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Crisis Communication Response in a Digitally Connected Tourism Company

Our eco resort, situated in Australia, involves the Avondale eco-resort project in South Wales. The Avondale Escarpment resort is the first ultra-luxury and wellness resort proposed in the Illawarra region. This project is a major remediation and rejuvenation initiative that will transform elements of the former Huntley and Avondale colliery into world-class tourism infrastructure for Wollongong and New South Wales. Nowadays, our resorts are facing social media backlash over environmental misconduct involving the Avondale eco resort project in South Wales. A private landfill operated by a backer of the 185 million dollar Avondale eco resort was fined 15,000 million dollars by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) for breaching landfill regulations. The incident raised significant concerns about the environmental Integrity of the proposed resorts and attracted public scrutiny. The role of head of corporate communication here is to manage a crisis strategy to deal with this situation.

Several authors have attempted to define a crisis to help improve their understanding of this phenomenon. Pauchant and Mitroff(1992:15) believe that a crisis is a “disruption that mphysically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumption, its subjective sense of self, its existential core.” Selbst (1978 in Faulkner 2001:136) defines a crisis as “any action or failure to act that interferes with an organisation’s ongoing functions, the acceptable attainment of its objectives, its viability or survival, or that has a detrimental personal effect as perceived by the majority of its employees, client or constituents”. Kash and Darling(1998:179) agree and claim that it is no longer a case if a business will face a crisis; it is rather a question of when, what type, and how prepared the organisation is to deal with it.

Traditional method ;

Immediate public response (First 1-2 hours)

Issue a public statement recognizing the EPA’s findings, showing concern, and detailing actions we're taking to resolve the issue. Within the first two hours, we can mobilize the crisis communication team to engage with stakeholders, the CEO, the legal sustainability officer, HR, and PR. Every facet of this crisis will be examined in our discussions. Our HR and Sustainability team is compiling comprehensive information regarding the alleged environmental misconduct. After that, we will be ready to draft the holding statement in this report. We acknowledge awareness of the concerns and promise a full response soon, and will distribute it to all the media channels. Here I will show which kind of statement we will make for media channels about environmental misconduct.

“We are aware of the concern being raised about our environmental practices. Sustainability is at the care of our mission, and we are taking these claims seriously. We are conducting a thorough review and will provide further updates shortly”.

Along with that, we will publish a digital strategy on social media. we give a PIN statement across Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook within 2-4 hours of a crisis misconduct.

Some team members look after the social media PIN statement, and we turn off the auto replies, but we monitor every comment closely. Also, we are cautious about genuine criticism comments and debate, but don't delete any genuinely debatable comments. We will try to respond to every comment with empathy and a promise of transparency. Launch a dedicated page on misconduct, showing a summary of the issue, including what steps have been taken, and what I should do in the further process. aspects covered on the page. we are updating this page from time to time.

Video message from CEO (24 hours)

In the next 24 hours, we will share a video message from our CEO. While this video is scripted, we intend it to be a sincere apology concerning this misconduct. Our primary concern is environmental safety. However, if we find ourselves to be victims of this misconduct, we accept full responsibility for any environmental harm caused. We take all ecological issues seriously. Additionally, we will share this video message on social media and embed it on our website to attract more followers.

Internal communication

Employee's email and internal announcement (3 hours)

Reinforce company values: During a crisis, it's vital to reaffirm our core company values, which form the basis for every decision and action we take. We remain committed to integrity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that even when faced with challenges, we act with honesty and openness to uphold the trust of our employees, customers, partners, and stakeholders. Our people-first philosophy continues to guide us, as we prioritize the safety, well-being, and support of our team members and communities. Collaboration and adaptability are crucial to our response approach; we harness the strength of our collective knowledge, diverse perspectives, and shared goals to navigate uncertainty with agility and resilience. Above all, we are driven by our long-term mission and vision, understanding that our actions today shape our identity for tomorrow. Upholding these values not only helps us endure the challenges but also strengthens our unity and determination to meet our responsibilities and commitments.

