Hospitality Management	<a href="mailto:Farrah.Smith@scl.com">Farrah.Smith@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5571
Ketzi Herrera	Director of Communication	<a href="mailto:Ketzi.Herrera@scl.com">Ketzi.Herrera@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5572
Maribel Scott	Head of Legal	<a href="mailto:Maribel.Scott@scl.com">Maribel.Scott@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5573
Cameron Young	Head of Government Relations	<a href="mailto:Cameron.Young@scl.com">Cameron.Young@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5574
Tyler Gerard	Head of Security	<a href="mailto:Tyler.Gerard@scl.com">Tyler.Gerard@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5575
Antonia Singer	Cruise Captain	<a href="mailto:Antonia.Singer@scl.com">Antonia.Singer@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5576
Lea Patel	Customer Service Manager	<a href="mailto:Lea.Patel@scl.com">Lea.Patel@scl.com</a>	(555) 555-5577

\*Main Source of Communication: Group Email

SCL Greater Response Team: [GRT@scl.com](mailto:GRT@scl.com) (for internal communication use only).

## IV. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

This section lists the roles and responsibilities of our crisis response team members. The objective is to highlight what each role will prioritize and the initial actions they will take to help effectively communicate key messages during the current crisis that SCL is facing. The roles and responsibilities will provide better oversight into how each role operates individually, and in unison, to meet the overall organizational objective of successfully executing the proposed crisis management plan presented below.

### **Dan Olsen, Media Relations Manager & Spokesperson**

#### Role and Objective

As the media relations manager and spokesperson, this individual is responsible for conducting all media relations activities, including answering media inquiries, distributing media advisories, news releases, coordinating press conferences, etc. (This would include operating a Media Information Center if needed. A separate plan for setting up press conferences and a MIC should already be included in the crisis management plan and corresponding toolkit.)

#### First Action Items

The first priority of this role would be to issue an initial media statement reinforcing our primary messaging of health, safety and well-being of crew and passengers, and that we are coordinating with federal, state and local health and transportation officials to ensure the safe return of passengers and crew to port. This ensures our messaging is included in initial media stories that are breaking the issue and helps reinforce with our primary and secondary audiences that we are working quickly to resolve the issue in a way that preserves the health, safety and well-being of all involved. It also reinforces that we are not navigating this crisis alone – we are taking direction from health and transportation experts – building trust with our audiences in the process.

Next, we would hold an initial briefing for media to share what we know in the current moment, address and dispel misinformation, and take questions from the media. This tactic ensures accessibility of leaders and spokespeople, furthering trust in our secondary audiences, including media, general public and current and prospective customers. We would hold a news briefing every hour for the initial four hours of the crisis and then move to a once a day briefing for the remainder of the initial 72 hours, and as needed to supplement daily briefings. Initial briefings would include other cruise lines and federal, state, and local officials to show unified coordination and response.

### **Allison Milke, Director of Digital Engagement**

#### Role and Objective

The top priority of the Director of Digital Engagement will be to ensure all digital communication channels have the appropriate messaging in place, and that SCL is effectively engaging with their audiences in the digital space. It is vital to maintain ongoing communication with the First Line of Defense and Greater Response teams to ensure consistency in our message. Any contradictions in messaging can lead to decreased credibility and confusion, amplifying the crisis and reducing the effectiveness of our crisis management plan. The main communication channels that will be utilized are the website, e-mail, on-board electronics, and outside media sites. The Director of Digital Engagement will monitor and determine the effectiveness of the messaging in each channel by reviewing the data analytics, such as bounce rate, engagement, time spent on page, open rate, reach, and impressions.

With digital platforms being the main source of news and communication, we must ensure we are developing and executing communication strategies in a way that optimizes results and reaffirms to our stakeholders that we are prioritizing their wellbeing first and foremost, while being transparent and honest. In this specific situation, since the cruise ship is adrift, the main form of communication to the public from on-board passengers is through digital channels, which is why this should be a priority item for the organization. If we can get ahead of the communication, we can control the message (Ulmer, 2019, p. 6). By implementing the below action items, SCL can utilize the digital channels to our advantage.

#### First Action Items

The first priority item will be to remove any information on SCL's website that involves promotional messaging or could be viewed as insensitive in the wake of the crisis. The website is the company's most valuable communication asset and will be used to provide consistent updates to the public on the ongoing developments. As seen in the Odwalla Crisis Case Response, having a dedicated website page that allows routine updates of information will prove valuable in crisis management (Ulmer, 2019, p. 57). Furthermore, SCL's website will act as an "information hub" where we can share public health and safety updates, the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak on the DriftAway cruise ship, customer



support resources, and any corrective actions SCL is taking to amend/minimize the effects of the event, as outlined in our key messaging. The information will also be dispersed through an e-mail campaign. By utilizing our CRM platform, we can target specific audiences with messaging tailored to each and utilize a CTA that drives consumers to our “information hub” on our website.

The Director of Digital Engagement will not only publish all SCL press releases on the company website, but will also work with the Media Relations Manager to submit them to media outlets to be published on their sites. This will help us get the message out before the media frames it in a way that may be unfavorable to us, which is vital in effective crisis management (Turner, 2023). Any paid search or display ads will also be paused, as our efforts will be strictly to listen, inform, educate, and engage with our audience. Lastly, to streamline communication with passengers, the Director of Digital Engagement will work with IT to set up streaming to all TV’s on the cruise ship, including in-room TV’s. This will allow SCL to effectively reach the passengers with important updates, ensuring they remain informed throughout the entire process.

