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ONLINE CRISIS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT SEMINAR – SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

London, 19 November 2014

These supplementary notes are based on the seminar presentation slides, with additional information. They accompany the slides but may be read separately.

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1.0 EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Three examples of unexpected events in November we discussed briefly at the beginning of the seminar, two of which were ‘breaking news’ on the day (19 November 2014), were:

- i) #AlexFromTarget
- ii) Broadway Hotel - Couple ‘fined’ £100 by hotel for a bad Trip Adviser review.
- iii) Bexleyheath Academy - Inner London Crown Court were told Mr Stuart Kerner, an ethics teacher and Assistant Vice-Principal at Bexleyheath Academy, “gave in to temptation”, pursuing a secret affair with a girl around the school.

2.0 THE GROWTH OF ONLINE INFLUENCE

The rapid development and distribution of sophisticated, miniaturised digital communications technology, with the growth in use of mobile devices and software applications (apps) - such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat - means that information can be communicated almost instantaneously via text messages, images and video.

There is no doubting the popularity of the Internet and the proliferation of smartphone technology (which puts the ability both to make and distribute text and images in the hands of most people of all ages):

- * 44.3 million adults (87%) in the UK used the Internet in Q4 2013.
- * Almost all (99%) 16 to 24 year olds have used the Internet, compared with just over a third (36%) of adults aged over 75.
- * 59% of children aged 10 have used a social network.
- * Teenagers spend about six hours a day online (their parents think their kids spend only four hours).



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- * 64% of teen Internet users have access to a smartphone and 67% to a tablet.
- * 75% of young people claim they could not live without the Internet.
- * London has the highest proportion of Internet users (90%); Northern Ireland the lowest (79%).

As a result of this new 'digitally connected world', people of all ages, aptitudes and demographics (including pupils/students, staff, parents and other members of a learning community) can act as 'citizen journalists', recording and reporting on events as they happen.

Reports, stories and multimedia can be associated directly with an institution and/or its members, uploaded and shared, commented on, developed and stored without reference to the institution's administration.

This means the reputation of a School, College or University can be enhanced or damaged locally, regionally, nationally or even internationally before those responsible for the institution (and its 'brand image') are even aware of a potential opportunity or problem.

3.0 REPUTATION MATTERS

No question, reputation matters. In the past a learning institution, like most businesses and organisations outside the education sector, could identify a story or an event that might impact on their reputation and attempt to 'manage' the situation early, hoping to maximise the opportunity for positive promotion and/or mitigate any negative repercussions.

However 'connectivity' and easy information dissemination via the Internet and associated online communications, and the availability of digital devices with software and cameras built-in, has made reputation management in the digital era very challenging, as identified by Deloitte in their 'Exploring Strategic Risk' report (2013):

"Reputation risk is now the biggest risk concern, due in large measure to the rise of social media, which enables instantaneous global communications that make it harder for companies to control how they are perceived in the marketplace."

In their report 'Understanding the Economics of IT Risk and Reputation (2013)' the IBM Corporation found that *"...reputation and brand damage represents the single largest potential cost to the organisation of the six common cost categories examined..."*



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Concern about reputation is nothing new, leaders of organisations of all sizes have been concerned about reputation for many years; Warren Buffet famously commented: *“If you lose dollars for the firm by bad decisions, I will be very understanding. If you lose reputation for the firm, I will be ruthless.”*

Indeed writers have long recognised that image is important, Victor Hugo (Les Misérables) wrote: *“Whether true or false, what is said about men often has as much influence on their lives, and particularly on their destinies, as what they do.”*

4.0 ABOUT ‘ONLINE CRISIS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT’

4.1 DEFINING ‘ONLINE CRISIS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT’

For the purposes of our training we consider ‘online crisis reputation management’ to be the process by which a school or college deals with an ‘event’ involving digital communications (platforms and channels) with 3 common elements:

- 1) a threat to the School’s reputation,
- 2) the element of surprise,
- 3) a short decision time.

Examples include:

- negative comments or images that threaten to “go viral”,
- an accidental post by someone associated with the School,
- an online reaction to something ‘offline’.

In responding to such issues the “must dos” include, where possible:

- Earning respect.
- Embracing transparency.
- Monitoring what people say.
- Reacting positively.

4.2 KEY ELEMENTS OF ‘ONLINE CRISIS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT’



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The key elements of any effort to develop a crisis response for online reputation management include:

- **Preparation and Planning** - the work must begin now... not when a crisis erupts.
- **Knowhow** - identifying potential problem areas, researching background information (rules and regulations, legislation, health & safety, key personnel, contacts etc).
- **Resources** - expertise, guidance, human resource, technology, support (influencer and advocate relationships) etc.
- **Intelligence** - understanding what people are saying, what competitors are doing, broader issues that are relevant etc, through an on-going process of 'Social Listening' and 'Online Monitoring' (collecting, separating, analysing and visualising social data).
- **Attitude** - context is everything but pre-thinking on issues of philosophy, style, tone of voice etc is helpful, together with consistency of action, respect for all parties and clarity over facts (and the degree of openness and transparency possible).
- **Analysis and Review** - implementing analytical tools (like Google Analytics) and regularly reviewing the institution's online profile and other relevant information will help with the process of continuous improvement and contribute to the measurement of the 'return on investment'.
- **Continuous Improvement** - developing an effective crisis reputation management process requires continuous development and improvement, with the need to update information, develop expertise, foster contacts, utilise new tools etc.

No institution, business or organisation can prevent problems developing that may threaten its reputation, what matters (in terms of 'brand image') is how those involved respond:

"It is not always the cause of the disaster that people remember but the handling of the aftermath by the institution involved."

4.3 FIRST STEPS... THE HERE & NOW (REVIEW)

Preparation is everything in dealing with a crisis that may come with little or no warning, at any time of day or night.

Inevitably the degree to which an institution is prepared to handle any possible crisis will make all the difference to the speed with which it can react, the appropriateness of the reaction(s) and the likelihood a situation can be exploited positively or, at the very least, any potential negative impact minimised.



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Many Schools, Colleges and Universities will focus on their online presence when reviewing and re-developing their website and social media but then direct most of their attention to other aspects of their marketing after the period of intense activity.

As a result the institution's website and presence on third-party platforms may become less relevant, content may become dated and inaccurate, branding may tire, old links break etc.