We want to reassure all employees that we are actively monitoring the Share, what we know current situation, and taking proactive measures to manage the crisis effectively. Our leadership team collaborates closely with relevant departments to evaluate risks, prioritize safety, and ensure continuity in operations. We have already introduced several precautionary and corrective measures, such as enhanced communication channels, updated safety protocols, and contingency planning to mitigate potential disruptions. Our aim is to reduce the impact on our people, customers, and business while remaining true to our values. We are dedicated to transparency and will keep sharing updates as new information arises. Your well-being and feedback are important to us, and we encourage everyone to voice any concerns or suggestions. Thank you for your ongoing professionalism and resilience as we navigate this challenge together.

Assure job security and sustainability goals: As we navigate the current challenges together, we want to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to both your job security and our

long-standing sustainability goals. We recognize that times of crisis can bring uncertainty, but please be assured that the well-being and stability of our team remain our top priority. We are taking proactive steps to ensure that every decision we make supports the continuity of your employment while also safeguarding the values that define us as an organization. Our sustainability efforts are not being put on hold; instead, they are being integrated into our crisis response strategies to ensure that we continue operating responsibly, ethically, and with long-term vision. Whether through reducing waste, conserving energy, or supporting community initiatives, we remain committed to building a more sustainable future, even in times of disruption. We deeply value your dedication and resilience, and we are confident that by working together with clarity, compassion, and purpose, we will emerge from this period stronger and more united than ever.

live Question/ answer/ Town Hall (48 hours)

In light of the ongoing challenges we are facing, we are opening a dedicated forum with our leadership team to actively engage in meaningful dialogue around crisis management. This initiative is designed to provide a transparent and inclusive space where employees at all levels can voice their concerns, ask questions, and share insights on how we can better navigate difficult circumstances together. We recognize that effective crisis response depends not only on strong leadership but also on the collective input, resilience, and adaptability of our entire organization. By fostering open communication and mutual understanding, we aim to align our strategies, clarify our priorities, and ensure that everyone feels supported, informed, and empowered to contribute. We encourage all team members to participate openly and constructively, as your perspective is invaluable to shaping the way forward.

Employee concern directly: We understand that the current situation has created a great deal of uncertainty and concern, and we want to speak to those feelings directly. Many of you have voiced valid questions about job security, workload expectations, safety measures, and the direction we're headed as an organization. First and foremost, your well-being—both physical and mental—remains our top priority. We acknowledge that this crisis has disrupted routines, created stress, and forced rapid change, and we don't take the impact on you and your families lightly. While we may not have all the answers today, we are committed to transparency, timely updates, and including your voices in our planning. Our leadership team is actively exploring every option to preserve jobs, support flexible work arrangements, and provide clear safety protocols for those on-site. We are also putting in place mechanisms to ensure you can share feedback and concerns directly with decision-makers. Please know that your dedication during this challenging time has not gone unnoticed, and together, we will navigate this crisis with empathy, resilience, and shared responsibility.

Frontline staff points: During a crisis, we must stay calm, informed, and unified in our response. As frontline staff, our role is to reinforce trust and stability by providing clear, consistent messages to our colleagues. First, acknowledge the situation honestly without speculation, and emphasize that leadership is actively monitoring and managing the issue. Reassure employees that their safety and well-being are the top priorities, and share any available factual updates, timelines, or changes in protocols. Encourage team members to

ask questions, voice concerns, and rely on official internal communication channels for accurate information. Remind them that support resources, such as HR or mental health services, are available. Reinforce the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and staying focused on our shared goals despite uncertainty. Lastly, express appreciation for everyone's efforts and commitment, and make it clear that leadership values transparency, feedback, and collaboration throughout the situation. Our steady presence and empathetic communication help anchor the team and promote a sense of continuity and confidence during challenging times.