### **Katie Bylin, Social Media Manager**

#### Role and Objective

In crisis communication, social media can be used effectively to monitor conversations, communicate with target audiences, and predict potential threats and opportunities (Dulmer, 2019, p. 45). The Social Media Manager is responsible for developing and implementing SCL’s social media strategy across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. This includes drafting and executing content that helps amplify key messages on the appropriate channels during the crisis.

They are also responsible for social media community management, which includes responding to comments, messages and misinformation that appears on our posts. Additionally, they should flag any potential issues, crises, or viral posts that surface and share them with the greater team.

#### First Action Items

The first step of the Social Media Manager is to pause any and all future posts and paid social media advertising, indefinitely. It’s important to shift our communications to the crisis at hand. It’s no longer appropriate to communicate marketing and sales campaigns via social media while the health and safety of our customers is in jeopardy.

It would be incredibly insensitive to continue pushing out SCL’s usual content strategy and it could even negatively derail the narrative if we did. For example, It’s likely that a post promoting our summer cruise special could end up next to a post from a customer or crew member talking about the conditions on board the ship that is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak. This would give SCL’s audience the perception that we aren’t taking this situation seriously and that those aboard our ship are not top-of-mind.

While waiting for further messaging and direction from the crisis team, it’s also imperative to be mindful of how the SCL’s tone on social media will need to be shifted for the duration of the crisis. The tone of the social media posts should change from fun and witty, to informative and empathetic to match the tone of the crisis communications that will be distributed.

**Julie DeCook, Director of Internal Communication**Role and Objective:

The Director of Internal Communication's top priority is establishing a channel of communication with all employees that:

- Allows information to be disseminated quickly, while limiting misinformation.
- Eases anxiety and uncertainty with factual information that is relevant to each person.
- Inspires camaraderie among employees by focusing on common goals and positive progress.

SCL leadership at HQ and on the cruise ship will be empowered with clear direction for how they should communicate with their teams, including who to inform, by what means, and the frequency they should be contacted. Additionally, the Director of Internal Communication will be a source of information for all employees, who are encouraged to reach out via email.

First Action Items: SCL Leadership Call

The first action that the Director of Internal Communication will take is to initiate a teleconference with SCL leadership located at the headquarters and on the ship. They will refer to the corporate communications policy and designate who is responsible for communicating to which groups of employees. Considering that the media is more than a channel, they play a role in shaping the situation (Ghenaitet & Ghenaiet, n.d.) all employees will be reminded that Corporate Policy – 001 (Article 1) specifies that only official spokespersons may speak to the media on behalf of SCL.

Bringing all leadership together on a call will ensure that everyone has the same information, closing gaps that could lead to misinformation. Also, while on the call, sharing encouraging words, setting common goals, and expressing empathy for those on the front line of the crisis will build camaraderie within the organization. Empowering the leadership team to lead their staff will provide a sense of self-efficacy throughout the organization as employees are assigned responsibilities. The outcome of the call will be a leadership team that is confident, aligned on key messages, and has clear direction on next steps.

**Notable Points**

- SCL managers and supervisors will be the main point of contact for their own staff.
- Give special attention to the Customer Service team. Be available to the whole group while working closely with the Customer Service Manager to support them with accurate, up-to-date information as quickly as possible.
- Keep close contact with the DriftAway Director of Communication.
- The Media Relations Manager is the official Spokesperson with authority speak to the media. Media Relations Manager may designate subject matter experts to speak to the media.
- DriftAway Director of Communication is the key point-person for ship leaders, including the Captain and the Chief Medical Officer.
- DriftAway Captain is is the key point-person for port authorities, passengers, and the crew. Captain may be designated to speak to the media.
- DriftAway Chief Medical Officer is the key point-person for the CDC and the ship's official information source for all medical information, updates, and instructions. The Chief Medical Officer may be designated to speak to the media.

## **Maya Jurayj, Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager**

### Role and Objective

As the Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager, the top concern is diligent direct communication with ship passengers, the CDC, SCL board members and investors, and the authorities at each planned destination. When communicating a crisis to stakeholders, it is crucial to connect as soon as possible. In order to control the communication surrounding a crisis, an organization needs to address it quickly before the media and public start spreading potentially damaging information that can be irreversible. The objective of these communications will be to provide continuous updates on the situation and address any concerns or questions. We want to ensure that our stakeholders feel heard and confident that SCL is doing everything they possibly can to properly manage the crisis. While communicating with stakeholders is vital, it's important to also listen to them so that we can effectively address their questions and concerns. Following along on the dialogue surrounding this crisis will keep the Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager informed and allow them to cater their communication to the stakeholders' needs.

