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The Four Stages of Highly Effective Crisis Management: How to Manage the Media in the Digital Age by Jane Jordan-Meier

“I’d like my life back.” Those were the regretful words of BP Chief Executive Officer Tony Hayward during the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Jane Jordan-Meier categorizes this as an example of what not to say when handling a crisis. Throughout her book are thorough guidelines to follow for each and every media outlet imaginable for each of the four stages of a crisis.

Jordan-Meier earned a master’s degree in communication management and started her career as a journalist in Australia (Martinson, 2011). She then moved to corporate communication, headed a public relations company thereafter, and is now solely focused on licensed media and crisis management training with her company Media Skills (Jordan-Meier, 2011, p. xxiii).

The Four Stages is refreshing in that it examines crisis communication from the perspective of a practitioner who has helped real-world clients successfully navigate the seas of uncertainty as events spiraled out of control (Byars, 2013). In a video interview to promote her book Jordan-Meier recalls the first crisis she personally encountered and what she learned in handling that crisis (Martinson, 2011). These are the lessons she shares with the reader, and all 296 pages offer valuable information for businesses.

Crises can happen to anyone and it’s best to be prepared for when it comes. What is a crisis? “A crisis is always a significant disruption to a business, social environment, or organization. It results in national news media coverage and is, inevitably, a situation where the public needs information to make better decisions” (Jordan-Meier, 2011, p. 8). Many companies do not have a crisis communication plan. If they do, they don’t practice it and are unprepared when a crisis happens.

It is explained what constitutes as news worthy and the key ingredients to breaking news/crisis. Depending on how well you handle Stage One: Fact Finding and Stage Two: Unfolding Drama will determine how Stage Three: Finger Pointing and Stage

Four: Resolution and Fallout will play out (Jordan-Meier, 2011, p.44). At the end of every stage is a list of what to expect the media to do.

It is impressive how detailed Jordan-Meier expresses how to work social media and the mainstream media when representing your company. From how soon your company should tweet a brief statement (within the hour) to what your spokesperson should wear for an on-camera interview (depends on the crisis), all your bases are covered. Although the book was mainly written for companies in handling crisis, there is a strong focus on media and how they report. Everything written on what a company should do corresponds with the media's role.

Jordan-Meier's extensive knowledge is beneficial for those producing the news, my ultimate goal. When a crisis surfaces, not only is the company dealing with the situation, but so are the news. Both need to stay at the top of their game and *The Four Stages of Highly Effective Crisis Management* is complete with an array of scenarios for both parties, types of questions journalists will ask in each stage, and how to word the response.

This is a vital read for anyone pursuing a career in communications as aforementioned, crisis can happen to anyone. I urge the reader continue reading after Chapter 30. "The appendix is rich in resource material including sample press releases, step-by-step flow charts, and media briefing checklists" (Sayer, 2012). Keeping this book on your shelf is a smart decision, as I feel you'll learn something new every time you re-read.

Citations – American Psychological Association (APA), 6th Edition

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