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## Seven warning signs a crisis is imminent:

A crisis is any internal or external event that causes an interruption of normal business operations *and* threatens your organization's reputation. Your only goal: end the crisis as quickly as possible and return to business as usual.

Here are seven warning signs a crisis may be looming.

1. Matters that attract unwanted media attention or give rise to a dramatically increased level of commentary on the web.
2. Incidents that involve serious personal injury, death or jeopardize public safety.
3. Activities that may cause law enforcement and/or regulatory involvement.
4. Matters that result in significant work stoppages or production delays.
5. Behavior by managers or employees that reflects badly on your company's reputation.
6. Actions by competitors or others – including rumors – that threaten financial performance or customer or investor confidence.
7. Be especially alert to “smoldering crises,” such as drops in stock value or sales, an employee exodus, pending lawsuits or government investigations.

Smoldering crises are often self-inflicted. For example, consolidations and restructurings with subsequent layoffs and facility closures are potentially volatile situations that should be properly anticipated. The most damage to your reputation can stem not from the event, but from management's failure to plan accordingly.

Heed these warnings, and ask yourself: Is there a good chance this situation will escalate if left unattended?

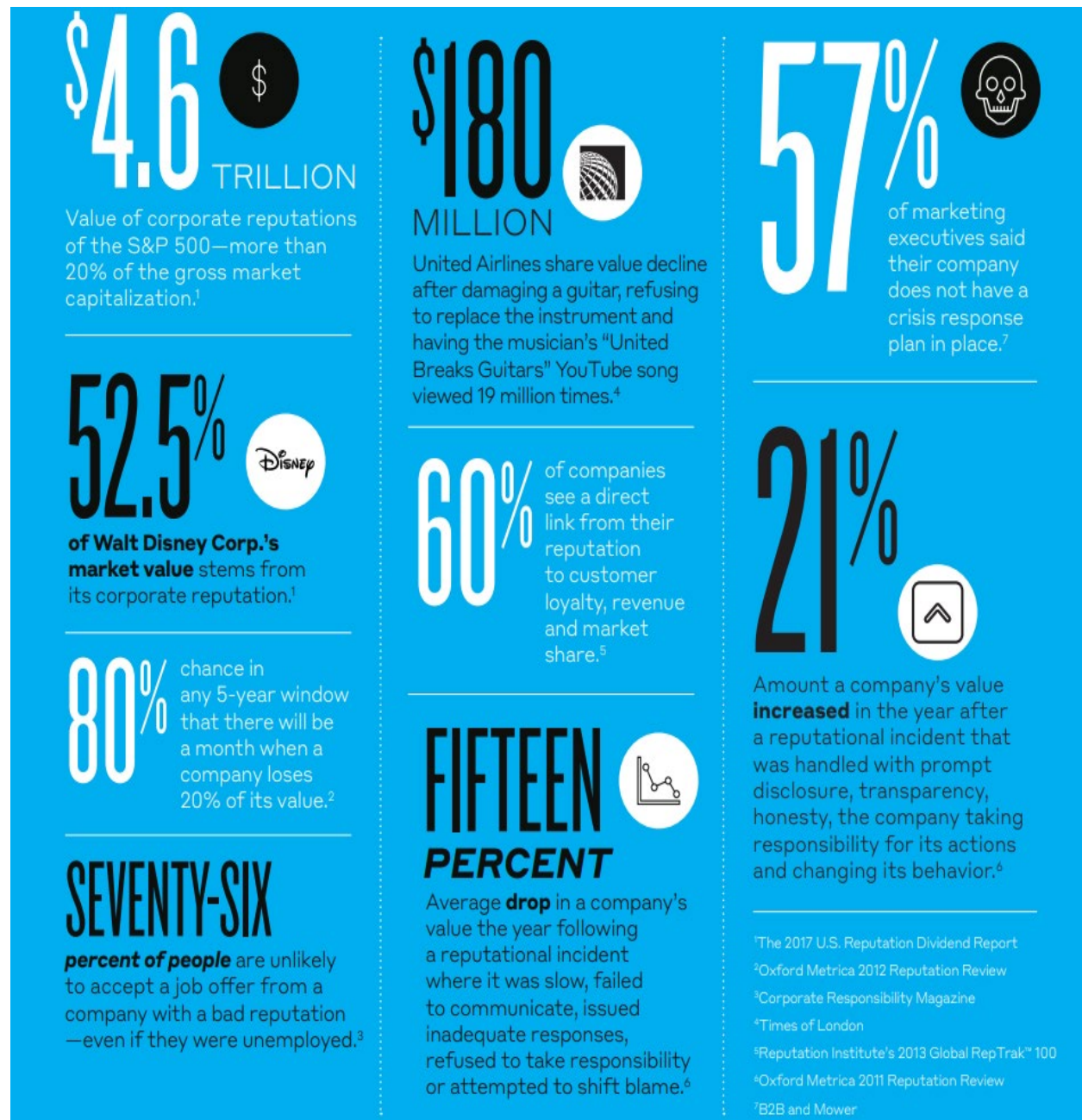


## Guiding principles for crisis communications:

- ☐ Facts are your most powerful tool for managing crisis communications. They occupy space that would otherwise be filled with rumor and speculation. If you want people to hear your side of the story, level with them. Facts are specific. Platitudes are ignored.
- ☐ Know how to present your facts clearly and quickly – fewer than 20 seconds.
