

Risks of Crisis Situation: Communication Contribution

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Abstract— Background: Communication has become one of the central themes of our contemporary societies of the Head of State to the citizens.

Objective: Everyone wonders: why so many difficulties to communicate? How to promote communication between individuals, between groups or within an organization? What to say when it comes to a crisis situation.

Methods: The interest of this work is to present the issues related to a crisis situation especially during communication.

Results: The various episodes of communication in crises have shown that public authorities have understood issues related to the media component. The media are increasingly linked to communication.

Conclusions: It can not be denied that communication plays a crucial role, in crisis situations, for institutions, both public and private. Communication is required to inform and reassure residents and to restore confidence. But the crisis can arise by communicating itself.

Index Terms— Crisis, Communication, risk, information, Crisis Management

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the global financial crisis (2008), global policies have increasingly sunk into a black spot that has led to major economic chaos and destructive organizational transformations. The succession of crises since September 11 has led to business leaders in the service sector, especially an innovative strategy for internal and external risk management. All sectors are highly sensitive to minor changes related to imbalances, especially security or natural disturbances. What we are seeing in Tunisia is the slow diversification of supply in terms of new trends and international options.

In this article, we will address the issue of the strategy of foresight and management planning, such as the deletion of groups of "houses or groups", and identify factors that may affect organizational performance.

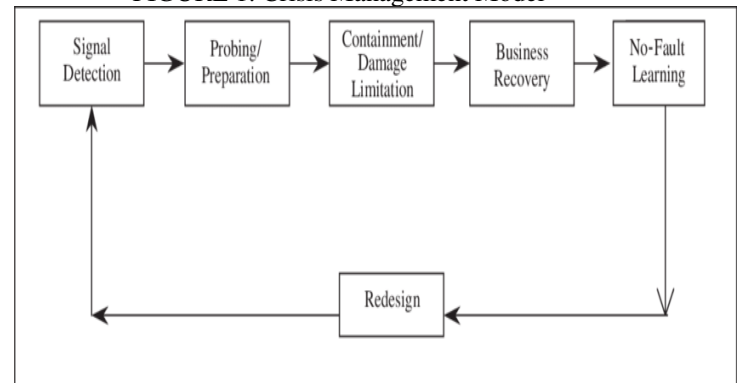
II. DEFINITION OF THE CRISIS

The crisis is a decisive moment in the evolution of a process. A decision is often difficult to make in terms of choice and implementation. While the crisis is a threat that sometimes puts into question the very existence of the organization, it often tends to increase uncertainty.

The crisis can be defined as a sudden disruption, inside or outside the organization, or result from pernicious phenomena that are difficult to perceive and end up causing serious disruption (see figure n°1). After a crisis, we see the access to

a new equilibrium: the crisis being limited by two periods of relative stability (Bouzon, 1999).

FIGURE 1. Crisis Management Model



Source: Mitroff (2005)

The crisis has for some years been the subject of intensive use to explain various phenomena. This to the point that one can wonder if its generalization does not also have for ideological function to hide complex and new problems "(Barus-Michel, Giust-Desprairies, Ridel, 1996).

The crisis is usually accompanied by an information crisis, which does not control information and does not manage the crisis. In fact, uncontrolled information or the absence of information increases the amplitude of the crisis whereas adapted communication can attenuate it (Lagadec, 1994).

III. THE EVOLUTION OF THE CRISIS

The crisis is not limited to the visible event but fits upstream and downstream of it. It is part of a long temporality. According to the "event type" approach, the birth of the crisis coincides with the appearance of the trigger event, the crisis results from it. The event can be considered as the cause of the crisis. The event is "single or multiple, unpredictable, contingent, of low probability of occurrence and of high intensity".

This event is therefore characterized by its surprise effect among the actors, who did not foresee its occurrence. In event logic, the observation of events is done rather in terms of the consequences of the crisis.