### First Action Items

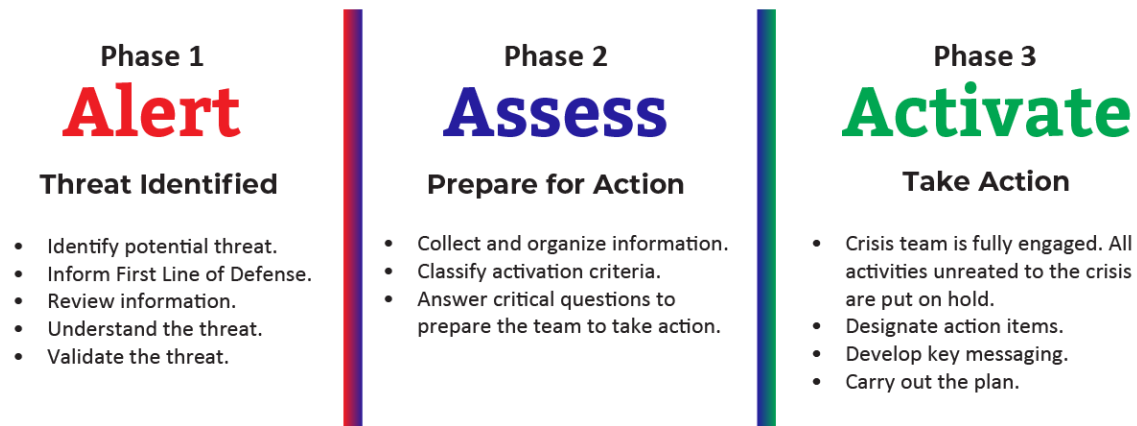
Separate action items are needed for each stakeholder. The ship passengers will be looking for transparency, and it's the role of the Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager to provide that to them. As the situation progresses, updates will need to be communicated, along with the steps that are being taken by SCL. Nerves will be high, so keeping passengers informed will show composure and commitment to reducing uncertainty and putting them at ease (Ulmer, 2019, p. 38). It is important to maintain contact with the CDC, as well to stay informed on best practices and, in collaboration with the Chief Medical Officer, relay guidance to the SCL staff on how to control the outbreak and protect all passengers. Providing updates to the CDC on the progression of the outbreak will help ensure that SCL takes all of the appropriate steps. The connection to the CDC will provide credibility for the SCL which, in turn, causes stakeholders to be more comfortable and confident in the organization's management of the situation. This crisis poses a threat to the reputation of SCL if not handled properly, so effective communication is critical. Board members and investors will be concerned as well, because any long-term damage the company faces, whether it be to their brand or their sales, impacts them. Their reputation is tied to SCL's, as is their professional success. Communicating with the authorities at the planned destinations is crucial for coordinating the logistics for the remainder of the cruise. The SCL team will need to figure out where to direct the ship and how to dock if they run into limitations like they did in Cozumel. Strong communication with the authorities will portray control and confidence, which will support the SCL's efforts in logistical planning.

## V. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN & KEY MESSAGING

### **Figure 1**

Spartan Cruise Line Crisis Management Phases

## Crisis Management Phases



### Phase 1: Alert

**A potential threat has been identified.** The alert phase is the first step in addressing a potential organizational crisis or threat and sets the tone for how SCL will handle the situation. During the alert stage, someone within the organization is made aware of a potential crisis or threat to SCL and must immediately alert the First Line of Defense/Crisis Response Team via email ([CRT@scl.com](mailto:CRT@scl.com)) with a subject line: URGENT and the alert status level presented below. This step is mandatory, even if uncertainty around the validity of the crisis is present. It will be the responsibility of the First Line of Defense to validate the potential crisis and determine whether it poses a threat to the organization's high-priority goals (Ulmer, 2019, p. 7). The action steps that should be taken during Phase 1 of the crisis management plan is as follows:

- **Step 1:** Information regarding potential crisis/threat to organization is received and informant determines the alert status level.
  - **Status Level 3:** Low likelihood that the situation occurred, and/or would pose minimal to no impact to SCL's operations, finances, reputation, and stakeholders, if validated. The event could be resolved within a couple of hours (Goh, 2021).
  - **Status Level 2:** Medium likelihood that the event occurred, and/or would pose a moderate threat to SCL's operations, finances, reputation, and stakeholders, if validated. The event could be resolved within a few hours (Goh, 2021).
  - **Status Level 1:** High likelihood that event occurred, and/or would pose significant impact to SCL's operations, finances, reputation, and stakeholders, if validated. To minimize impact and provide corrective action, the crisis management plan would need to be enacted (Goh, 2021).
- **Step 2:** The First Line of Defense is alerted via email ([CRT@scl.com](mailto:CRT@scl.com)) with subject line "URGENT" and the alert status level. The informant should include all information known at time of the email, and any evidence to support the alert status level. If the team does not respond

confirming receipt of the email within 10 minutes, or if the event occurs out of regular business hours, a group text message should be sent to the team as well.

- **Step 3:** Informant remains available and accessible as the First Line of Defense reviews the information provided and determines whether a formal meeting with informant will be necessary to gather more information/validate details.
- **Step 4:** The First Line of Defense sets up an internal meeting among its team members to conduct further research on the matter and validate potential threats. During this meeting, the below questions should be answered:
  - What do we know at this time?
  - Are the sources credible?
  - Does this pose a threat to the organization?
  - Does this warrant further assessment?
- **Step 5:** Threat is validated, and the First Line of Defense launches Phase 2 of the crisis management plan, which is assessment of threat level and activation criteria.

## Phase 2: Assess

**Prepare for action.** After Phase 1 is complete and the threat to SCL is validated, the team will use the activation criteria presented above to identify the threat level. During this phase, the First Line of Defense will need to determine if the Greater Response Team needs to be briefed, and which stakeholders should be contacted first. This stage is vital for notifying, classifying, and escalating the situation (Goh, 2021). The assessment phase determines how the crisis management plan is activated in Phase 3. The steps below define the process for effective assessment of the situation.

- **Step 1:** The First Line of Defense continues to gather information as the situation develops. The team will need to investigate the matter by conducting outside research, setting up internal or external meetings (when necessary), and examining similar crisis situations to see potential risks and outcomes. All collected information should be compiled into a document that is accessible to the First Line of Defense.
- **Step 2:** Assess and classify the event using the activation criteria (provided above). This will allow the team to determine the appropriate escalation level.
  - In this case, the activation criteria have reached a level 2, posing a moderate threat to SCL's operations, finances, reputation, and stakeholders. The Greater Response Team will need to be contacted and briefed on the situation.
- **Step 3:** Utilizing the information document and activation criteria, the First Line of Defense must answer the questions below to effectively prepare SCL for the activation phase of the plan.
  - What happened?
    - There was a COVID-19 outbreak on the DriftAway cruise ship.
  - When were we made aware of the situation?

