Crisis Communication

The Librarian’s Guide to Clear Communication Under Pressure

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Presenters

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It’s not if…but when
Higher Education Crisis Trends

- Academic Cuts
- Academic Integrity
- Financial Pressures
- Labor Strikes
- National Political Pressure
- Policy Decisions
- School Shootings
- Secretary of Education Changes
- State Legislative Decisions
- Student Activities
- Weather Events
Poll: What crises are you concerned about happening in your library?
What crises are you concerned about happening in your library?
A **time** of great danger or trouble whose outcome decides whether possible bad or good consequences will follow.
Your Audience

Upside and downside of reputational risk
LOGIC VS EMOTION
Emotional Intelligence

Self-Awareness
Self-Regulation
Motivation
Empathy
Social Skills
Poll: When your library or unit has been in a crisis, what was most challenging for you?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not understanding the full crisis picture</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to quickly respond to questions</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure from the audience to make a statement or fix a problem</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected additional work</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing my own emotions</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requested by administration to not respond or make comment</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Studies

Industry
Learn from outside our community.

Libraries
Learn from each other.
Unexpected loss of access to essential library resources and services. A strain on digital infrastructure caused intermittent access issues and slowed user access to library resources and services.

The lack of immediate and clear communication and resolution created uncertainty, eroded trust among library users and left staff feeling overwhelmed and inadequate.
A category four hurricane caused widespread flooding and devastation in the library’s area. The university was significantly affected, and its libraries faced various challenges.

The library’s response showcased a well-coordinated and adaptive approach to a crisis, focusing on communication, service continuity, collaboration, flexibility, empathy, and community support. Through this crisis the staff and community were informed and felt supported creating goodwill and long-term library support.
Executive Aura Crisis Model

- Post-Crisis
- Pre-Crisis
- Crisis
Expect the Unexpected

Identify **internal** and **external** needs.

Verify information.

Appoint the best people.

Share the facts ASAP.

Manage perceptions.

Plan for 24/7 info.
Poll: When your library or unit has been in a crisis, what was most challenging for you?
Rank the most important parts of how you send a message.

1st: The TONE of your voice
2nd: The WORDS you say
3rd: Your BODY LANGUAGE
The **words** you say send **7%** of the message.

The **tone** of voice you use sends **38%** of the message.

Your **body language** sends **55%** of the message.

If 100% is the total message, what % do you think communicates?

Albert Mehrabian
What’s most important...
That is not my area of expertise. From my point of view...
It would be more accurate to say...
Let me emphasize again...
What matters most for our library is...
And that reminds me...
Before we leave this subject, I need to add...
ABCs

A. Acknowledge that you can’t answer

B. Bridge to what you can say

C. Communicate your message
Poll: What did you observe?
FACTS
(Observations)

MEANINGS
(Interpretations)
Their needs, values, unique observations, data, unmet hopes, and lessons of past experiences

Choose appreciative inquiry: unconditionally positive questions into even the most difficult information or delivery.
Stay curious longer.

Our impulse is in the face of resistance is to judge, run, or debate. Replace the impulse with genuine curiosity.

Ask questions to deepen my understanding of this person’s perspective.

“This sounds important to you and I want to understand what makes this topic particularly important to you.”
Seeking Wisdom in Resistance

Suspend judgment and interpretation. Replace with appreciative investigation.

If someone uses strong interpretations, such as “this is already a mess,” investigate what they have seen or heard that adds up to that interpretation.

“I wonder what you’ve seen or heard that has you concerned?”

“What could success look like on the other side of this issue?”
Poll: Your library crisis plan
Does your library have a crisis plan?

- Yes: 44%
- No: 27%
- I don't know: 29%
Does your library have a crisis plan?

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Action Plan

- Create a crisis plan for your library.
- Get the team trained in difficult conversations, appreciative inquiry, and crisis communications.
- Practice scenarios so everyone is ready – be proactive.
- Evaluate every crisis situation with a post-op learning experience.
Thank You

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