

# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

How to Prepare and Execute a  
Sound Communications Plan When  
Dealing With a Crisis

**PAN**  
COMMUNICATIONS



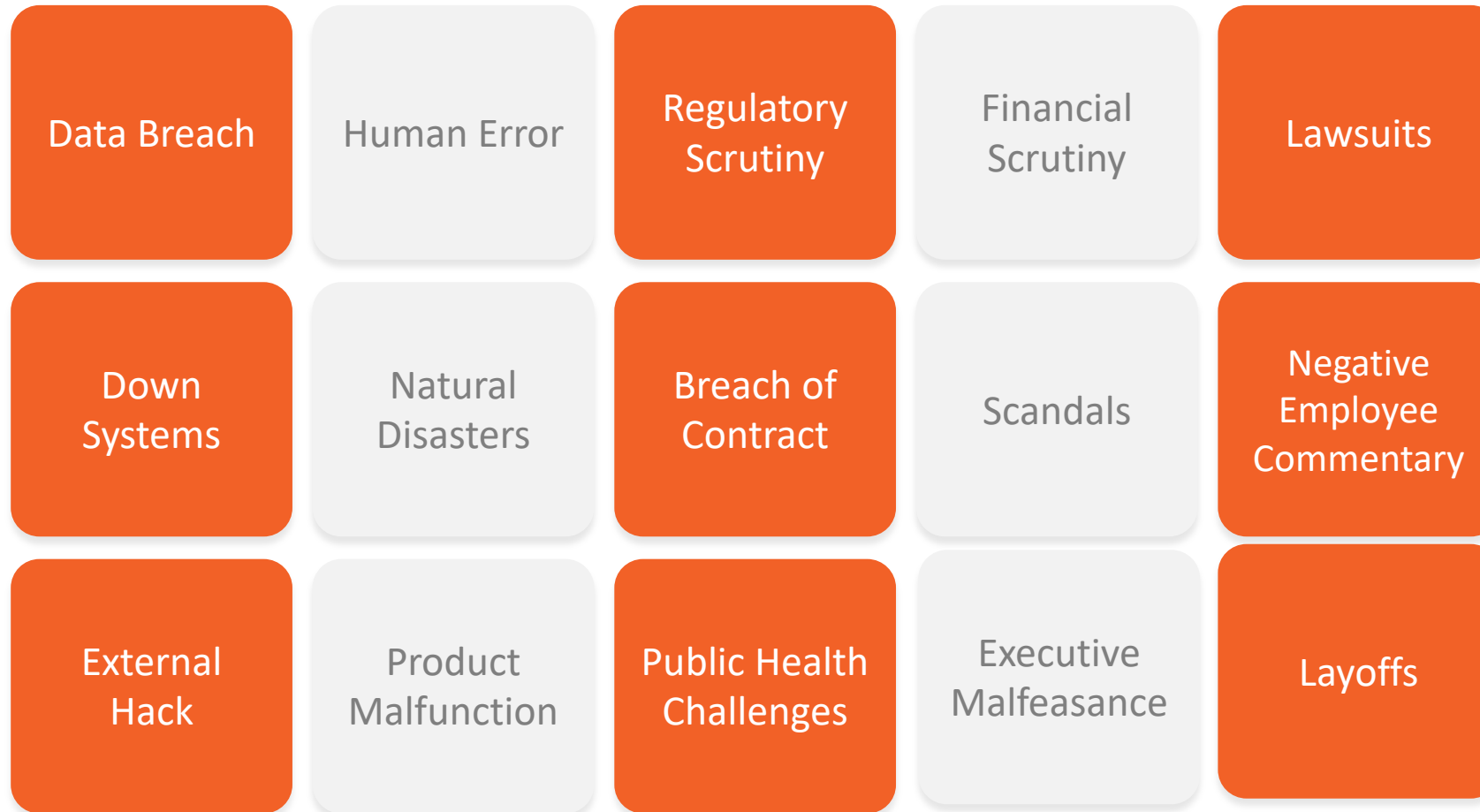
# Learning Objectives

This guide serves to outline the course of action for developing a crisis plan. You will learn:

- Ways to Identify the start of a crisis
- How to establish your chain of command
- What preparations are needed for each stage of the crisis
- Which tools are effective for developing messaging documents
- Best practices for partner, customer, media and social media communication

# UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS

# Mapping Crisis Scenarios





# Identifying the Crisis Team

The **core crisis team** is defined as the group that immediately convenes to discuss the crisis and next steps.

This can/should include:

- CEO & company executives
- The communications team
- Board members
- Outside legal counsel
- Human resources

Depending the nature of the crisis, additional internal stakeholders may need to get involved.

