Reputational Threats Online: Social media as a simultaneous agent of crisis and tool for response and resolution in the case study of an American academic library

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Presentation Outcomes

- Recognize the potential for social media to act as both an agent of crisis and as a means for crisis communication and response.

- Consider possible reputational threats online that may exist for your organization/brand upon review of the presented UNF reputational threat case.

- Identify possible preparation opportunities and solutions for reputational threats on social media using Social Listening.

- Discuss pragmatic implications and recommendations.
Social Media: Cause of Crisis & Crisis Communication Tool

Lakewood Church • @lakewoodch • 11h
Please bring these items to Lakewood Church, Circle Drive off Timmons St. LakewoodChurch.com/Relief

Lakewood Church • @lakewoodch • 11h
Beginning at 12 Noon tomorrow we are collecting infant and adult diapers, baby formula and baby food.

Lakewood Church • @lakewoodch • 11h
Coordinating with the city, Lakewood is a collection site for distributing supplies to the Houston area shelters. LakewoodChurch.com/Relief

Lakewood Church • @lakewoodch • 12h
We will get through this storm together. Are you able to volunteer? Help us help others. Click here: LakewoodChurch.com/Relief

Joel Osteen • @JoelOsteen
Victoria & I are praying for everyone affected by Hurricane Harvey. Please join us as we pray for the safety of our Texas friends & family.

8:39 p.m. • 26 Aug 17
UNF Case Study: What Went Wrong

Posted to UNF Student Union Facebook page on April 17, 2017 at 11:17am (two weeks before finals)

“Finals are frustrating, but remember…”
#MakeYouSmileMonday #LoveUNF #SWOOPLife

UNF Library Facebook Page @unflibrary tagged by the Student Union
UNF Case Study: The Fallout

• 24 hours later, the post went viral
  – 189 reactions (Like, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry)
  – 181 shares
    • “Where is this poster?” “The UNF Library”
    • “Our library is savage AF”
  – University President received “official call of action” from a non-campus organization that advocates for students with mental health/emotional health issues
  – The President forwarded message to Library Dean and other University admins
UNF Case Study: How We Responded

• Contacted Student Union marketing staff member asking for support in controlling the situation

• Replied to students who commented on and/or shared the photo on Facebook
  – Our goal is to build students up, not tear them down

• Message sent to Library Administration
  – “I’ve responded to the negative comments... the poster is NOT on display in the library, and we do not condone its message.”
UNF Case Study: Lessons Learned

- Accentuate the Positive
- Eliminate the Negative
- Plan for future social media crises
- Revel in the small successes
Importance of Social Listening in Online Crisis Communication

- Stewart & Arnold (2017) define social listening as “an active process of attending to, observing, interpreting, and responding to a variety of stimuli through mediated, electronic, and social channels.”

- Social Listening invites prompt response to online threats.
Additional Recommendations

- Practice Social Listening routinely
- Prepare for potential crises
  - Identify clear target audiences
  - Maintain a social presence on relevant platforms
  - Readily prepare and adapt messages according to crisis and audience needs
- Be responsive and engage with your consumers online
Questions?

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http://www.unf.edu/library/
References


