

3 ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION DURING COVID-19

BY TERRENCE TRACY

During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, our collective appetite for information has been insatiable. News stations, social media feeds and even commercials and ads have become a constant stream of coronavirus-related information.

Local, state and federal governments and agencies share constant updates on the virus' spread and efforts to contain it. And because people are quarantined in their homes, every news report, updated statistic and revised projection are closely monitored.

By now, virtually every organization, from the world's largest corporations to local restaurants, has offered an update on the coronavirus' impact on their business.

For companies, there's no doubt distributing communications during a crisis like this is critical.

It's an integral part of any robust risk response plan. But effective communications, particularly amid so much competing information, can be a challenge. How can companies ensure their communications to customers and stakeholders convey the necessary information in the right tone and via the right channels?

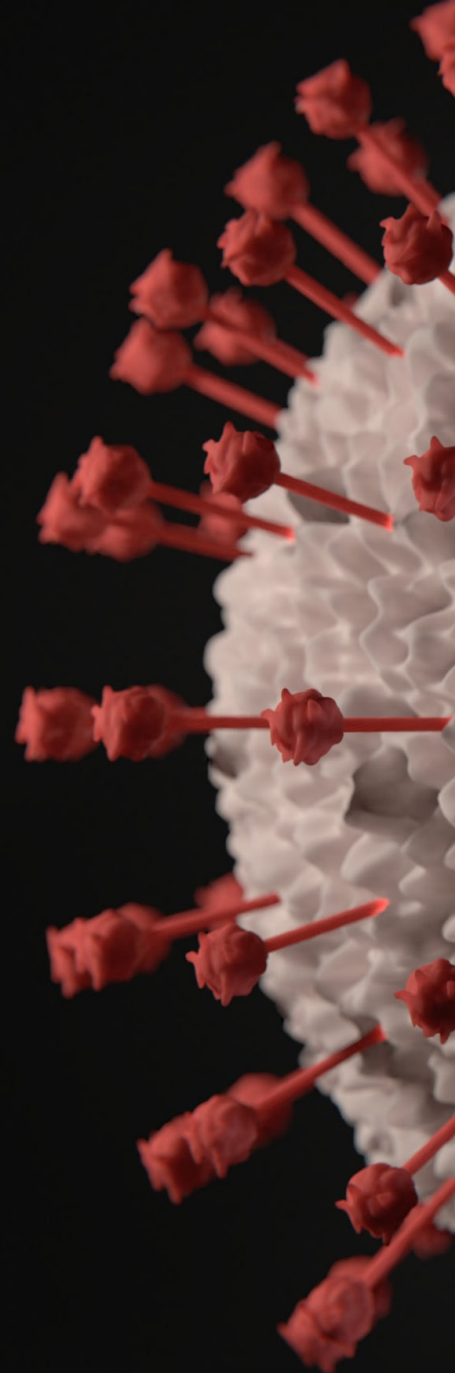
For risk and insurance professionals, there are several key considerations that can guide strategic communications and increase their value for audiences from employees to customers.

1 MAKE COMMUNICATIONS EASY TO ACCESS

Many organizations have adopted the best practice of creating a COVID-19 task force and sharing all related communications in a centralized hub.

Organizations cannot overlook the essential step of making this information easy for customers and stakeholders to find and access.

That means prominent placement on the company website, regular email communications, social media updates and distribution through any other applicable channels.



It's also important to ensure all information is consistently shared across all channels. Customers and other stakeholders shouldn't have to check multiple places to get the full view of your coronavirus communications. If you are answering questions on social media, make sure those responses appear on other channels. If you're providing daily email updates, make sure those updates are available elsewhere.

Further, risk managers and organizations should have access to some engagement metrics on their communications.

Analytics showing which communication topics are getting the most traction and which channels are the most utilized can be quite valuable. Use these insights to optimize communications efforts and prioritize the kinds of information you're sharing and how you're disseminating it to stakeholders.

2 SERVE AS A BROADER RISK RESOURCE

These metrics can provide meaningful insight on what information stakeholders are craving at a broader level.

That creates an opportunity to elevate the role of your communications from company updates to a more valuable resource for customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Organizations should use their hub to share relevant external resources from credible organizations.

Official government and legislative updates, as well as more specific industry or community information, can elevate your information center to a true resource for customers and others looking for guidance in responding to this crisis.

Brokers and insurers are uniquely suited to fill this expanded role. Shift your mindset from thinking about what you need to tell customers to what they want to know - not just from your organization, but from a broader risk management perspective.

Are there additional updates or resources that could help them navigate the risks associated with coronavirus facing their business? Serving as a conduit to a wider set of tools can position your organization for increased trust and leadership through this crisis and beyond.

3 BUILD ON BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Reacting to a crisis with the size and scope of the coronavirus is bound to be part effective planning, part rapid response. No risk management or business continuity plan could account for every aspect of this complex and fast-moving pandemic.

Part of effective communications means adapting to new developments and adjusting your messaging to address shifting needs.

Creating an agile task force that can respond to an evolving crisis and communicate effectively is key.

As your organization builds these response capabilities, look for opportunities to enhance and formalize future business continuity plans and communications tactics. There's a chance to realize more long-term benefits from all the time and resources that have gone into COVID-19 response planning.

Consider which parts of your communications efforts were most effective by analyzing the metrics. Take the time to review which parts of your plan worked and which didn't. In some cases, it may be worth maintaining key aspects of your COVID-19 response plan and team in anticipation of future crises.

Identify the individuals or teams who led communications efforts and consider investing in additional media or communications training for those employees.

In the coming months, we expect the constant slew of news updates, projections and government actions to continue.

As organizations get a better handle on the crisis and the pandemic subsides, organizations that take the time to reflect on their response and evaluate what worked and what didn't will be better positioned to navigate the next business disruption.

The entire world just got a crash course in risk management and crisis response. Smart organizations and their risk management teams will turn the tremendous challenges of the last few months into an opportunity to learn and be better prepared in the future.

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TERRENCE J. TRACY, CPA

Executive Vice President, Commercial Lines
267 702 1458
tracy@connerstrong.com