Examples:

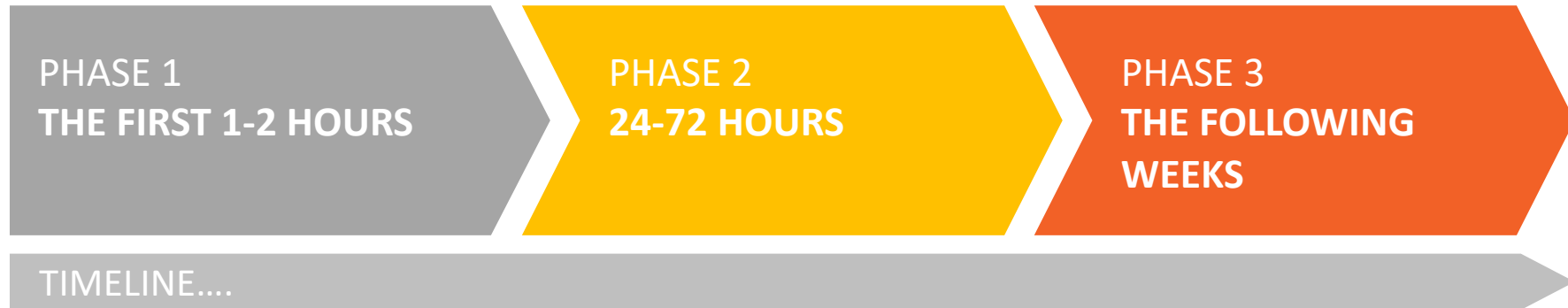
- General Counsel
- Customer representatives
- Other third-party partners
- Vendor partners (in the case of a product malfunction)

# Defining & Establishing Roles

TEAM	ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Core Crisis Comms Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing the crisis and defining the internal and external stakeholders who need to be involved</li><li>• Developing company's response and ultimate course of action</li><li>• Convening/discussing crisis on a regular basis</li></ul>
<b>Communications Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advising the core crisis comms teams</li><li>• Advising/developing communication to core audiences (internal and external) and working through approvals on communication with internal stakeholders and legal (as needed)</li><li>• Addressing media questions on the crisis</li><li>• Addressing appropriate course of action for comments and questions on social media</li><li>• Coordinating with additional internal stakeholders on their role in crisis comms</li><li>• Keeping core crisis comms team apprised on the course of action and where things stand</li><li>• Working with internal team and external teams for monitoring media and social channels</li></ul>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting core crisis comms team and advising on best practices for internal comms to employees</li><li>• Addressing employee questions, as needed</li></ul>
<b>Legal Counsel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting in approval of external communication</li><li>• Supporting core crisis comms team and advising on best practices/protocols</li></ul>
<b>Spokesperson/people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaking publicly about the incident (media interviews)</li></ul>

# STAGES OF THE CRISIS

# Stages of Crisis Management



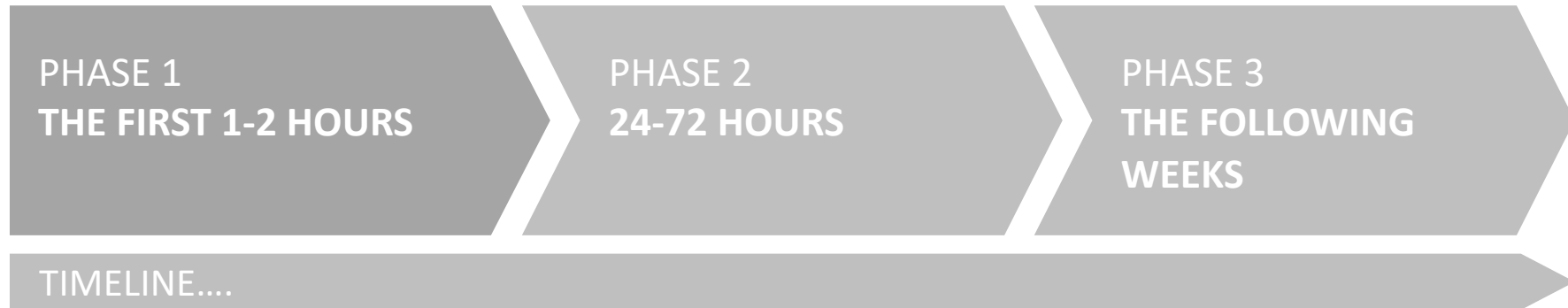
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*The greater the crisis, the more the communications required...*

