

“Say what you know. Say what you don’t know. Say what you’re doing about it.”

01 Speed beats perfection.

A 30-second holding statement posted in minutes outperforms a polished press release an hour later. *You don't need to have answers, you need to have presence.*

The moment people sense silence, rumor fills the void. Signal early: we know, we’re on it, here’s when you’ll hear from us next. Credibility is built in the follow-through.

- Pre-write 5 holding statements (medical, AV, weather, misconduct, no-show) — approved in advance. These statements buy you time and demonstrates control.
- Store templates somewhere accessible at 11pm, not in a binder on your desk
- Honor every timeline you commit to, even if the update is “still working on it”

NOTE

Template: “We are aware of [situation] and our team is actively responding. The safety of our [members/attendees] is our top priority. Update by [time].”

02 Your insiders hear first. Always.

A donor who learns bad news from Twitter loses trust. And they talk.

Major donors, board members, key partners expect to be treated as insiders. A brief, honest heads-up — even “we’re managing a situation, I’ll brief you by 3pm” — preserves the relationship. Silence reads as exclusion.

- Build a 5-person First-Call List before you need it: name, cell, backup
- A 2-sentence text at minute 10 outperforms a polished email at hour 4
- Assign one person to own these calls — not everyone, not whoever’s free

NOTE

Rule: Your most important stakeholders never learn about a crisis from the news.

03 Fill the narrative before rumor does.

Every crisis creates an information vacuum. Post updates even when there is nothing new to say.

Monitor what’s being said so you can correct misinformation in real time. One spokesperson, one message, unified before going public. Three people giving slightly different answers to three different platforms, attendees or reporters creates a second crisis.

- Designate ONE external spokesperson and ONE internal comms lead — they coordinate, one speaks
- Update publicly every 30 minutes during an active crisis, even just “still responding”
- Search your event hashtag every 10 minutes while it’s live

NOTE

When a false post goes viral: post your own factual update and link to it in a calm reply. Once.

Your action this week:

Text your ED or COO: “Crisis comms drill this quarter.”

Practice the 30-minute drill:

Pose a scenario to leadership. No prep. Time the response.