

Crisis Can Strike Any Business. Is Your Company Prepared?

Career Development



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If you've watched the news lately (or ever), you've likely heard story after story about monumental crises affecting companies around the globe. Even beyond the headlines, crises large and small affect businesses of all sizes and across all industries — even more frequently in the digitally-connected world we live in.

Despite this, less than half of companies (49 percent) have a formal crisis communications plan, according to a 2023 Capterra survey of US business leaders. But of those who had one and had to use it, 98 percent say it was effective and 77 percent said it was *very* effective.

Emily Schmidt, an Emmy award-winning journalist and communications consultant and former CNN Newsource correspondent, shared her crisis communications insights with ACC members during the program, **Preparing for a Crisis: Acting on the Unimaginable**. Establishing a crisis communications plan is a crucial first step for in-house counsel.

"There is no way you can be 100 percent prepared," she said. "There's no way that you can 100 percent get it right, and that's a scary place to be. But it's also an empowering place to be because it means the more work we do now — the more coalition-building we do now, the more trying to understand we do now — the higher that number is going to be."

Schmidt emphasized practical steps that in-house counsel can take to prepare for the worst, including conducting risk assessments, implementing risk monitoring, and establishing clear communications channels. Corporate lawyers should also be sure to involve all necessary stakeholders in any crisis preparation.

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The communications or public relations function will most often be the key stakeholder to involve. But legal departments may at times find themselves as a counterweight to more fast-moving communications teams, according to Schmidt:

- While comms might want to respond with **speed**, legal may emphasize the need for **caution**.
- While comms can express interest in full **transparency**, legal must weigh confidentiality **considerations**.
- While comms may desire **consistency** in explaining a crisis, legal often looks for **flexibility** in adapting/evolving language.
- While comms is focused on a company's brand **reputation**, legal is often focused on the company's **liability**.
- While comms may approach a crisis from an **empathetic** point-of-view, legal will often need to remain neutral in how to assess (and address) a **crisis**.

Participants get the chance to share what concerns they are facing in their workplaces so that Schmidt can tailor the upcoming sessions on **In the Crisis: Finding Calm During the Storm** and **After the Crisis: Looking Back, Looking Forward** to the real-world needs of in-house counsel.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to learn more from Schmidt's experience and expertise.

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