It is therefore important to undertake a regular digital communications audit of all online presence for the institution. For each platform, channel and network you should review and identify:

- **Platform/channel/network name and details** - what, where, why, how etc.
- **Purpose** - what purpose does your presence serve (what is the positioning in the marketing mix)?
- **Target audience(s)** - who are you trying to target through this presence, why and how effective is it? How consistent is the targeting alongside other online (and offline) activity and what is the 'fit'? How well are the expectations of your audiences being managed and met?
- **Ownership, access and control** - who has ownership/control of each of your presence, who has access and to what degree, what are the account names/profiles and access details (passwords etc)?
- **Management, expertise, responsibility** - who is managing the presence day to day, what is their level of expertise and is any additional training or support needed (in preparation for managing a crisis through that presence)?
- **Resources (inc Tools)** - what resources are currently available to you, how are you using them, what tools should you be using?
- **Brand consistency** - is there brand consistency across all online presence - in terms of brand image (logos, colours, fonts etc), style, tone of voice etc?
- **Set-up, Functionality, Links, Ground-rules** - how well do you understand the platform/channel/network's functionality and is it set-up correctly to maximise this functionality for your brand? What links have you created between your online presence, and also with third-parties (and why)? Are the links all still working? What cross-promotion have you set-up to drive traffic to your other presence and especially your website? What ground-rules and other guidance information have you provided for users, to educate them as to the expected (and appropriate) behaviour, language etc?
- **Content and personality** - have you sufficient, relevant content online to satisfactorily represent your institution and to address questions and concerns anyone may have about it? Is the information regularly updated? What additional content would enhance your online presence and help in the event of a crisis arising? How is the



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content presented, in what style and tone and is this consistent with the institution's philosophy, brand and reputation?

- **Influence** - what influence does your institution have online? How easily can you connect with people and how effectively? How engaged are those receiving your communications and how engaged are visitors to your online presence? Overall, how effective are the institution's communication channels and do they need improvement or enhancement?
- **Frequency and topicality** - when are you communicating and does this suit your target audiences and/or the platform/channel/network you are using? Is what you are saying relevant and/or topical?
- **Partners and key influencers** - who are the key influencers, advocates and/or partners who might be relevant to you during a crisis (and perhaps more frequently with day-to-day communications and marketing)? Who should you be developing a positive relationship with now, or at least a 'working relationship' based on mutual respect and transparency? How well prepared are potential influencers and advocates to help and support you if a crisis develops?
- **Brand image, reputation and regard online** - what is your institution's brand image and reputation currently? Could you undertake research to identify the regard with which the institution is held? How resilient is that brand image and reputation and what can you do to improve and strengthen it?

4.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

What are the risks to the reputation of your institution?

Risks are inherent in any School or College community and it is impossible to predict every eventuality but it is important to consider potential risks and the likelihood of each developing into a crisis of some kind.

Having prioritised each potential risk area allocate sufficient time and resource to researching them, then address any obvious weakness or potential threat.

Possible general risks to your institution may include:

INTERNAL - Pupils, Staff, Parents, Governance/ownership.

- Sexual, Physical, Emotional abuse.
- Death or injury.
- Substance abuse - drugs, alcohol etc.
- Inappropriate words or imagery.
- Bullying.
- Physical Education.
- Health & Well-being.



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- Discipline.
- Teaching.
- Curriculum.
- Results.
- Transport, trips and tours.
- Facilities - teaching, sports, social, boarding etc.
- Equipment.
- Catering.
- Security.
- Theft/fraud.
- Financial.
- Employment.
- Governance.
- Health & Safety.
- Licensing.
- Legislation.
- Insurance.
- Fire.
- Weather.
- Comparison to other schools.
- Inspection.
- Etc...

EXTERNAL

- Prospective & former parents and staff.
- Alumni.
- Suppliers.
- Relationships with other schools and organisations.
- Media.
- Associations.
- Local Education Authority.
- Politics.
- Economics.
- Etc...

Each of these potential risk areas will obviously have a range of possible events to be considered and there will be some cross-over. For example, in the event of a food poisoning incident there may be any number of possible causes and factors around health and safety, legislation, training, storage, transmission, treatment etc.

4.5 KEY WORDS AND KEY PHRASES

Having considered the institution, it's staff, alumni and other important individuals related to it and having identified the main risk areas, the next step is to generate as many key words and key phrases as possible that have a bearing on the institution's reputation.

For example:



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- All the names and abbreviations used to refer to the institution.
- Similarly named but unconnected institutions.
- Key staff, alumni and parent names.
- Terms relating to location.
- Terms related to risk areas.
- General education/curriculum terms.
- Competitors and suppliers.
- Etc...

Anyone looking for information about stories or events, information and news, will search using words or phrases. Monitoring tools and search engine optimisation techniques, as well as the identification of key influencers and other crisis reputation management techniques (to be discussed later in this document), will also depend on the identification of relevant key words and phrases.

4.6 PLAN & PREPARE

Bolster strengths, seize opportunity, address weakness, minimise threats.

- **Consider 'in-house'** - what can you do to prepare, educate and/or train members of your community (pupils/students, staff, parents, alumni, suppliers etc) to reduce the possibility of them initiating and/or contributing negatively to a story or event either as 'perpetrators' or 'onlookers' ('citizen journalists') or extending a story or event beyond a natural lifecycle? For example, do they understand how what they say in social media may have a negative impact or how publicly available personal photographs or video they post online might be used by 3rd parties, such as happened when the personal photographs of the students who absconded from Stonyhurst College were used by journalists around the world, and hashtags created by other students fuelled the story further?
- **Identify, recruit and train human resource and expertise** - ultimately the most important resource in dealing with an event threatening the reputation of an institution is human resource and professional expertise. The more informed, well managed and directed the help you can focus on a developing situation the more likely you will be able to reduce its impact and growth, by quickly understanding what is happening and identifying the key factors (and influencers) involved and then tackling those likely to 'fuel the fire', correcting rumours, issuing appropriate responses etc etc. It is important to identify ahead of any potential crisis the personnel who may be involved and/or who may provide guidance and expertise, not only internally but also externally (legal, public relations, journalism, security, health and safety etc etc).