Information and flow transparency

Information and flow transparency are fundamental to effective internal employee communication in crisis management. Such misconduct requires clear, consistent, and timely information during high-stress situations to remain aligned with the organization's response strategy. Transparent communication builds trust and fosters a sense of inclusion, allowing employees to feel informed and valued rather than isolated or uncertain. When information flows openly—both top-down from leadership and bottom-up from staff—it empowers employees to make informed decisions, adapt to evolving circumstances, and contribute meaningfully to recovery efforts. Transparency reduces misinformation, curtails rumors, and maintains morale, which are all critical to organizational resilience. Leadership must prioritize clarity, acknowledge uncertainty when necessary, and provide regular updates through appropriate channels. This includes using accessible language, offering opportunities for feedback, and ensuring communication reaches all employees, regardless of their role or location. In essence, transparent information flow not only supports operational continuity but also reinforces a culture of accountability, collaboration, and mutual respect during times of crisis.

Post-crisis evaluation and adaptation: After managing the immediate crisis, a comprehensive evaluation of the response strategies employed can yield valuable insights. In the wake of a crisis, post-crisis evaluation and adaptation are crucial elements of a strong crisis communication strategy, especially for a digitally connected tourism business like Avondale Eco-Resort in South Wales. Following a disruptive incident—whether environmental, reputational, or operational—the resort must conduct a thorough assessment of its crisis communication response to pinpoint both strengths and areas needing improvement. This process involves analyzing digital engagement metrics across various platforms, assessing internal coordination efficiency, and gathering feedback from stakeholders such as guests, staff, and local partners. Key performance indicators like response time, message clarity, and audience sentiment should be evaluated to gauge the effectiveness of communication in addressing stakeholders' informational and emotional needs. The resort must also assess how well its digital tools, including social media, email alerts, and website updates, function in delivering timely and accurate information. Informed by these findings, Avondale should update its crisis communication protocols, improve staff training, and invest in technology that enhances rapid response capabilities. Additionally, fostering robust relationships with the community and media during non-crisis times can lead to more effective communication in future incidents. Being transparent about lessons

learned and actions taken to prevent future crises will help restore public trust and strengthen Avondale's reputation as a resilient, guest-oriented eco-destination.

Metrics of Success for Avondale Eco-Resort: For a digitally connected tourism business like Avondale Eco-Resort in South Wales, a robust crisis communication response strategy is vital for safeguarding its brand, reassuring stakeholders, and maintaining trust in cases of misconduct. Such misconduct, ranging from environmental breaches to employee issues, can significantly harm the resort's eco-friendly reputation. The crisis communication plan should start with immediate, transparent internal reporting protocols and a dedicated crisis management team trained to respond swiftly and effectively across all digital platforms. Responses aimed at the public must be timely and consistent, beginning with an acknowledgment of the issue on the resort's website and social media, followed by regular updates, factual clarifications, and corrective action plans. A digital-first approach also requires monitoring social media sentiment, engaging directly with concerned guests or influencers, and leveraging SEO-optimized press releases to shape the online narrative. Importantly, the resort must show accountability by outlining concrete remedial measures, such as staff retraining, investing in sustainability audits, or partnering with local environmental organizations, and proactively communicating these initiatives. Success metrics for this strategy include a decrease in negative media coverage, enhanced online sentiment (monitored using social listening tools), positive feedback from stakeholders, retention of bookings with minimal cancellations, and quick response times. By merging ethical transparency with strategic digital engagement, Avondale Eco-Resort can not only navigate a crisis effectively but also strengthen its dedication to responsible tourism.

Conclusion: An effective crisis communication response for Avondale Eco-Resort in South Wales must prioritize transparency, speed, and empathy, especially due to digital platforms' scrutiny and rapid information sharing. The resort's strategy should focus on promptly acknowledging issues, maintaining clear internal communication, and engaging proactively on digital channels. Regular updates, sincere apologies when needed, and visible corrective actions will help rebuild stakeholder trust. A well-executed plan aligning with Avondale's eco-conscious values will mitigate reputational damage and strengthen long-term customer loyalty and public confidence.

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