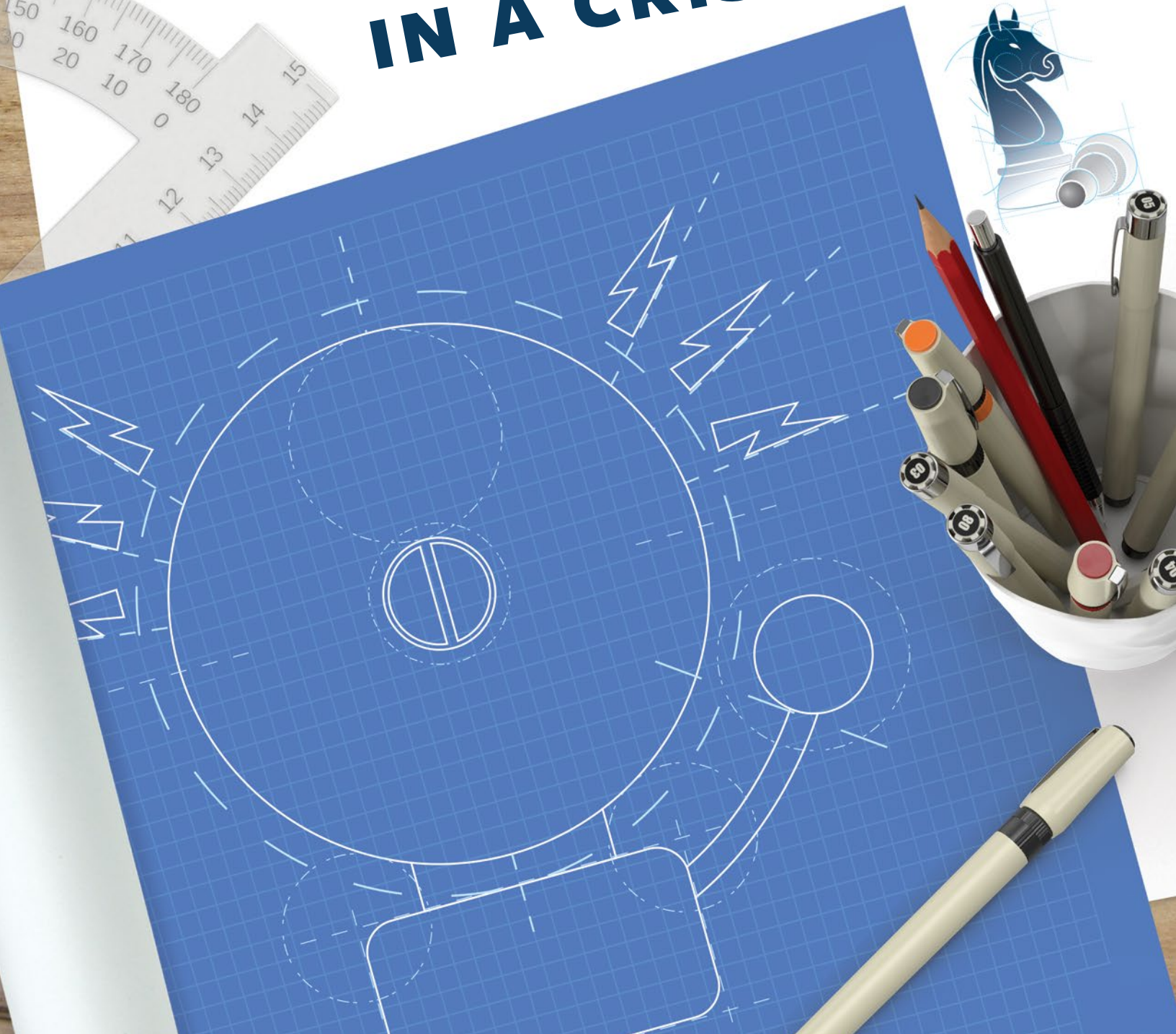
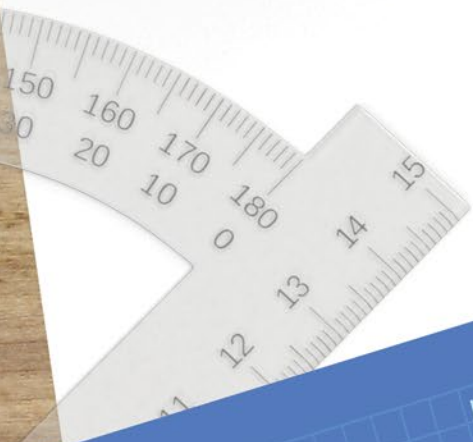




HOW TO

COMMUNICATE **IN A CRISIS**



PRO TIP:

*In times of crisis,
remember...
Don't Panic. Pivot.*

A CRISIS IS A TIME FOR **CLEAR COMMUNICATION.**

Crisis in any form demands clarity for survival. Whether a crisis of a personal nature, manmade or a natural disaster, clear communication is paramount to save or build a reputation.