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- **Give responsibility but restrict access as appropriate** - when confident in the ability of the human resource available to you it is important to give them sufficient responsibility to act, including access to key platforms and accounts, but this should be carefully managed and controlled. (As previously stated, it is important to manage all access to the website, social media and other online platforms/channels and networks used by staff and/or contractors day-to-day. Overall control, such as access to passwords etc, should be shared by more than one senior member of staff to avoid any access problems as a crisis unfolds.) Management tools like Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com) can provide useful shared management functionality to assist with this.
- **Determine and agree philosophy, style, tone of voice** - as well as technical skills, managing access to platforms/channels/networks and understanding appropriate use it is extremely important that all those involved in any reputation management effort are clear about the institution's philosophy, ethos, obligations and so on, as relevant to the context of any breaking story or event. Additionally the appropriate style and tone of voice for communications should be clarified and understood by all those involved, for accuracy and consistency.
- **Arrange training, give guidance and set expectations** - in order to establish a 'team' of people able to respond appropriately to a situation it is important to provide training and to give guidance before a problem arises, as there will be insufficient time and too many distractions to do so satisfactorily in the middle of a developing story or event. It is also important to inform senior management and those involved in governance as to the level of preparation undertaken for crisis reputation management, the plans and procedures to be followed and any potential weaknesses or threats, together with expectations about any role they may have.
- **Update and refresh content** - having reviewed the content available online about the institution, efforts should be made to update and refresh online content ahead of any potential crisis, to ensure that text, images and video serves to prevent or (at least) reduce any problems rather than possibly contribute to them. (This should be part of the on-going marketing and admissions activity for the institution and a 'content calendar' may be useful for day-to-day management, see the basic excel spreadsheet example provided.)
- **Increase engagement** - also important in helping to prevent or reduce the potential for a crisis arising, is the 'user experience' (the 'UX') for visitors to a website or social media presence. Factors such as rendering and usability on mobile devices,



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navigation, functionality, links etc should be regularly reviewed and (where necessary) revised and improved.

Other factors in helping to instil a process of continuous improvement are monitoring and analytics and regular reporting. Senior management and those responsible for governance should recognise and approve all contingency and a 'fail safe' process should be implemented for escalation and resolution in any potential crisis situation.

4.7 SOCIAL MEDIA = 'REAL-TIME MARKETING'

Social media should be viewed as 'real-time marketing'. The importance of communications day-to-day, hour-by-hour should be recognised and properly resourced. A failure to identify and respond to enquiries, concerns or issues on digital platforms/channels or networks may lead to the growth of stories and events which damage an institution's reputation but might otherwise have been limited or prevented altogether.

Those responsible for an institutions social media presence should:

- Ensure consistent brand positioning.
- Identify, engage and curate key influencers, advocates and partners.
- Identify 'prospectives' and nurture them.
- Look for opportunities to engage with target audiences.
- Deliver 'customer service'.
- Monitor discussion and sentiment and take appropriate action.
- Encourage positive involvement, feedback, opinions.
- Direct traffic to 'owned presence'.
- Extend content.
- Listen and learn - implementing a process of 'social listening' and mastering 'netiquette'.
- Secure intelligence about competitors.

Understanding how each platform and channel operates and the normal behaviour expected of those using it is important, a failure to follow the correct 'netiquette' within a particular network can cause misunderstanding and even resentment.

Before taking any action within a particular platform/channel/network it is necessary to listen and learn and to appreciate what response is appropriate and respectful, otherwise a situation may be made worse.



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5.0 KEY INFLUENCERS

'Key influencers' are individuals or organisations online who have an audience - often through the popularity of their social media and web activity (such as websites, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Forums and Blogs etc).

As part of the process of gathering, informing and enabling human resource to help avert or deal with a crisis, it is helpful to identify, court and engage key influencers and potential advocates who have some interest in or connection with the school or college (or something related, like education, youth development etc) and therefore might provide support in the event of a crisis developing. More generally, key influencers can play an important role day-to-day in any marketing effort.

Additionally, having practiced the process of identifying and engaging key influencers ahead of any potential crisis, and possibly as a direct result of any positive relationships developed with them, it will be easier to identify, assess and (where necessary) approach and engage new influencers who may emerge in a crisis, as it develops.

Developing relationships with key influencers may prove beneficial in a number of ways:

- Correcting rumours through their channels and audience(s), communicating facts and helping to develop understanding.
- Extending reach, helping to communicate information and amplifying messages beyond an institution's own sphere of influence.
- Instilling trust and authority through their own positive reputation and relationships developed over time within their area(s) of interest or expertise.
- Sharing experience and good ideas.
- Using their own contacts to help the institution deal with a crisis.
- Influencing media and other key influencers for the benefit of the institution.

Ultimately the goal is to influence the influencers!

5.1 IDENTIFYING KEY INFLUENCERS

Some key influencers may have an unusually large number of followers, others may have a smaller number of followers but more influence (or 'clout') because of the regard with which they are held and the type and/or relevancy of their followers.

Ways to measure influence include:



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- **Number of followers/friends/likes** - but as mentioned, the relevancy or quality of the followers may be more important than the number.
- **Ratio of followers to following** - 'reciprocal following' may skew the numbers and the extent of influence so a larger number of followers vs a smaller number following will normally mean more influence.
- **Post frequency** - someone who is influential will tend to be active and post regularly, but posting too much may reduce influence.
- **Engagement level with messages/comments** - the more engaged people are with the individual or organisation (conversing, messaging, replying and commenting) the more influential they are.
- **Lists & Quotes** - inclusion in Twitter account 'Lists' and/or being referenced as an authority and quoted frequently will give some indication of authority.
- **Verified accounts (Twitter)** - if the account has been verified (on Twitter this is signified by a blue tick) then the individual or organisation has been officially recognised as active and influential.
- **Klout and/or Kred score** - these services will give a guide as to potential influence.
- **Search Engine ranking (blogs etc)** - if a blog, website or social media account is recognised as authoritative by Google for a particular search term then it is likely to be influential.
- **Mentions of relevant words/topics** - key words or phrases and the context with which they are used will give a guide to relevancy and influence.
- **Profile/biography information** - the more closely related the interests and background of the individual or organisation to the school or college, the more relevant and potentially helpful.

5.2 INFLUENCER IDENTIFICATION TOOLS

5.2.1 Klout and Kred

'Klout' (www.klout.com) and 'Kred' (www.kred.com) are two tools for measuring how influential someone is online.

Klout was the first social media scoring system. Its algorithms measure how many people are sharing content and engaging with others, and the extent to which known influencers are engaging with them. The more influence an individual or organisation has, the higher their 'Klout score'. This score can then be compared to others to determine the level of influence enjoyed by different people.



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Kred provides two different scores, one is similar to Klout's influence score. The other is for the level of 'outreach', ie. how much of a community an individual or organisation has developed within particular subjects/areas.

One difference between the two is that Kred is transparent, the Kred dashboard shows the data Kred is looking at and how it is being evaluated, giving a snapshot of activity and range of influence etc.

5.2.2 Other Influencer Identification Tools

Other tools which may be helpful both for assessing and monitoring an institution's own influence and in identifying internal and external online influencers and advocates include:

- **Commun.it** (www.commun.it) - this tool looks at an individual or organisation's current followers and scores them in terms of influence, it also recommends potential new influencers with whom the user might engage.
- **Followerwonk** (www.followerwonk.com) - enables the searching of profiles and biographies of Twitter users who are influential on a topic (giving the number of followers and their 'social authority'), and also search by location.
- **Peer Index** (www.peerindex.com) - similar to Followerwonk in that it searches profiles and biographies for influencers but with more detailed results to help identify true influencers.

