

Crisis Communications on the Web

Thank you for attending Geonetric's August, 2007 Webinar. This takeaway document includes a **3 top ten lists detailing the steps to take before, during and after a crisis.**

We hope to see you in next month's presentation: **"Understanding Web Accessibility," presented at 2:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time, September 20 and 24, 2007.**



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Crisis Communication Top Ten Lists

Before the Crisis

- 1.** Define crisis communications scenarios and match each with the appropriate spokesperson in your organization.
- 2.** Talk with your hospital's crisis preparedness team and make sure the Web team is included in the process so you'll be notified when a crisis occurs.
- 3.** Meet with your I.T. team to discuss potential bandwidth issues and disaster recovery options.
- 4.** Create a process for updating your Web site in an emergency, including if you have to be offsite. Clearly define roles and responsibilities.
- 5.** Conduct regular drills – at least annually.
- 6.** Develop a 'dark site' or at least a 'graphics-light' version of your home page.
- 7.** Prepare message outlines that can be filled in with information specific to the crisis.
- 8.** Review your plan and messages with your attorneys. Determine ahead of time what is appropriate and how decisions will be made in the heat of the crisis.
- 9.** Look at your "Contact Us" forms and who is handling the submissions. Decide if you will make changes in a crisis – for example, directing incoming requests to your call center or consolidating all incoming forms and redirecting them through your crisis team.
- 10.** Create an "Emergency Readiness" section on your site today. Include links to government resources such as: www.cdc.gov, www.ready.gov, www.who.in, www.pandemicflu.gov, www.ftc.gov/idtheft, www.redcross.org

During the Crisis

- 1.** Immediately update your home page. Make sure the messages (graphics and text) on your home page aren't contradictory or inappropriate to the situation.
- 2.** Publish information immediately as it becomes available. Balance the goal of transparency with privacy requirements.
- 3.** Add to the story as it develops. Include photos, statistics and details to put the story in context and make it understandable.
- 4.** Work hand-in-hand with your crisis communications team to ensure that messages are timely and consistent through all channels, including the Web site.
- 5.** Stay in close contact with your I.T. team to track site performance and monitor how well you're able to handle any increased bandwidth.
- 6.** Check that the search results on your site are directing site visitors to the appropriate page. If possible, manually promote your crisis information page to the top of the list.
- 7.** Search on the Internet to see what others are saying and decide if and how you want to respond.
- 8.** Find ways that people can help. Direct them to the Red Cross for financial contributions or blood donations, for example.
- 9.** Be sure to monitor your "Contact Us" form submissions and handle responses as needed.
- 10.** Think clearly about the needs of your primary audiences – patients, victims, their families, and employees. Make decisions that align with their best interests.

After the Crisis

1. Update your home page or take down the 'dark site' when appropriate.
2. Replace your "Contact Us" forms if you took them down, or return to the before-crisis process.
3. If appropriate, thank the public for helping during the crisis – donated blood, set up cots, gave vocal support, etc.
4. Decide how much of the crisis information will remain on the site and for how long.
5. Continue to monitor the Internet for how the public is responding. Make sure that your view of the crisis being over is accurate.
6. Conduct a lessons-learned with the entire crisis communications team to discuss what went well and what could be improved next time.
7. Conduct a lessons-learned with the I.T. team to determine if your process and Web infrastructure were appropriate for the situation.
8. Conduct a lessons-learned with the Web team to review your process as well as evaluate your online presence during the crisis.
9. Based on feedback, update your plan and make adjustments to team roles and responsibilities.
10. Thank all the people who worked what were undoubtedly long hours in difficult conditions. Recognize and appreciate the value that you and your team provided – even if it didn't all go perfectly.