Successful organizations navigate trying times by designing a crisis communications strategy of effective, clear and pro-active messaging to their target audience across offline and online channels.

MESSAGE: DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE

The first step is to identify your goal during a time of crisis. What is your organization's specific goal? For example, is it increased brand or campaign awareness, to be an informative resource, or to increase sales of a product? Whatever it is, make sure you define your communications goal at the beginning.

When designing a message during a time of crisis, it is critical to cut through the noise and confusion.

PRO TIP: Be concise and keep it simple.

Tailor this message to your target audience to make sure it aligns with what they want and need to hear. If you ignore the crisis, you risk coming off as tone deaf. If you embrace the concerns of your voters or consumers, you show how you can help alleviate those concerns. That can take the form of proactively taking steps to assist the most vulnerable members of your community, sharing critical information from state officials, advocating for local businesses, or offering discounts on in-demand services or products.

It is critical when forming your messaging that it DOES NOT: create panic; rely on unsourced/potentially inaccurate information; or appear to be coming from an expert (if you are not an expert).

DATA: IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Once you have framed a goal and message, the next step is to identify the WHO. **Who is most vital for your organization to communicate with at this time?** Once that question is answered, the next is HOW do I find my audience?

There are multiple options for identifying an audience for communication: your existing data; voter file data matched to mobile devices; geo-targeting based on location; and a vast amount of commercial consumer data are all examples of data sources for your audience.

Sample target audiences include:

- **For Elected Officials** – All constituents in their jurisdiction or those constituents most negatively impacted by a crisis, such as Seniors or Parents of School-Aged Children
- **For Campaigns/Political Organizations** – Volunteers, party-members, and/or voters likely to vote in an upcoming election
- **For Non-Profits/Trade Associations** – Key stakeholders such as members, elected officials, donors or your existing online following
- **For Businesses** – Your current customers, prospective customers, or even your employees

TACTICS: CUT THROUGH THE NOISE AND DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE TO YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Once you have identified what you want to say, who you want to say it to, and how you are going to find them, the final step is to deliver that message to your audience in the most targeted and cost-efficient manner.

The below platforms and tactics are tried-and-true solutions that ensure you increase the reach of your message across online and offline platforms.

- **WEBSITE:** A website is a must in any crisis response. People expect a resource online where they can get more information. Websites should have information about the issue of concern and how it affects them. Make sure the site is easy to navigate, is mobile-friendly, and can easily be changed as situations evolve.
- **SEARCH ADVERTISING:** When people want more information, they go to search engines online. That is why search ads are essential in crisis communications. Your ads will meet people when they are looking for information on your topic. Use ads to direct people to your website where they can learn more or take an action.
- **DIRECT MAIL:** Mail is a trusted form of communication because it is personal. In times of crisis, mail is a good vehicle for distributing reliable information. Examples include:
 - Postcards that direct individuals to hotlines or websites for more information
 - Personal letters that focus on human elements
 - Informational flyers with resources and explanations
- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Social media platforms are communities of individuals connected to each other. That is why social media is a great tool to quickly spread your message and provide updates. Your posts also can be promoted to audiences to grow their reach.
- **DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS:** Display ads run on apps and websites and are comprised of image ads or short animations. They are best used for quick informational messages and generating traffic to a website. Use display ads for:
 - Quick messages
 - Getting sign ups/opt-ins
 - Repairing brand reputation
- **ONLINE VIDEO:** Video combines sight, sound, and motion to create a powerful experience. It is very effective in persuading people. It can be used in a crisis to build consumer confidence, dispel myths, or share important information. Videos can be professionally produced, or, if time and resources do not allow, self-shot on smartphones. They can convey a lot of information in a short period of time but need to be brief and concise just like the rest of your message. A lengthy, rambling video will ruin your credibility.
- **TEXT MESSAGING:** Text messages have a near 100% open rate and are a quick and easy way to get a message out. Use text messages for quick and short updates, especially when time is of the essence. They can be used for:
 - Sending critical/time sensitive information
 - Quickly receiving simple feedback
 - Important health/safety updates

CONCLUSION

Clarity of purpose, message, and audience is the key to surviving and even thriving in times of great challenge. Pivot your organization's strategy – rather than panic – to utilize this time to increase your awareness and strengthen the loyalty and confidence of your target audience.

And remember ...

RIGHT MESSAGE, RIGHT AUDIENCE,
RIGHT PLATFORM, RIGHT TIME,
EVEN IN TIMES OF CRISIS.



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