Having identified key influencers of interest it is then necessary to prioritise them, depending on the resources available, before monitoring them and finally approaching them (if that is the strategy being employed).

6.0 TROLLING

6.1 IDENTIFYING TROLLS

Drawing on the definition provided by Wikipedia, in Internet slang a troll is:

"...a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion".



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This sense of the word ‘troll’ and the verb ‘trolling’ have been used more widely recently with the media equating trolling with online harassment.

Trolls may send or post negative messages using email, blogs, websites or social media, such as sending bullying tweets or posting hurtful comments on tribute pages on Facebook or setting up defamatory blogs or websites.

It is important not to rush to label a frustrated correspondent, such as a prospective parent asking for details about an Open Day or an alumni posting about their negative experiences at the school, as a ‘troll’. Indeed treating someone unjustly as a troll may only result in making them one!

In considering whether someone may be exhibiting troll-like behaviour it is helpful to research their background (to identify their real name and contact details if hidden) and to ask:

- Do they seem unreasonable and irrational?
- Are their posts on other subjects similar?
- Is what they are saying uninformed and irrelevant?
- Are they generally intolerant?

Tip: Switch-on profanity filters etc where these are included with the social media platforms being used and post ‘user guidelines’, ‘ground-rules’ and/or ‘policy statement’ about acceptable behaviour on all your platforms/channels/networks online.

6.2 WHERE DO TROLLS LURK?

You may find troll-like behaviour exhibited by individuals on the institution’s platforms, on public platforms and/or on their own platforms:

The Institution’s platforms:

- Comments on the institution’s website, blogs and/or owned forums;
- Posts on your institution’s Facebook Page and/or Group;
- Moderated mailing list groups, such as a Google group for parents.

Public platforms:

- Mentions on Twitter using @yourinstitution;
- Public Facebook Pages or Groups;



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- Public Forums;
- Review websites, such as school or teacher review sites, directories and education sites.

Their platforms:

- Their own blog or website;
- Facebook Pages or Groups they set up;
- Their Twitter account;
- Other social media.

6.3 DEALING WITH TROLLS

In dealing with trolls you may choose:

- **To ignore them** - there are times when ignoring trolls will be the best option. If they have none or little influence, if their posts or tweets are having no impact and/or if they are clearly in the wrong (and will be ignored by others) then it may be best to simply ignore (and possibly block) the individual rather than give them any attention that may risk amplifying the situation.
- **To call for backup** - you may wish to ask influencers and/or advocates to intercede and/or respond on your behalf.
- **To comment** - sometimes it is necessary to respond. Keep any comments polite and factual and don't be drawn down to their level. Try to take the conversation offline by acknowledging their comment and inviting them to make contact by email address or telephone.
- **To delete the troll's communication(s)** - if considering moderating or deleting a troll's post or blocking them completely take care as such action may lead to an even more concerted effort to attack the institution. First refer the troll to your 'user guidelines', 'ground-rules' and/or 'policy statement' about acceptable behaviour and ask them to remove and/or to cease posting negative, hurtful or slanderous comment or material. If necessary consider reminding them that the laws of libel and slander apply to publications online too and they may be causing problems for themselves. Finally, take action as appropriate and state why you have done so (this may encourage other users to support you).



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7.0 BEYOND TROLLING - DEALING WITH THE 'HATERS'

Constructive criticism is acceptable, but what if you are dealing with a 'professional attacker' who is doing more than sending a hurtful tweet or posting a slanderous comment on a Facebook Page?

If dealing with a more concerted attack first research the 'attacker' as much as possible (try to identify them ideally) and consider the likely impact.

The main concern with a determined effort to damage your institution's reputation is the possible impact on search engine results. It is unlikely that prospective parents or students will find a single tweet sent by a troll, but they may find a blog or website set-up with the intention of defamation.

Long-term damage may be caused by:

- **'Hate' Sites** - a website intended to defame with false and misleading information.
- **'Community' Sites** - potentially useful platforms for sharing information, seeking advice and reporting bad experience... but how accurate are they and what if someone was using them to intentionally slander and mislead?
- **'False' Reviews & Negative Ratings** - many sites provide a platform specifically for rating experience, some are specific to education and others are more general. False ratings can cause big problems.
- **Fake Accounts & False Information** – 'Brand jacking' can cause problems... whether intentional or simply a case of mistaken or shared identity.

In dealing with 'haters' standard online reputation management techniques should be employed along the lines already discussed, together with more direct action if warranted:

- **Be likable!** By being active online, maintaining a good reputation and developing trust prior to a problem your target audiences are more likely to recognise false information, to mistrust those seeking to damage the institution's reputation and to lend their support.
- **Ensure consistency** – across all branding and 'official' presence online.



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- **Link and cross-promote** the institution's blogs, websites and social media activity to reduce the likelihood of people inadvertently straying on to third party material designed to do damage.
- **Investigate and undertake a risk assessment** - who are they, why are they doing it, what is their likely influence?
- **Gather on-going intelligence** by setting up monitoring etc.
- **Consider taking action:**
 - Approach them and ask them to rectify the situation to your satisfaction.
 - Leave a comment to clarify or correct a misleading statement.
 - Consider asking for content to be removed.
 - Use own platforms and channels to clarify, to correct and to "call out"... use facts not sentiment.
 - Ask any third parties to take action against their users.
 - Consider legal action.
 - Consider using online advertising (such as Google Advertising, Facebook, LinkedIn etc) as a short to medium-term tactic to subvert negative material, presenting positive information and driving traffic to your own material.
- **Seek platform and channel verification** where possible.

8.0 INTELLIGENCE GATHERING – MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

One of the differences in dealing with reputation management offline and reputation management online is the opportunity to easily monitor, assess, analyse and report.

'Real-time' monitoring tools provide an opportunity to track what is being said about the institution and related individuals and organisations minute-by-minute and to respond quickly.

If your institution is being talked about online you'll want to know about it as soon as possible. There are several tools available that can help you discover mentions of your institution's name and other key words, phrases and terms online.

There are specialist monitoring tools available and also some social media management tools which offer some basic monitoring options.



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Some monitoring tools like Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) and Topsy (www.topsy.com) offer free and pro versions while other monitoring tools like Brandwatch (www.brandwatch.com) are available on a subscription basis only. The free tools are useful, offering some beneficial monitoring options, while the more advanced paid-for tools bring a huge amount of functionality and additional data which may be of interest to a larger school, college or university with a bigger budget and/or particular concerns about threats to their reputation.