*—Sir Howard Stringer, Chairman & CEO, Sony Corporation*

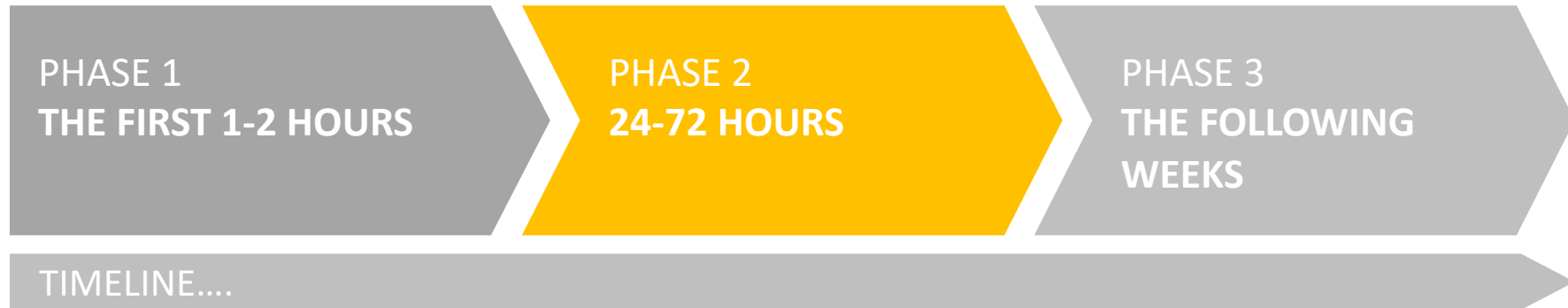
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# The First 1-2 Hours



- Gather core crisis management team immediately upon discovering/hearing of a crisis.
- Core crisis team convenes to discuss:
  - Level of crisis
  - Who is impacted and level of impact
  - If the crisis is public or likely to become public
  - Potential actions for addressing crisis
  - Additional internal stakeholders who need to be brought into the conversation
  - Defining external stakeholders who need to be communicated with (employees, customers, partners, investors, the media, social)
  - Defining immediate next steps, including roles and responsibilities for the crisis team
  - Establishing the monitoring of external channels (the press and social media) for communications management

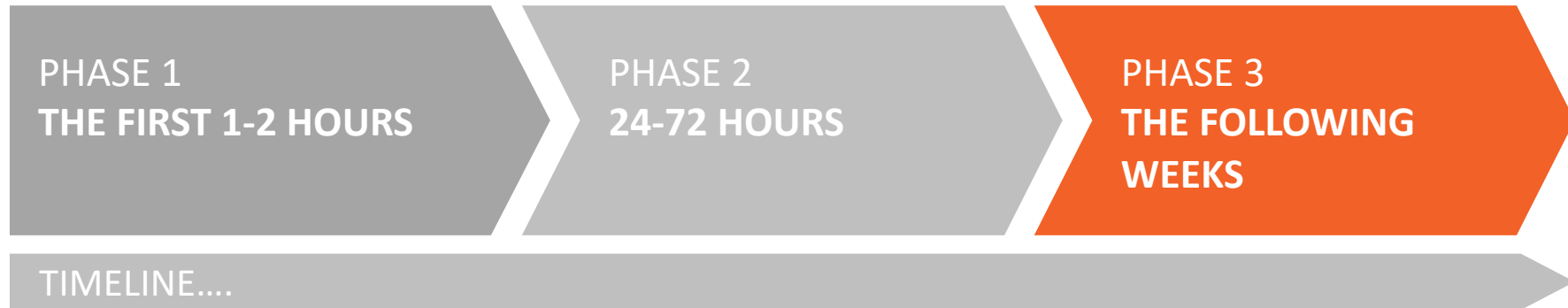
# 24-72 Hours



- Set up calls with additional internal stakeholders and external advisors/lawyers who need to be involved
- Prepare internal communication statements for employees
- Prepare immediate communication statements for key external audiences (as defined in the first 1-2 hours), including:
  - Key messages/FAQ
  - Holding statement
  - Media/public statement
- Define communication strategy and protocol, including:
  - Communication timing (immediate and subsequent) and distribution
  - Who the message is coming from
  - How external questions are funnelled up to the core crisis team and who is addressing those questions to the media and on social
- Continue to monitor external channels and advise on media or social commentary/reaction to minimize negative impact or misinformation



# The Following Weeks



- Communicate subsequent outcomes of the crisis (inquiries, investigations, etc.)
- Assess impact of crisis – from a customer, partner, investor and media standpoint – and where additional brand management may be needed to rebuild trust
- Devise longer-term campaigns/communications plan for driving the post-crisis conversation through thought leadership POVs and best practices
- Continue to monitor conversation across media and on social in case the conversation bubbles up again

# EXTERNAL MESSAGING

# The Situation

Your security partner identified a vulnerability in your internal systems, putting sensitive customer data at risk. They are currently running diagnostics to determine if any third parties gained access.

- **Scenario one:** The vulnerability was not exploited, and the security partner is able to patch the network.
- **Scenario two:** The security partner found that there was, in fact, a breach.