IV. THE CRISIS PROCESS

According to the process-type approach, the crisis results from organizational dysfunctions. Some authors have distinguished seven successive stages in the process of crisis. The normal operating phase corresponds to the so-called "routine" phase.

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The incubation period which corresponds to a period of not taking into account the accumulation of events announcing the crisis.

1. The triggering phase: where are the origins of the crisis, which can result from errors in social and entrepreneurial systems, human errors or the combination of these elements.
2. The acute phase, where the first consequences appear, the crisis begins when the organization loses control of the triggering event and its consequences.
3. The adjustment phase: is the phase in which the organization organizes itself to respond to the crisis.
4. The end of the crisis: corresponds to the return to the "normal" operating situation of the organization.
5. And finally the readjustment phase: taking into account the experience of the crisis experienced, to anticipate and plan future crises (Shrivastava, 1995)

V. CAUSES OF CRISES

To begin, we must first understand the basic concepts. A crisis is an unexpected event that jeopardizes the existence or reputation of an organization. The grouping of a set of data concerning crisis experiences leads to the observation that companies almost always suffer two shock waves, two waves of damage:

_ Immediate effects, observable from the announcement of the event generating crisis.

_ Delayed effects, several weeks or months after the onset of the crisis, which can have a lasting impact on the company and its relations with the market.

On the marketing side, the crisis is problematic because it disrupts the relationship between the company and its customers and, more generally, the relationship between the company and its professional and institutional environment. The range of possible damage is wide, it can be a dissatisfaction or a discontent of the customers, perceptible momentarily. It can also be a decrease in turnover more or less sustainable, a deterioration of the image of the entire company, the permanent loss of a market, a abandonment of activity or even the cessation of business activity.

Most crisis typologies distinguish events of natural origin (eg earthquakes, floods, etc.) and events of human origin (eg technical errors, social conflicts, revolutions, terrorist acts ...). To be more relevant and with a view to crisis management where one is interested in possible forms of prevention and repair of damage, the distinction between intentional events and accidental events is important in order to set up an adequate crisis communication. .

The event is intentional from the moment when one can observe that some of the stakeholders of an activity (people, groups, institution, people ...) are actively seeking to provoke a crisis situation hoping to benefit from it. International conflicts, revolutions, strikes, boycott actions, etc. are part of this catalog of intentional crisis-generating events.

The event is accidental from the moment when it can be admitted that none of the stakeholders really wanted it or wanted it. Breakdowns, fires, pollution, climatic accidents, large-scale epidemics, etc. are most often considered as accidents, even when it can be shown that errors or human negligence have been at their origin.

From the point of view of the consumer, and more generally of all the actors of a market, these distinctions are important because they influence the behaviors in times of crisis.

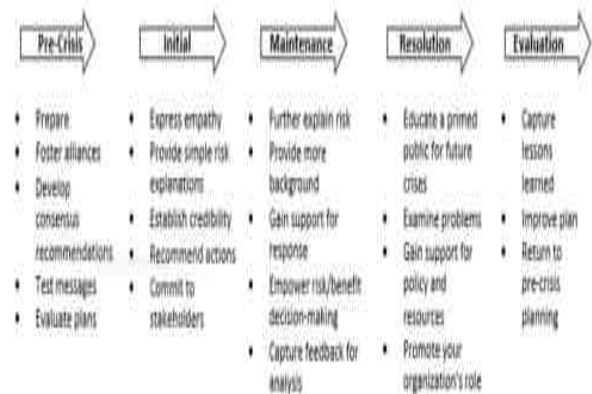
When the event is intentional, parties who feel victimized can identify an attacker. We can observe then different relational strategies, sometimes of rupture (boycott or evasion of the customers), sometimes of solidarity.

VI. THE PRINCIPLES OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

If the crisis is by nature unexpected, it is possible to foresee it. The main purpose of crisis communication is to prevent an incident or a sensitive situation from turning into a crisis.