Drawing on the list of key words and key phrases already produced for managing your institution's reputation, use these monitoring and management tools to set-up automated 'alerts' to notify you and your colleagues whenever relevant names or terms are used online.

Consider different topics and themes (and update regularly) such as:

- General, descriptive, about etc.
- Key staff, parents, alumni, suppliers etc.
- Associated themes and topics.
- Events.
- Competitors.

There are various alerts which can be set-up using the monitoring tools to track mentions of the institution (and associated names and terms) in social media and across the Internet, such as:

- **Real-Time Alerts**
 - Regular alerts for mentions... can use filters to customise.
 - Keep on top of what people are saying in real time.
- **Digest Alerts**
 - Multiple mentions grouped together, at regular intervals.
- **Threshold Alerts**
 - An 'alert on increase' to alert to escalation, changes in behaviour, trends.
- **Custom Alerts**, using filters for more specific monitoring.
 - Positive or negative sentiment and limited page types (Twitter and Facebook).
 - MozRank and page type filters to identify important news coverage.
 - Filter metrics to identify influential mentions.



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- Use categorisation to focus on particular topics or themes and to isolate key mentions.

8.1 SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT TOOLS

It is a challenge to manage online activity (especially social media) for an organisation of any size without the added pressure of dealing with a potential crisis and the negative impact it may have on reputation.

A social media management tool can save time and improve productivity. The more evolved social media management tools have considerable functionality and enable the management of multiple different accounts from one dashboard, as well as allowing the distribution of tasks between different staff and volunteers.

Recommended social media management tools include Tweetdeck and Hootsuite. Both provide useful social media management functionality and basic monitoring options too.

The following web page may be helpful in considering which tool to try:

<http://signup.hootsuite.com/top-5-reasons-hootsuite-vs-tweetdeck>

- **Tweetdeck** (www.tweetdeck.com)

Tweetdeck gathers feeds from Twitter (only) allowing the monitoring of multiple different columns of feeds using the Tweetdeck interface.

The customisable columns can be set up to display your Twitter timeline, mentions, direct messages, lists, trends, favourites, search results, hashtags, or all tweets by or to a single user. The client uses Twitter's own automatic and invisible URL shortening (so a link of any length will only use 23 characters of a Tweet's 140-character limit). All columns can be filtered to include or exclude words or tweets from users. Tweets can be sent immediately or scheduled for later delivery.

Users can monitor and tweet from multiple accounts simultaneously. For added account security, users signing in with their Twitter username and password can use Twitter's own two-step verification, known to Twitter users as Login Verification.

- **Hootsuite** (www.hootsuite.com)

Hootsuite is similar to Tweetdeck but it collates feeds from a wide range of social media platforms and networks, allowing you to set up multiple different columns of



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feeds to monitor and manage different channels and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn etc.

- A free basic version is available and a more featured pro version provides:
- Ability to schedule up to 350 messages
- Access to a wide range of additional apps
- Ability to add multiple users from one school
- The option to manage up to 50 different social profiles
- Detailed social media analytics

Hootsuite also enables searches based on current location. This enables the monitoring of tweets being made from the location, such as a school or college campus, even if the twitter accounts are unknown and the tweets do not carry any relevant key words or key phrases or hashtags.

'Hootlet' is an extension for the Chrome browser which gives access to Twitter results and enables the seamless tweeting of web content.

8.2 MONITORING TOOLS

There are a number of free, low cost and premium monitoring tools available including:

- Google Alerts
- Topsy
- Brandwatch

8.2.1 Google Alerts

A free, simple and effective tool for discovering mentions online, Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) will notify the user by email of any mentions of user-specified key words or phrases on web pages, newspaper articles, blogs etc (but not in social media).

Advanced options allow the user to choose how often they want to be updated and to filter results by type of website or region.

8.2.2 Topsy

Topsy (www.topsy.com) is available in free and pro versions and provides search functionality for reviewing mention over the past few hours, days or months.



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By searching for keywords and phrases a user can discover mentions and filter by type, topic, time etc.

8.2.3 Brandwatch

Brandwatch (www.brandwatch.com) is available by monthly subscription. It is expensive but serves as a powerful social media listening and analytics tool, used by brands and agencies around the world. It has rich functionality and could be of considerable help to any large school, college or university that can afford to use it.

8.3 MONITORING TOOLS - CASE STUDIES

8.3.1 Hanson Academy and Hove Park School

The Hanson Academy

The Hanson Academy introduced a new dress code at the beginning of the Autumn term 2014, with all students expected to wear the specified uniform. Over 150 students arriving with incorrect uniform on the first day were sent home. This received considerable online and offline coverage regionally, nationally and even internationally.

In the presentation slides relating to the Hanson Academy case study, the Brandwatch timeline graph shows that there was little mention of Hanson Academy online until a sudden peak in interest, followed by some smaller peaks.

Subsequently, a more detailed representation of the graph highlights how the story broke across different sources. It is clear that when the original incident happened (5 November 2014) the vast majority of mentions were on Twitter. By the following day the news sites were reporting the story and comprised the majority of all mentions (6 November 2014).

This reflects how social media enables rapid discussion and sharing about an incident, story or event, followed by more considered news and opinion pieces 6-24+ hours later.

Regional and national interest in the story appeared to diminish rapidly and the Academy team managing their crisis response may have considered that the story had lost impetus after a few days. However the graph of mentions shows that renewed interest in the story followed when MP Denis Skinner referenced the academy's uniform policy in a humorous tweet using a photo of PM David Cameron. The story re-emerged a third time when more students at the academy were subsequently sent home for having inappropriate uniforms.



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Clicking on a mention in Brandwatch gives access to detailed information about the author and where the mention appeared online. On discovering a mention of interest (or concern) it is advisable to research not only the author but also the context of the mention and the platform where it was made before deciding on appropriate action.

The Hanson Academy example given on the presentation slide shows a mention made in a forum on the Student Room website.

Having identified this it would be important to determine the 'netiquette' for users of the Student Room forums before responding, especially as the forum discussion lasted several days and involved a number of members.

Another slide shows how Brandwatch gives a 'word cloud' view of topics being discussed in mentions, helping with analysis and also to identify non-relevant key words and phrases which can be removed from future searches. This could also be useful in reporting post-event.

Hove Park School

For some time the management, staff, parents and pupils of Hove Park School were embroiled in debate over whether the school should apply for academy status. Eventually the Governors voted on the issue and decided against the application.