- ☐ Get all the bad news out at once on a carefully planned basis. Covering up bad news never helps in the long run. People can take bad news, and they respond to it far more positively than they do to uncertainty, unanswered questions, and shifty responses.
- ☐ Avoid all speculation and premature announcement.
- ☐ Before you spend time thinking about answers, figure out what you will be asked. Know what your audience wants and expects. Rehearse possible questions ahead of time. Knowing your messages and how to use them is the key to communicating well.
- ☐ Never lie. People only support organizations they trust. Tell the truth. Even if it hurts. Candor receives more positive attention than "no comment" and defuses hostility.
- ☐ "No comment" is not an option. Remaining silent means you agree with your critics, which often equals "Guilty as charged".
- ☐ Follow a "full disclosure" principle. Give all known information that has been factually established except for admission of fault.
- ☐ Communicate frequently, as often as possible, whenever new information is ready to deliver.
- ☐ Manage emotions. Be calm. Keep your tone down and don't be combative if questions turn hostile. If a questioner attacks your information or your credibility, hold your ground. Repeat your key message points, and don't go on the defensive.
- ☐ Correct any false statements immediately. Object to invalid statements or misleading characterizations.
- ☐ Assume everything is "on the record." Deliver your message with the facts, make your point and stop. Don't speculate.
- ☐ Be human. Demonstrate compassion.
- ☐ Admit mistakes. Do so with honesty and humility. You can defuse a hostile situation by exposing your humanness.



## Reputation management infographic:





## For your crisis communication needs:

### ▮ About Mower

We work as a single firm with offices in ten top cities.  
That way we can collaborate to match our projects based  
on our people's passions, not place.

Albany, NY

Buffalo, NY

Cincinnati, OH

Atlanta, GA

Charlotte, NC

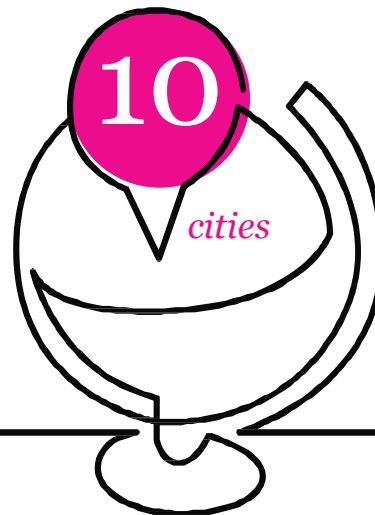
Rochester, NY

Boston, MA

Chicago, IL

Syracuse, NY

New York City, NY



**mower**

thank you

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