- How were we made aware of the situation?
  - We were made aware of the situation on Monday, June 12<sup>th</sup>.
- How were we made aware of the situation?
  - A medical staff member aboard the ship informed the President of Communication, who in turn, informed the First Line of Defense.
- Who is directly impacted by the situation?
  - All passengers, crew members, and personnel aboard the ship. At the moment, there are 12 passengers who have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Who is indirectly impacted by the situation?
  - SCL board members, Miami port (where the ship will likely dock), SCL future customers, outside medical professionals, and the CDC.
- Do we have all the information we need?
  - At this time, we have enough information to make stakeholders aware of the situation and our diligence in handling the matter. However, new developments continue to take place, and we are working with the necessary parties to investigate the situation further. We should refrain from over-reassuring stakeholders and only provide information we have confirmed is accurate (Ulmer, 2019, p. 40-41).
- What should be addressed first?
  - The health and safety of our passengers and crew members, as well as SCL's commitment to working with necessary authorities and providing real-time updates. We need to clarify what we are doing to minimize the COVID-19 exposure and amend the situation.
- Do we know who is responsible?
  - At this time, we do not have concrete information on how the affected person(s) managed to board the ship. However, we have identified the four families and have quarantined them. We also confirmed that the initial safety and health protocols were followed: each passenger presented their proof of vaccination card and signed documentation affirming non-exposure and lack of present symptoms.
- Is outside assistance needed?
  - Yes, we must work with the necessary agencies, such as: the CDC, head of operations at the Miami Port, and government and transportation authorities.
- Are there any other circumstances that could escalate the current threat to SCL?
  - There was an altercation on the ship between guests. Some bystanders were knocked to the ground and a crew member was injured. Footage was taken and published online. This further supports the need to address the safety concerns our stakeholders have during this time.
  - There is evidence that a medical professional did not wear PPE and has exposed other passengers and crew members. The public is unaware at this time, but DriftAway crew members are upset. SCL should review the enforcement process of protocols to ensure this does not happen again.
  - SCL has reviewed video footage that shows the infected families exposing other passengers prior to their diagnosis. This video has not been made public at this time, but SCL should get ahead of this before someone else does.

### Phase 3: Activate

**Take action.** Once the team has been alerted and the situation assessed, the First Line of Defense will begin executing the activation phase, where each member of the team is responsible for their designated action items. Additionally, the team will need to be available for touch base calls as needed.

The Crisis Response Team's main goal is to provide aid in dealing with the situation. All other projects and routine work must be placed on hold for the crisis. Our efforts will be dedicated to timely and transparent communication of critical information to key audiences. To start, we have provided the key messaging that will be distributed during the activation phase. Before we can execute any action, we must determine what our messaging is so that we can then tailor it to each communication channel and stakeholder.

#### Key Messaging

The key messaging that will be implemented in the activation stage of the crisis management plan will be used by each team member to ensure consistency throughout all communication efforts. The messaging has been developed based on what crisis communication experts have deemed important and effective during a crisis, with the critical points of this specific crisis engrained into each. We have closely examined the crisis that SCL is up against and have created messaging that will not only affirm our commitment to resolving the issue, but our priority to putting our stakeholders first. SCL will use strategic messaging that encompasses our values and goals to reaffirm to stakeholders that we are trustworthy, reliable, and committed to finding attainable solutions. Each message's tone will be tailored to the platform it is being posted to.

#### **Message 1: The health, safety, and well-being of our crew and passengers is our foremost priority.**

Spartan Cruise Line's number one goal is to keep our crew and passengers safe. As a passenger there may be a lot of uncertainty, especially as information isn't readily available yet. Providing this first message is imperative to reassure our crew and passengers that we care about them and are working to address the situation. Although we may not know the full extent of the crisis, we are making every effort to communicate early and often (Ulmer, 2019, p. 38). Within this first message we will stress that we are leaning on our pre-established relationships with the CDC, as well as health and safety experts to guide our decision-making process (Ulmer, 2019, p. 32). While we are reassuring our passengers and crew that we have their health and safety in mind, it's important that we don't overpromise since the situation is still developing and could potentially get worse (Ulmer, 2019, p. 41).

#### PROOF POINTS:

- We are in constant communication with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local public health offices. We are implementing the health and safety recommendations that they have provided.
- We are following expert guidance from our Chief Medical Officer and public health experts.
- We are coordinating our arrival with the Miami port authority and keeping the federal transportation department informed of our arrival and debarkation process.
  - It's important for Spartan Cruise Lines to lean on the positive partnerships that they have built with key stakeholders, like the CDC, public health experts, and the port of



Miami for the duration of the crisis (Ulmer, 2019, p. 33). It's also important to acknowledge these partnerships and call out who specifically is helping SCL make decisions to build trust with stakeholders (Ulmer, 2019, p. 33).

- We have provided face masks and hand sanitizer to all guests. We have also provided our crew with personal protective equipment to help protect themselves while rendering aid to those who are ill.
  - During times of crisis it's crucial to improve self-efficacy and provide tactical ways to do so (Ulmer, 2019, p. 42). By providing our passengers and crew with equipment that helps slow the spread of COVID-19, it allows them to take an active role in protecting themselves.
- Passengers are receiving updated information as it is available and have been provided with guidance on keeping themselves and others safe throughout the remainder of their trip and the debarkation process.
  - In order to limit uneasiness, we are committed to being transparent and providing updates as quickly as possible, even if there isn't a lot of information yet known (Ulmer, 2019, p. 38). As the situation continues to evolve, it is possible that the necessary self-efficacy actions could increase (Ulmer, 2019, p. 42). A regular communication cadence will allow SCL to effectively communicate any new developments promptly, ensuring the appropriate safety measures are being taken by passengers and crew members.