As expected, the monitoring results distributed on a timeline graph show a clear spike in mentions of the school name around the day of the vote. However the results also reveal other (smaller) spikes in the months leading up to the vote.

Researching each of the spikes reveals that all the peaks in mentions relate to the same story about academy status. The first spike in mentions concerned a picnic event organised by the anti-academy campaign and the second spike concerned the election of new school governors (who were against academy status).

Monitoring tools will normally give some indication of the sentiment of mentions, whether positive or negative. This can be crude and context is everything... the tools may perceive a mention as negative because of terms used in a tweet, post or article when the sentiment was actually positive.

In the case of Hove Park School the sentiment for the mentions at the time of the governors' vote is mostly positive, with campaigners celebrating a successful outcome.



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Using the monitoring tools it is possible to compare Twitter users to see who are the most influential during an on-going crisis. In the example given on the presentation slide Caroline Lucas has nearly 100k followers while Marek only has 372, so any effort to recruit key influencers might start with Caroline Lucas. (Although ideally this decision should not be based solely on the number of followers, further research should be undertaken to assess the influence of the followers of each Twitter account etc.)

The word cloud shows various topics and themes that were popular in the mentions, including some unrelated to the academy debate such as the London Film Festival (with which students from Hove Park School were involved).

Comparing The Monitoring Results For Hanson Academy And Hove Park School

These are two quite different case studies but both illustrate how monitoring tools can be a powerful resource in assessing (and then responding to) social media and other media coverage of a particular story or event.

The Hanson Academy

- One huge peak of mentions around one isolated event.
- Mainly negative mentions.
- Mentions from across the UK.
- The majority of mentions occurred over just 2-3 days.
- Following an initial peak in social media mentions (primarily on Twitter) on the day of the event there was a large volume of mentions in newspapers and websites the next day.
- Nearly all mentions relate to one incident/topic.
- The Academy had a clear, unified stance on the issue.

Hove Park School

- One big peak in mentions around the story but also several smaller peaks and on-going mentions.
- Mainly positive mentions.
- Mainly local mentions.
- Mentions spread out across a number of months.
- Most mentions were on social media (primarily by parents and campaign groups).
- Most mentions relate to one topic but there are other mentions too.



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- The School could not take an official stance (with the Headteacher for academy status but other staff and governors against) and so appears to have tried to remain neutral.

8.3.2 Danum Academy

Sadly many schools and colleges have to deal unexpectedly with tragedies involving members of their community. Danum Academy recently had to deal with the loss of five students who were killed in a car crash.

This story exposes some of the flaws of the monitoring tools. The seriousness of the story is not immediately apparent from the number of mentions, there were not as many mentions as might be expected for a story covered nationally. However this might be explained by the nature of the story; while the story was of national interest it was primarily a local story and after the initial reporting there was little to add of interest to a wider audience (outside of the local community).

The sentiment analysis is also somewhat misleading as it suggests positive sentiment about a negative story, but this may be attributed to the number of people choosing to celebrate the lives of those involved through social media.

The monitoring tools helpfully identify the most 'influential' authors who wrote about the tragedy, primarily a mix of local and national journalists. The tool enables further research into the backgrounds of these influencers, providing information on the topics being discussed, links to the stories and additional information about the authors.

In such circumstances it is inevitable that people will discuss the tragedy without necessarily referencing the school or college name, so it is important to extend the typical key word search to include the names of victims and other related terms, to get a fuller picture of the mentions related to the event.

Also of interest is how Danum Academy dealt with the tragedy. The Danum Academy used Twitter to direct traffic to their own statements written on Facebook. The first statement on Facebook was a brief, initial reaction giving few details. The second was an extension of the first message paying tribute to the (named) individuals who were killed. This statement was also posted on the home page of the Danum Academy website, replacing the normal content.

On Facebook the two posts by the Academy attracted at least 250 comments between them. These were all very supportive of Danum Academy and paid tribute to the crash victims,



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however it is not known whether the Academy had to moderate, delete or block any comments or commentators.

8.3.3 Alvechurch School

Sadly a number of schools and colleges have to deal with crisis resulting from things going wrong with trips off-campus. Alvechurch School experienced a tragedy resulting from a coach crash when a teacher was killed and pupils were injured returning from a school ski trip in 2012.

The tragedy experienced by Alvechurch demonstrates the challenges that schools and colleges can face in such a situation, not only in managing communication with the many people in their community touched by such an event, often with little factual information at the beginning, but also in dealing with the various 3rd parties involved. The school had to co-ordinate with the ski holiday company, the coach company, rescue services in the UK and France, with government advisors in both countries, and with media in both countries.

The event also demonstrates how interest in a story can be renewed at a later date. The local press chose to return to the story one year later, on the anniversary of the tragedy, and two years later there were still legal and insurance matters creating renewed interest in the story.

8.3.4 Terra Nova School

Sexual and physical abuse, often by staff on pupils, is another issue threatening the reputation of many schools and colleges.

A private tutor at Terra Nova School was charged with abusing boys in the 1970s. Reports of his arrest first appeared in August 2013, with a court hearing the following month. Ultimately he pleaded guilty to the charges and was jailed but the monitoring tools and internet research show how the case has been drawn-out over a long period, repeatedly associating the school with the abuse perpetrated by the former member of staff:

- 1998 to 2005 – initial investigations ‘stalled’.
- 21 August 2013 – ex-teacher charged.
- 10 September 2013 – court case begins.
- 15 October 2013 – more charges investigated.
- 11 December 2013 – ex-teacher re-arrested.
- 20 August 2014 – court case for all charges begins.
- 5 November 2014 – suspect pleads guilty to 42 charges.



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- 6 November 2014 – suspect jailed.

The lasting legacy for Terra Nova is a first page of search results referencing the abuse and associating the school with the enquiries and eventual court case. While the first search results direct people to the school's website etc and are positive, the majority of later results are about the abuse story. Even though the events took place some time ago, the school has to continue to contend with the negative association.

Interestingly the school appears to have decided not to comment publicly on the court case and there is no obvious reference to it on the school's website or social media. The school may have communicated with parents privately but otherwise it appears to have attempted to distance itself from the case.

It makes sense to limit the amount of online content about a court case by not adding further to it (and so any communications with parents, staff and alumni should ideally be by letter or phone where possible) but what of the prospective parents and potential employees looking for some official response to the case having seen the search results? A web page, blog post or online statement addressing the story from the school's perspective might help to answer any concerns they may have.

8.3.5 Ashdown House

Ashdown House is another school embroiled in abuse allegations, this time concerning a former Headteacher.