# Questions to Consider

1. To what extent did the vulnerability threaten customer data?
2. When exactly was the vulnerability identified?
3. How many customers are impacted?
4. Is the vulnerability still in place or has it been resolved?
5. What caused the vulnerability? Is someone to blame?
6. Who was impacted by the vulnerability?
7. What is the financial impact of the issue? Was revenue lost because of this?
8. How will the company prevent this from happening again?



# Develop a Response Strategy

## Business response:

- Identify source of issue
- Identify parties impacted
- Identify the financial cost of the damage
- Define the level of impact
- Prepare outreach strategy for communicating to parties impacted
- Put in safeguards to ensure impact doesn't spread

## Communication response:

- Build communication for customers affected
- Create specific communication for sales/support teams who work with the impacted customers
- Provide update to employees outlining issue and defining course of action if they receive inquiries
- Notify relevant third parties as needed
- Set up monitoring for media and social media mentions



## Sample Key Points

- Summers Systems has made all relevant parties aware of the situation and offered a temporary solution for impacted parties. (If accurate)
- Summers Systems is working closely with security partners and local law enforcement to fix the problem.
- Summers Systems will keep all relevant parties informed as updates happen.
- Summers Systems is taking steps to prevent this in the future.
- Summers Systems is accepting any financial responsibility for the issues caused. (If accurate)





## Sample Holding Statement

“  
*Summers Systems was made aware of a network vulnerability this morning and we are currently working with security partner Angelus, as well as local law enforcement to identify the extent of impact to customers, partners and employees. We will continue to keep those involved updated on our progress and ensure that customer needs are met.*”

# Employee Communication

- Ensure your employees receive the news from you
- Give clear instructions on external communication
- Offer HR resources and outside support if needed
- Communicate social media engagement and processes
- Be proactive about sharing updates
- Give customer-facing team members the right tools and messaging

# Communicating with the Customer

Before communicating anything to your customers, you must ensure that every customer-facing team is aware of the crisis. This may include:

- **Marketing:** They may want or need to adjust outgoing messaging during the crisis. Sending an email blast encouraging people to try a new feature may not be received well by customers when they can't use your product at all.
- **Public Relations and Legal:** These teams may need to get involved if the crisis has an extraordinarily large customer impact, or for crises that involve legal issues.
- **Sales, Account Management, Customer Success and Executives:** All these teams need to know when a crisis is ongoing, so they don't go into a meeting with a customer or prospect and get ambushed with questions they don't have answers for.
- **Key customers and partners:** Certain customers may expect proactive or verbal confirmation of crisis events as part of your support contract. Similarly, resellers or other partners might need to be kept apprised of the situation in the same way that internal customer-facing teams would.

Source: Zendesk

# Crisis FAQ: What to Include

FAQs are internal and external tools that provide a roadmap for how to communicate with employees, customers, media and other third parties.

- Acknowledgement of the issue
- Details about the occurrence (date/time)
- How the company discovered the issue
- Who was alerted and how
- Actions taken once the issue was discovered
- Real or potential effects
- Steps taken to prevent a reoccurrence
- Contact information



## Sample FAQ Questions

- When was the vulnerability discovered and how?
- Who is impacted?
- How are they impacted?
- Is the crisis under control or still happening?
- When does the company expect it to be under control?
- What steps is the company taking to get it under control?
- How is the company addressing the crisis with its customers and partners?
- What was the financial impact?





# Other Considerations

- Build relationships with the local media and your community partners
- Media train your key spokespeople
- Understand the language impact (create translations for your customers in other countries and/or regions)
- Remain agile and be prepared to pivot based on outcomes and future developments





# Media Dos & Don'ts

## Do

- ✓ Appoint a single spokesperson for addressing the media
- ✓ Respond promptly so you don't appear to be avoiding the situation
- ✓ Prepare a clear and succinct statement
- ✓ Make yourself available for addressing media questions
- ✓ Be honest and sincere

## Don't

- Comment on rumors or speculation
- Say more than you know
- Make promises on when you'll have the answers
- Allow employees to speak to the press (unless vetted by comms)

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

# Social Media Best Practices

- Maintain control over your channels (understand who has access, change passwords/remove admins once an employee departs)
- Manage rapid response inquiries by developing a proactive response plan
- Direct the conversation off public channels as much as possible
- Track hashtags and influencers associated with your crisis to understand how the conversation is developing
- Remain consistent with messaging as reporters often track and quote social media
- Educate your employees about how to respond to crisis inquiries
- Educate yourself on how other companies handled similar situations



# Social Media Dos and Don'ts

## Do

- ✓ Appoint a single person for responding to questions/comments on social
- ✓ Monitor and respond promptly to questions and comments
- ✓ Prepare canned responses for questions and comments, but remain authentic
- ✓ Take questions/concerns offline when possible
- ✓ Communicate appropriate information/updates via social channels as available

## Don't

- Comment on rumors or speculation
- Say more than you know
- Engage in a negative back/forth on the crisis
- Allow employees to comment on the crisis on social

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