Communication can then help to emerge from the crisis by providing a pseudo-rational explanation that is acceptable to all, and by disseminating the lessons learned to secure the future (Weick, 1993). This communication seeks first and foremost to reassure, motivate and reassure the members of an organization that has been severely shaken (see figure n°2). It makes it possible to "reconstruct" in common a representation of reality, from which individuals can mobilize again (Mucchielli, 1993).

Figure n° 2: Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Lifecycle



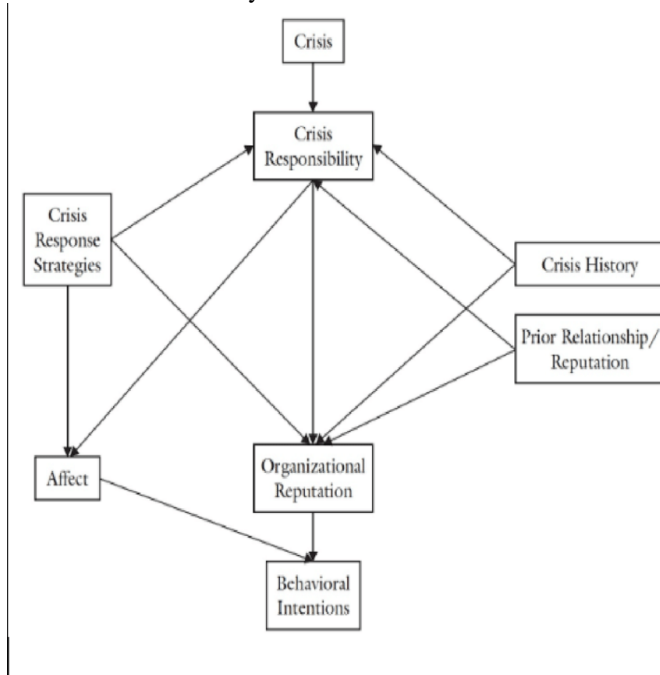
Source: Center for Preparedness and Response (CPR) 2017

It regularly monitors the internal or external environment in order to identify as early as possible the warning signs of potential risks. Indeed, crises that can threaten business are not just "industrial". They can take many other forms: violation of the law, management problem, strikes ...

A sensitive situation that gets worse, either unexpectedly or under pressure from the environment (local residents, associations, new legislation, ...) can very easily degenerate into a major crisis.

Of course the crisis communication can not completely prevent the mediatization of a crisis within the company (see figure n°3). Good communication will limit this media coverage and its impact on the functioning of the company. It is in all cases to return quickly to the usual operation.

Figure n°3: Crisis Situation model of Situational Crisis Communication Theory



Source : Reilly, Atanasova, Criel (2015).

VII. CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Libaert (2009) integrates communication in the management of the crisis. According to him, managing the crisis involves communication. It divides crisis management into four phases.

1. The preliminary phase: the organization must be on the lookout for first signals that can lead to a crisis at any time;
2. The acute phase: the triggering event brings the company quickly and intensely in a crisis situation. There is a great presence in the media;
3. The chronic phase: as the crisis has peaked, it is beginning to be less addressed in the media. If a bigger crisis is triggered elsewhere, a reduction in media attention will be caused;
4. The healing phase: There is a return to the normal functioning of the organization, the crisis is over and the media do not talk about it anymore.

However, even if an organization has overcome these four phases, the crisis is never fully over. Since the democratization of the use of the Internet, there are still traces of crises.

VIII. CRISIS SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Tunisian revolution of January 14, 2011 brought with it a lot of hope and optimism for a better future. While it will have caused a lot of losses especially in economic terms, but everyone agrees that this price is worth the candle to turn a new page in the history of our country (see figure n°4 and table n°1).