Research using the monitoring tool suggested a connection with the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and other famous individuals like Damian Lewis. Further investigation revealed that Johnson attended the school along with a number of other famous alumni. This association between the school and famous alumni has not been missed by the media and social media commentators and has resulted in much more coverage for the abuse allegations than might have been expected. Johnson and others may also have experienced some unwarranted and intrusive attention as a result, including having his photograph printed alongside news reports.

The story demonstrates the importance of understanding the way media works and how alumni and anyone else connected with a school or college community can become involved with a breaking story through their loose association.

This relates back to the issue of 'key influencers' as discussed previously, by identifying key influencers and those likely to attract attention (and by connecting with them in advance) a



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school or college can take steps to inform and support them in how they react to a story or event, and also seek their support in return.

8.3.6 Stonyhurst College

Without warning two apparently lovestruck and bored teenage boarders 'ran away' overnight from Stonyhurst College public school in January 2014, using a credit card to book flights abroad. After an international search they were eventually tracked down to a five star resort in the Dominican Republic but not before mass media coverage and speculation on social media.

While Stonyhurst was not the first boarding school to have students leave without permission (and it won't be the last), the story had all the elements that might appeal to a broad audience and fill newspaper headlines.

Worse, the story was also taken up internally on Twitter by some of Stonyhurst's own students who used the hashtags #wheresbunyan and #wheresindira. These hashtags were then promoted by the media.

The hashtag monitoring tool 'Tagboard' (www.tagboard.com) is useful in helping to track the use of hashtags and bringing hashtag mentions together in one place.

Another factor that helped to fuel the story was the extent to which personal photographs of the students were publicly available on Facebook and other social media for journalists to use, providing a salutary warning to all young people about the way their photographs might be used by third parties without their permission.

Again, Stonyhurst College has some very positive content online but search engine results for the College are currently blemished by the story. While this story ended well and was positively handled by Stonyhurst it is inevitably damaging for a College that markets itself on providing a secure, caring, learning environment for young people.

9.0 **DEALING WITH NEGATIVE SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS**

Negative or misleading links appearing in search engine results relevant to your institution can have a very damaging impact, especially if they appear on the first page of search results:



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“Sites listed on the first Google search results page generate approximately 92% of all traffic from an average search. When moving from page one to two, the traffic drops by 95%, and by 78% and 58% for the subsequent pages.”

Unfortunately it is not easy or straightforward to ‘manipulate’ search engine results. Google, Bing, Yahoo and other search engines each have their own criteria for determining the authority of different material online and its relevancy to a particular search word, phrase or question.

It is possible to contact any of the search engines to draw attention to especially negative, slanderous or libellous content and to ask for it to be removed but the likelihood of this happening, at least without legal action, is slim.

Instead the first recourse in dealing with a negative search engine result is to try to ‘optimise’ the institution’s own presence online, and to expand it. This is known as ‘Search Engine Optimisation’ (SEO).

The more web pages, blogs, social media platforms (including Google+, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Flickr etc), channels and networks containing fresh, accurate and relevant content about the institution, featuring a high density of key words and key phrases likely to be used in search by target audiences, the more likely Google and the other search engines will rank it above other negative content. (Key words and phrases can be identified using the free ‘Google Keyword Planner’, www.adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner.)

As well as the institution’s own website it may be possible to develop content on other platforms including Wikipedia, Online Guides & Directories (Music, City Guides, Relocation, Expats), Blogs, Discussion Forums, Questions & Answers, Potential Feeder Schools, Places where Parents & Students ‘hang out’ (such as MumsNet/Facebook etc), Local Education Authorities, Relocation Agents, Estate Agents, Listing Directories, Banks, Lifestyle, Media, Entertainment etc etc...

In addition to producing good content optimised with keywords and phrases and ensuring it is featured across different blogs, websites, social media etc, other SEO good practice includes writing optimised, relevant and engaging ‘Page Titles’ and ‘Descriptions’ in the ‘Meta tags’ on every page of content, giving descriptions for images, writing relevant anchor text etc.

As well as content, Google also judges search engine ranking by the ‘authority’ of the particular website, platform or network. Particularly relevant are the ‘back links’ from other websites and social media linking to the institution’s own material. Each website or social



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media that links to the institution's own material is effectively recommending it, thus lending some of that recommending website's own authority to the material and boosting it up the search engine rankings. Courting back links from feeder schools, academic bodies, directories and so on may therefore be helpful (but avoid reciprocal or unrelated linking as that may be penalised by Google).

In the event that whatever you do to optimise your institution's online presence to 'push out' negative web content from the first page of search results is having no obvious effect in the short-term, press on for the long-term benefits but consider online advertising as a short-term fix.

Also consider whether you can do anything to work with the negative search result to remove it... such as requesting that the owner take down the content or working with the owner to try to increase the amount of newer, more relevant content.

For example, if a negative news story about the school or college on a local newspaper website is stuck on the first page of search engine results consider approaching the newspaper to discuss developing a series of positive news articles or features about aspects of education, or perhaps a regular column for the Headteacher or another member of staff. This may encourage Google to feature the more recent (and more positive) comment in early results, rather than the negative story.

10.0 SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS & FAILURE (#FAIL #EpicFAIL #SUCCESS)

Big organisations who should know better have got it very wrong when attempting to promote themselves using social media.

When organisations get it right it is mostly as a result of luck more than good judgement. Successful pro-brand viral messages on social media are more likely to be spontaneous and unplanned, and likely to be more effective when they are. It is helpful to bear this in mind when considering marketing activity for your institution and particularly when dealing with crisis reputation management.

We can draw useful lessons from how organisations have failed and succeeded, the following are just some of the many examples:

10.2 #myNYPD

In an "own goal" the New York Police department sent the following tweet inviting people to reply with a particular hashtag:



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“Do you have a photo w/ a member of the NYPD? Tweet us & tag it #myNYPD”

In response users took the opportunity to flood Twitter with hundreds of photos of police brutality during Occupy Wall Street, one of an 84-year-old man brutalised for jaywalking and even a dog being frisked.

In no time more than 70,000 people had tweeted about police brutality, ridiculing the NYPD for a social media disaster and recalling the names of people shot dead by police.

10.2 #askJPM

JP Morgan Chase helped underwrite Twitter’s initial public offering, so really they should have understood the likely response to their Twitter campaign better.

On the day of the IPO, six minutes after the New York Stock Exchange opened, the account @jpmorgan tweeted:

“What career advice would you ask a leading exec at a global firm? Tweet a Q using #AskJPM”

In response they received thousands of tweets questioning JP Morgan’s ethics, financial mismanagement, the high salaries and bonuses paid to bankers, the apparent disregard for the welfare of the banks customers and poor service etc etc.