**Message 2: We are committed to providing consistent updates, sharing real-time information, and remaining transparent with our crew, our customers, our partners, and the public.**

In the early stages, information may not be available. However, it is still important to let stakeholders and the public know our intent, which is to provide them with consistent updates throughout the entire process, and acknowledging when we don't have all the answers (Ulmer, 2019, p. 40). The reason this message is so important is because remaining open, accessible, and transparent will help build trust and credibility (O'Malley et al., 2009). At this time, there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the event. Passengers aren't sure what the future of their cruise looks like, stakeholders are questioning the security and stability of SCL and its' ability to manage the situation, health officials are unsure of SCL's ability to contain and control the outbreak, and customers are concerned about how this will impact their future cruises that are already booked. It's vital to not only communicate early about the challenges SCL is up against, but to also maintain contact and communication with stakeholders, the media, and the public. By remaining committed to consistently providing updates, SCL can effectively reduce ambiguity and uncertainty (Ulmer, 2019, p. 40). Furthermore, the following proof points roll up under this message and should be openly communicated to stakeholders and the public.

**PROOF POINTS:**

- Today, an SCL medical staff member informed us that that there is a COVID-19 outbreak aboard the DriftAway vessel. There are currently 12 passengers who have tested positive. They have been quarantined and are receiving medical care.
  - It's important for SCL to acknowledge and address the situation, be quick to report the news, and provide only accurate and validated information (Ulmer, 2019, p. 31). The



media has already reported on the incident and claims that they will be hearing from an SCL representative soon. Although we do not know where they obtained that information from, it is important that we make a formal statement before the media can frame the situation differently (Ulmer, 2019, p. 19).

- We have confirmed that all passengers provided what appeared to be a valid proof of vaccination and also signed the SCL health assessment paperwork prior to boarding the ship. We are unsure at this time how the infected passengers managed to board the ship and are working with the necessary authorities to investigate further.
  - In effective crisis communication, it is vital to provide updates, yet also admit when we do not know something, such as how the infected passengers were able to board the ship. Instead, we should provide information on what we are doing to find the answers, which is working with the necessary authorities (Ulmer, 2019, p. 44). This further supports the message of being open, transparent, and honest, and also reflects SCL's values of putting their stakeholders first.
- On Saturday evening there was a physical altercation between passengers on the DriftAway cruise ship. Security officials quickly arrived on the scene and were able to diffuse the situation. All parties involved were examined and tended to by our medical team. SCL does not condone violence and we are taking the situation very seriously. We are working with the DriftAway security team and proper authorities to investigate the matter.
  - Since the media has already released information on the altercation that occurred aboard the DriftAway vessel, it is vital for SCL to make a formal statement before rumors and misinformation spreads (OECD, 2020). By being honest and forthcoming about the situation, we can help further support our overarching message of being committed to providing important information and remaining transparent with our stakeholders and the public.
- Before SCL was aware of a COVID-19 outbreak aboard the ship, there were instances where the infected families may have exposed other passengers. Using federal contact tracing guidelines, we have identified the passengers who were potentially exposed and are working with our medical professionals to ensure their health and safety. At this time, we have not identified any additional positive COVID-19 cases outside of the 12 passengers originally reported.
  - SCL has reviewed footage that shows that the infected families had spent time with other passengers prior to their COVID-19 diagnosis. While this information has not been made public yet, it would be to SCL's advantage to "be first" to report this information, as the CDC recommends, before other sources do (Ulmer, 2019, p. 31). This will provide SCL the opportunity to not only build trust, but also affirm to stakeholders that SCL is taking steps to contain the spread of the virus and that no other positive cases have been identified at this time.

**Message 3: Spartan Cruise Lines is refunding guests for the monetary amount of their cruise ticket and providing each guest with a voucher that can be redeemed on a future cruise. Spartan Cruise Line will also cover guests' flight change fee.**

When it comes to protecting and repairing an organization's brand image, corrective action is extremely important. In fact, one study conducted by Idaho State University shows that both compensation and corrective action have the greatest positive impact on a brand's ability to recover from a crisis, regardless of what type of crisis the organization is facing (Gribas et al., 2018). This research, along with taking into consideration our stakeholders' concerns and needs, supports the action of providing fair compensation to our passengers as a corrective measure. It's vital to communicate the corrective actions that SCL is taking so that stakeholders have confidence in the organization's ability to prioritize the situation and implement changes that are both effective and sustainable (Ulmer, 2019, p. 40).

**PROOF POINTS:**

- Guests will receive a voucher for a future cruise with the same or similar itinerary.
- Guests will be refunded for the full amount of their ticket with Spartan Cruise Lines.
- We will work with guests to arrange for hotel stays, as needed, as a result of the change in itinerary, and if needed for quarantining purposes.
- We will reimburse guests for fees associated with their safe return home, including flight-change fees and hotel accommodations.
  - Spartan Cruise Line is committed to responding to extraordinary crises with unordinary measures (Ulmer, 2019, p. 75). As a result, Spartan Cruise Line is providing unprecedented levels of compensation to ease our guest's uncertainty and limit the burden that these events will have on them. Providing refunds and vouchers for all guests ensures that they are able to get home in a timely fashion and encourages future stays with SCL, if they choose to capitalize on the offer.

First Line of Defense Task Delegation - First 72 Hours

**Media Relations Manager & Spokesperson**

- Draft initial holding statement for distribution to media.
- Activate joint information center to coordinate and align messaging, as well as establish a staffed hotline and email for media inquiries.
- Provide talking points, FAQs and media statements to frontline staff, including guest services and crew to address constituent calls and inquiries.
- Hold regularly scheduled press briefings to ensure media are aware of latest developments and actions, and address questions as needed.