Figure n°4: GDP - real growth rate, %

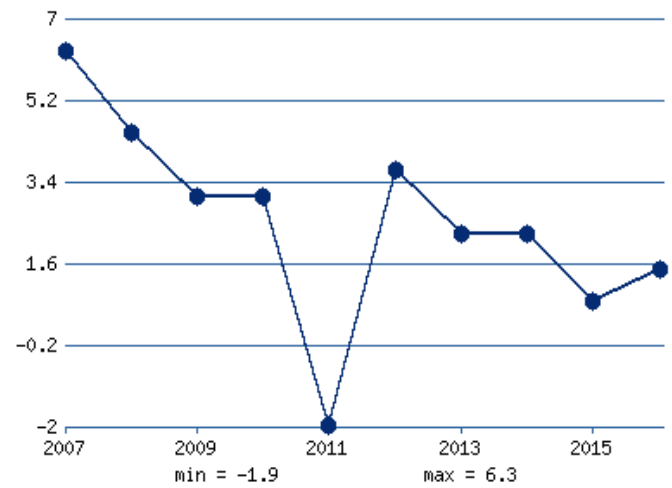


Table n°1 : GDP - real growth rate, %

year	Value
2008	4.5
2009	3.1
2010	3.1
2011	-1.9
2012	3.7
2013	2.3
2014	2.3
2015	0.8
2016	1.5

Source - CIA World Factbook 2016

Since the 1980s, information and communication specialists have emphasized the importance of communication in crisis situations. The real beginning of the use of the term "crisis management" October 1962, during the Cold War, during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In France, it was Lagadec who initiated work on the study and treatment of crises in the early 1980s. With regard to the concept of "crisis communication", it emerges in 1982, when the New York Times evokes crisis communication under the term "crisis communication" in an article on the Cold War.

The choice we made about crisis communication is not pure chance. Indeed, to get out of the slump caused by the revolution, Tunisian companies in difficulty need to present a communication to save face and bounce back. Especially that the impact of this revolution could very well have more than positive effects in the medium and long term for those who will not give up too soon.

Crisis communication is not an easy thing. It is therefore very important that it be thoughtful and coordinated. It must be carefully thought out so that all parameters are properly managed. One crisis is not another, and "ready-made" remedies do not exist.

There are two kinds of communication; bad communication and good communication (see figure n°5).

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Figure n°5: Bad and good communication

Bad Communication	Good Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed and conflicting messages from multiple sources • Late release of crucial information • Overly reassuring communication • Paternalistic messages • Unaddressed rumors and myths • Public power struggles, conflicts, and confusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple consistent messages • Timely release of information • Express empathy • Exhibit expertise • Remain honest and open • Use an effective crisis communication plan • Reduce high levels of uncertainty

Source: Center for Preparedness and Response (CPR) 2017

Communication in a crisis situation must take into account the logic of the media. In order to remain in control of one's communication, it is essential to understand how the media work and to be able to present one's point of view. The media act as crisis accelerators. In the past, information was essentially transcribed by journalists and conveyed via well-identified media. From now on, with the Internet, any individual can manifest and disseminate his opinion and consequently his dissatisfaction to the rest of the world, notably through discussion forums and / or community sites. For many businesses, managing a crisis is having good communication. However, do not confuse crisis management and crisis communication. A crisis is not managed with communication, as communication does not run a business. Nevertheless, communicating is certainly the best way to deal with a crisis. While the management of a crisis itself goes through many elements, crisis communication is certainly one of the key factors for success or the failure of crisis management. Crisis communication is a double-edged sword.

CONCLUSION

It can not be denied that communication plays a crucial role, in crisis situations, for institutions, both public and private. Communication is required to inform and reassure residents and to restore confidence.

But the crisis can arise by communicating itself. When communications strategies and messages are not as well suited as in the past. Many developments have been observed since the advent of crisis communications in the 1980s, and even today.

The various episodes of communication in crises have shown that public authorities have understood issues related to the media component. The media are increasingly linked to communication. These links allow journalists to establish trust and transparency for the public. Thanks to the development of new information technologies, the public has become more aware. It seems that communication with crises did not have the desired effect on the public.

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