JP Morgan shouldn’t have announced that it was ‘tuning in’ unless it was really prepared to contend with the public’s negative view of it.

The result was a tweet from JP Morgan cancelling the planned “Q&A” and accepting they had got it wrong. (One small consolation, whereas their first tweet achieved a handful of retweets, their tweet cancelling the “Q&A” following was retweeted over thousand times.)

10.3 @USAirways

@USAirways accidentally tweeted a photo they meant to report as inappropriate. It resulted in the @USAirways account being inundated with jeering tweets. Over 57,000 tweets were posted that same day.

However US Airlines took it in their stride and owned up to the “honest mistake”. They were transparent and apologised for the error with composure and poise.



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Their response serves as an example of how to deal with failure and earning respect and sympathy as a result.

10.4 TESCO

Tesco have also provided an example of how to get it right. Caught up in the 2013 horse meat scandal, the supermarket chain confronted the issue head on.

Reacting promptly, Tesco's CEO Philip Clarke appeared in a video blog reassuring consumers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfGE7aC8OLs>

Tesco was responsive, open and honest, re-aligning customer trust in the brand.

10.5 #ALEXFROMTARGET

As mentioned, pro-brand viral messages on social media are more likely to be spontaneous and unplanned (and are more effective when they are) than come from organised marketing campaigns.

The recent '#AlexFromTarget' phenomenon has given the US retail chain Target massive coverage across media online and offline, but the company's marketing team had nothing to do with it.

Despite all their investment in marketing and efforts to promote the company, their biggest success has come from the coverage one of their staff received when a teenage girl in the UK discovering a week-old picture of Target checkout worker Alex on Tumblr and posting it on her Twitter account (@auscalum) with the caption "YOOOOOOOOOOOO".

Alex, who started with 144 Twitter followers, now has more than 600,000 followers. He has appeared on Ellen and other TV shows and numerous news reports:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/13/style/alex-from-target-the-other-side-of-fame.html>

http://www.ellentube.com/media/0_ezp942gm

In response to suggestions that the Target marketing team were responsible they subsequently commented:



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“We value Alex as a team member and from the first moment we saw this photo beginning to circulate, we shared that the Target team was as surprised as anyone,” the company said.

“That remains the truth today. Let us be completely clear, we had absolutely nothing to do with the creation, listing or distribution of the photo. And we have no affiliation whatsoever with the company that is taking credit for its results.”

11.0 ANALYTICS & REPORTING

It is important to ensure that analytics tools are in place as soon as possible so that when a crisis arises data about visitors, their activity and engagement is collected and analysed and may be used for review and improvement in the longer-term.

As well as tracking a huge amount of data across a website and other platforms, ‘Google Analytics’ (www.google.com/analytics) has a feature that enables users to monitor visitors to a website in ‘real-time’.

This can help gauge the level of interest in a particular story or event. Data such as the location of the visitors may also help with the tracking of (and response to) something that might threaten the institution’s reputation.

Adding annotations to Google Analytics as events are happening provides a helpful reminder of the course of unusual events in a timeline, showing visitor numbers etc, explaining spikes in visitor numbers etc.

Another analytical tool, ‘Sprout Social’ (www.sproutsocial.com), is also helpful in providing details on followers and fans in social media using in-depth analytics.

12.0 DEALING WITH A CRISIS

In the event of a crisis arising it is important to respond quickly but not in an ill-considered and inappropriate (and potentially damaging) way out of embarrassment or in a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction.

First take time to reflect, to gather resources, to research the situation. Be positive. See it as an opportunity.

What makes the difference between a PR disaster and a brilliantly dealt-with crisis?



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Speed of reaction... combined with considered, appropriate, clear, honest, transparent communications.

It is important to assess the situation, to identify the 'cause and effect' and to clarify the details (the who, what, where, how etc) as well as the 'facts'.

Next consider who should manage the situation and how much should the matter be escalated (on a 'need to know' basis). Who should have responsibility for decision making?

Undertake a risk assessment... what may happen... what are the implications of doing nothing? Doing something? Doing everything?

Decide on what resources are required to deal with the situation - how important is it, what priority should it be given and what level of investment should be made in responding to it?

What human resource, experience and expertise will be required? What tools and services are relevant and should be utilised?

What is the appropriate reaction and stance to take? Do particular comments need to be acknowledged in the short-term while awaiting a decision about a full response? Should an apology be issued, a correction or clarification?

Who should be informed, engaged and asked to assist? (Such as pupils/students, parents, staff, alumni, suppliers, key influencers and advocates, professionals, journalists etc etc.)

Consider how to inform them and keep them updated appropriately (possibly avoiding using electronic channels to reduce the risk of 'leakage' of information etc).

Once the situation is understood (as much as possible), the facts have been established, the risks assessed and the context has been clarified (including relevant factors such as health and safety, legislation etc) a plan of action should be developed including objectives and outcomes, human resource responsibilities, target audiences, tools, channels, appropriate wording/images/video (drawing on materials prepared in advance).

Once the crisis appears to have been resolved the plan should be revised with a view to any further issues that may arise, ready to deal with any unexpected outcomes or any revival in the story etc.

No story or event should ever be considered finished, it may be that another chapter awaits, the crisis may re-occur at any time (such is the nature of social media and online communications).



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Following preparation of a revised plan to deal with any recurrence, the crisis and the institution's response to it should be carefully analysed and reviewed and a report produced for the senior management and governance.

It may be necessary to take remedial action to address any negative impact on the institution's brand and community resulting from the event and this should be undertaken as quickly as possible, with sufficient investment, to limit any long-term damage.

Finally, crisis reputation management plans, marketing and admissions strategies and so on should be updated as appropriate.

13.0 TOOLS & WEBSITES

The following tools and websites are referenced in this document:

- Hootsuite: www.hootsuite.com
- Klout: www.klout.com
- Kred: www.kred.com
- Commun.it: www.commun.it
- Followerwonk: www.followerwonk.com
- Peer Index: www.peerindex.com
- Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts
- Topsy: www.topsy.com
- Brandwatch: www.brandwatch.com
- Hootsuite vs Tweetdeck: <http://signup.hootsuite.com/top-5-reasons-hootsuite-vs-tweetdeck>
- Tagboard: www.tagboard.com
- Google Keyword Planner: www.adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner
- Tesco horsemeat response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfGE7aC8OLs>
- #AlexFromTarget: www.nytimes.com/2014/11/13/style/alex-from-target-the-other-side-of-fame.html and www.ellentube.com/media/0_ezp942gm
- Google Analytics: www.google.com/analytics
- Sprout Social: www.sproutsocial.com

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