**Director of Digital Engagement**

- Gather and distribute any press releases, CDC Guidelines, SCL's corrective action plan, and other important updates using the three key messages through SCL's digital channels.

- Touch base twice a day with the First Line of Defense, and when necessary, the Greater Response Team, to determine any new information that should be dispersed to key stakeholders on digital channels.
- Monitor data analytics on digital channels daily to determine trends, strength areas, and improvement opportunities. Adjust tactics to optimize reach and engagement. Report data findings and optimization plan(s) to SCL leadership.
- Monitor all online media sources, such as articles, publications, and news stories being distributed on SCL and report any new findings to the broader team. Work with the spokesperson to draft a response/address any new information necessary using the key messages outlined above.
- Check in twice a day with IT and website management team to ensure proper functioning of SCL's website. With higher numbers of visitors to our site, it's vital that our server can maintain proper functioning, so that the user experience is not compromised.

#### **Social Media Manager**

- Draft and publish messaging from spokesperson/media relations team with regular updates to communicate to key stakeholders and passengers (Ulmer, 2019, p. 45-46).
- Amplify health and safety messaging from key contributors (CDC etc.).
- Flag any viral social posts for leadership and crisis team.
- Flag misinformation for crisis team and respond with appropriate proof points to prevent further crises (Ulmer, 2019, p. 46).
- Gauge overall sentiment through social listening for various audiences and report to crisis team.
- Monitor comments and retweets on organic social posts and hide/delete any messages that violate the pre-established social media community guidelines (ex: hate speech, harassment violence).
- Compare overall volume of conversation to baselines developed by previous crises that SCL has endured and report to crisis team/leadership.

#### **Director of Internal Communication**

- Update SCL leadership via email at least three times per day.
- Update staff twice per day with an official update via email that includes a link to the message in video form with closed captions in the most common languages of the ship crew.
- Keep close contact with the DriftAway Director of Communication.
- Keep close contact with the Customer Service Manager.
- Be accessible and responsive to all employees via email.

#### **Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager**

- Email all ship passengers providing an update on the situation and the planned action items that are being taken by the SCL team.
- Maintain regular communication with the CDC to report any updates on the outbreak and obtain guidance on management protocol.
- Email board members and investors an update and share our crisis management plan and tentative timeline.
- Call authorities at each planned destination and inform them on the issue and desired next step outlined by SCL team.

- Field and answer all questions from stakeholders.
- Monitor dialogue surrounding the issue to stay informed on public tone and relay any key learnings to the broader team.

## VI. KEY AUDIENCES

The key audiences identified can help us accomplish our goals. It's important that we are a trusted source of information for our stakeholders. By understanding who they are and what they need, we can tailor each of the key messages to effectively resonate with them. SCL's relationship with its stakeholders is one of the most critical components of crisis management. We must partner with our stakeholders to ensure consistent dialogue and commitment to finding solutions (Ulmer, 2019, p. 32). SCL's stakeholders can be defined in two groups: primary and secondary. The primary audiences have the most direct impact on SCL's success, and are involved on a daily basis (Ulmer, 2019, p. 34). The secondary audience is not as actively involved, but still has influence over the brand's long-term success (Ulmer, 2019, p. 34). We can utilize our primary audiences as channels to reach our secondary audiences.

In the first 72 hours, our top priorities are:

- Get the DriftAway vessel back to Miami.
- Be the primary source of information and provide a quality crisis response that elevates trust and confidence in the SCL brand.
- Ensure key messages are prioritized in all communications about the crisis.
- Prevent misinformation and irrelevant information from spreading internally, onboard, and throughout the general public.

### Primary

- **CDC** – We need to build their trust and confidence in our plan to contain the virus, and can do so by following their outlined protocols and guidelines. (*Guidance for Maritime Vessels on the Mitigation and Management of COVID-19 | Quarantine | CDC*, n.d.) The cruise ship has permission to dock in Miami. The CDC recommends that the ship remain at sea until a plan for containing the spread of the virus is developed. The longer the ship is at sea, the more uncertainty there will be surrounding the situation, creating opportunities for increased anxiety and fear among those on board and the people who care about them. People want to know when and where the ship is going. A concrete answer depends on approval from the CDC to dock in Miami. Docking the ship will be a positive turn of events that proves the situation is progressing in the right direction.
  - The Chief Medical Officer is their main point of contact.
- **SCL Leadership** – We need to empower our leadership team with accurate and timely information to keep them aligned with our strategy. It is critical to have our internal team aligned on key messages and information about the crisis. Staff will turn to their superiors for information and advice. Leadership needs to have competency about the situation so they can support their staff. By doing this well, we can keep misinformation and skepticism at bay, resulting in solidarity, trust, and confidence.
  - Julie DeCook, Director of Internal Communication is their main point of contact.

- **Passengers on the DriftAway Vessel** – The passengers aboard DriftAway need to be informed about the situation and feel like they are our top priority to ease fear and anger on board. Passengers will be informed about critical events and the adjustments being made to their trip. They will be urged to take immediate precautions to prevent unnecessary spread of the illness. This will help ensure the safety of everyone on board.
  - Staff on board is their main point of contact.
- **All SCL Staff Members** – Our staff needs to be properly informed so they can make appropriate decisions related to their roles. The entire organization needs to be well-suited to help each other and our customers through this time. Keeping internal staff and stakeholders informed is a top priority that will result in organizational trust. As a result, they will feel less inclined to communicate issues and concerns via any type of media, which would exacerbate the crisis.
  - Department leaders are the main point of contact for staff. They also will receive regular email updates from the Internal Communication Director.
- **Authorities (Government, Transportation, Port)** - We need to keep the Miami port authorities and all other necessary authorities apprised of our actions so that when we are permitted to dock. Our goal is to communicate effectively and follow recommended protocols to ensure the process is as seamless as possible.
  - The Ship Captain is their main point of contact for logistical planning and execution.
  - Maya Jurayj, Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager is their point of contact for status updates and facilitation of all necessary approvals for docking.
- **SCL Customer Service** – We need to give the customer service team the knowledge and tools needed to support the incoming calls. There will be an influx of calls coming into the service center as people are trying to gain information about the situation. The team is interacting with worried family members of passengers and concerned customers. Emotions are high and the team needs access to information that they can help ease the stress. By doing this effectively, we can strengthen the relationships with our customers and prevent negative chatter about our organization.
  - The Customer Service Manager is their main point of contact.

## Secondary

- **Media** – Our key messages need to be made widely known. The media is already aware of the COVID-19 outbreak. We can leverage their reach and relationships with their audiences to our advantage. We need to provide a swift response that clarifies our key messages and assures the general public and future customers that SCL is in control and handling the crisis well.
  - Dan Olsen, Media Relations Manager & Spokesperson is their main point of contact.
- **General Public** – We need to ease the uncertainty that is prevalent in the general public. We want the sentiment to be genuine, showing empathy and support for the people who are affected. We also want SCL to be framed in a positive light by proving that the matter is being handled with diligence and care. This should help reduce the risk of any claims of negligence on SCL's part.
  - There are many important points of contact for this audience: the media, SCL customer service, SCL social media, and SCL digital communications.
- **SCL Board Members** – We need to keep board members adequately informed to assure their confidence in SCL's handling of the crisis. If not properly handled, the image of SCL could be severely damaged. This poses a risk for board members, as they have stake within the organization. Proper communication is crucial to establish a sense of security.

- Maya Jurayj, Community and Stakeholder Relations Manager is their main point of contact.
- **Emergency Contacts** – We need to be sure that emergency contacts of sick passengers are given the proper information about their person.
  - On board medical staff is their main point of contact.
- **Current and Future Customers** – Especially for those who have reservations in the near future, we need to build confidence in our response to the crisis, ensuring that SCL handled the situation properly and that illness outbreaks are rarities on SCL cruises.
  - There are many important points of contact for this audience: SCL customer service, SCL social media, and SCL digital communications.

## VII. ASSESSMENT OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Strengths & Benefits

The above crisis management plan is timely, transparent, and informative. The COVID-19 outbreak on the DriftAway cruise ship poses a lot of challenges for the crisis response team due to the lack of information and many uncontrollable factors that could potentially escalate the crisis. Keeping that in mind, this plan was built on the foundation of sincerity and authenticity. Establishing our goals ahead of developing the plan is necessary to ensure all efforts are cohesive and that the messaging and tone is consistent throughout (Ulmer, 2019, p. 31). The rapid response from SCL acknowledging the situation helps build trust with the public and eases uncertainty. There is always a potential risk that the media could report on the crisis with inaccurate or out-of-context information, especially when photos, videos, and other details are being shared online. Being first to communicate about potential issues, as well as any progressions in the case, helps ensure that SCL can control the narrative and prevent further uncertainty (Ulmer, 2019, p. 44). The timeline outlined within this plan ensures that SCL is communicating regularly, and honestly, with their stakeholders and the public, regardless of whether or not key information is known. For crises with a lot of uncertainty and ambiguity, having this level of transparency helps put people at ease and restore confidence in the organization (O'Malley et al., 2009). It also protects the image of the organization by showing a willingness to be open and vulnerable with its audiences. While SCL may not be able to answer every question that the public or stakeholders have, our efforts towards providing continual updates, remaining accessible, listening, and implementing corrective actions, builds confidence in our ability to manage and resolve the crisis.

The proposed plan provides communication guidelines to help ensure that our approach is both strong and effective. The First Line of Defense consists of five individuals from various departments. Each member has been assigned responsibilities and tasks to ensure that there are no gaps in our strategy. The team will work together to ensure consistency, as it is vital that our messaging provides clarity, comes across as authentic, and minimizes the opportunity for information to be misconstrued. The impact and progression of the crisis is unknown, so not over-reassuring audiences and making absolute statements prematurely is important in protecting the liability of the organization (Ulmer, 2019, p. 15). Each team member is made aware of this ahead of any public communications to guarantee internal alignment. Corrective actions are outlined to show proactivity and self-efficacy on

behalf of SCL, with the objective of instilling confidence in all key stakeholders (Ulmer, 2019, p. 42). This is also accomplished through the partnership with the CDC. Partnerships with stakeholders are critical for effective crisis communication because they cultivate open dialogue that increases preparedness and advocacy (Ulmer, 2019, p. 37). With the CDC, having this open dialogue is especially crucial as SCL is navigating a health crisis that could turn dire, if not managed properly. Having their guidance increases the strength of SCL's corrective actions and reduces the risk of escalation. The third-party validation of SCL's efforts creates credibility for the organization, as well as helps their efforts in easing uncertainty among their stakeholders.

The strengths of this plan all share the core attribute of conveying sincerity through transparency, while keeping SCL's core value of putting their stakeholders' well-being at the forefront. This crisis management plan emphasizes the importance of action, but it also encompasses the importance of listening. Monitoring conversations and playing an active role in the dialogue with the media, our stakeholders, and the public is prioritized by the First Line of Defense. This plan ensures that the key pain points from each audience are addressed and that each stakeholders' needs are met to the best of SCL's ability.

### Projected Outcomes

The situation that SCL is facing is not unprecedented territory for the cruise industry, as COVID-19 has been a known problem for years now. Our understanding of the illness, and how to respond to it, is much more advanced than it was when the initial outbreak occurred (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023). There have also been many instances of COVID-19 outbreaks on ships within other cruise lines, leading the CDC to provide and establish clear guidelines for how to manage these crises (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023). By reviewing this information and analyzing other cases, we can project the outcome for SCL. Once the full extent of the outbreak is known, and an effective containment plan is established, the ship will be able to dock in Miami. Proper testing and quarantine protocols will help SCL contain the spread aboard the DriftAway vessel. SCL's commitment to working closely with the CDC and local health officials will ensure that all infected passengers are given the best possible care.

Due to passengers expressing concern over the costs associated with their reduced experience, our plan proposes that SCL offers compensation for flight fees, reimbursement for the cruise ticket, hotel accommodations, and a voucher that passengers can use towards a future cruise. By providing reliable corrective actions that meet the needs of our passengers, we can predict that this will ensure customer loyalty and reduce negative brand sentiment (Gribas et al., 2018). We will also maintain consistent and transparent communication with stakeholders so that they are assured of the diligence that SCL is acting with. The First Line of Defense team will partner with the media to control the message, while also staying informed on public perception through digital monitoring, press briefings, and customer service interaction. Once the crisis is resolved, SCL will conduct a review of their existing COVID-19 measures to ensure processes and procedures are properly, and strictly, enforced to prevent future outbreaks. The First Line of Defense will also conduct a review of their crisis management plan to determine what areas need to be strengthened in the future.



## Weaknesses & Potential Threats

This crisis poses several potential threats that the response plan is unable to account for. In general, COVID-19 is a health risk with a lot of unknowns. It is impossible to predict whether or not more people will get infected or the intensity of those infections. If the infection does spread outside of the four currently infected families, this could reflect poorly on SCL's ability to keep their passengers safe. Even if SCL is not directly responsible, they are still liable as the response protocols are being implemented by the organization. This is a large vulnerability for SCL, as it could reflect poorly on their crisis management skills, damage their image, and risk the business of future customers who will be deterred from vacationing with SCL. Our proposed crisis management plan combats this as much as possible with transparent communication and achievable self-efficacy that avoids over-assuring. However, the outcome is highly dependent on the passenger's ability to comply with the outlined protocols, limiting SCL's control over the situation.

Another area of concern for SCL surrounds the passengers' decision to take and share photos and videos online, as we saw happen after the physical altercation on Saturday evening. Based on this outcome, we can assume that passengers will be documenting any scenarios that may play out during the crisis and will be sharing it online, which poses a risk to SCL. The media has also begun to report on the outbreak and passengers are becoming increasingly aware. SCL has limited control over the extent of external communications and how the media decides to frame them. If misinformation is shared, false rumors are spread, or events and communications are framed negatively, the magnitude of this crisis will increase (Turner, 2023). The more misinformation that spreads, the harder it becomes for SCL to correct the narrative. The spreading of false narratives poses the threat of increasing unnecessary panic among stakeholders, leading to further damage to SCL's reputation, decreased communication effectiveness, and poor credibility. Our proposed plan tries to get ahead of this with short response times, transparency, and thorough communication. However, as the situation progresses, if passengers start to become unruly, their acceptance of the circumstances may change. SCL will do everything they can to dock the ship in a timely fashion, but that is up to the discretion of the Miami port authorities and the CDC. The lack of control over the timeline of the crisis makes SCL vulnerable if passengers begin to act out in response to impatience.

The First Line of Defense will potentially have to escalate the plan as more developments in the case take place. For example, if the medical personnel who broke protocol ends up testing positive and being a contributor to the outbreak, this will need to be addressed, especially since staff are already aware and expressing concern. This is a threat to SCL because it shows a lack of compliance from staff and a weakness in our ability to execute, and enforce, protocol. If not handled properly, this could increase the already existent uncertainty within stakeholders. There has also been chatter about complicit behavior from the four initially infected families. Accusations of fake vaccination cards and fraudulent forms are starting to be made. This again shows a weakness in SCL's ability to enforce their own guidelines. Passengers are starting to become aware of this as they have already been escalating incriminating social media posts from the infected passengers. The First Line of Defense will need to escalate the plan if the depth of this issue starts to expand. The crisis management plan includes messaging and tactics that are aimed at mitigating some of these potential outcomes. However, SCL's ability to respond and act is limited to the information that is currently available. SCL will need to be prepared to take more drastic measures if the situation worsens or other unexpected threats arise.





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## IX. APPENDIX

### Article 1 – Communications Policy

For this project's purposes, a corporate management policy from the Holland Board of Public Works was modified to illustrate the Communications Policy referenced in the Director of Internal Communication's Action Item. ("Holland Board of Public Works M004 - Communications," 2023)

#### Spartan Cruise Line Corporate Policy - 001

##### Purpose & Summary

Spartan Cruise Line recognizes that clear, open, and timely communication with its customers, the media, and the public is important and critical in its service. This policy helps SCL employees understand roles and responsibilities.

##### Policy

The Management Staff shall:

1. Recognize designated Information Officers(s) that will serve as official spokesperson(s).
2. Release approved requested and/or relevant information to appropriate parties through designated Information Officer(s) or their chosen alternate.
3. Uphold an open and credible communication standard for all avenues of communication.
4. Require third parties to obtain permission to represent Spartan Cruise Line image, including its logo, for any promotional purpose.
5. Establish and review Communications Procedures & Guidelines as needed to match the current communication needs of the SCL community.
6. Annually train all appropriate employees on Communication Procedures & Guidelines.