

Emory Healthcare's Solomon Carter Releases The Executive Crisis Communications Playbook Through The SCCE

"Crisis management and the four pillars of communication" featured in the August 2023 CEP Magazine.

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In the wake of so many recent high-profile incidents, occurrences and epic failures surrounding a multitude of well-known brand behemoths, brand identity, brand image and brand reputation have been at the forefront of global executive teams now, more than ever.

From Influencer Dylan Mulvaney and the Bud Light debacle to Target and so many other well-known brands in between, there seems to be a recurrence of issues that often have less to do with these companies making communications decisions that damage their brand from the onset. It's how they respond.

There are countless things that a corporation can get wrong that could damage their brand, identity, and reputation when it comes to a message, advertisement or initiative. Mistakes and poor decisions are somewhat inherent in organizations consisting of thousands of employees. Things will always happen. But it's how the crisis management is handled post incident that appears to be the fatal blow to so many well-known brands of late. It's the response and lack of understanding in how to get out of the trouble they've made for themselves that has often caused their misery to last longer and at greater expense than it should. Sadly, and too often at the expense of their unsuspecting stockholders too. At last check, Bud Light, (AB InBev) said that U.S. revenue dropped 10% in the second quarter. The total losses thus far have been about \$395 million./

Figure 1: The four pillars of communication



in the process are the same. As a missionary who travels out of the country, it reminds me of malaria medicine. You take it to prevent getting malaria, but if you fail to take it and get malaria? The prophylaxis you should have taken to avoid it is the same medicine you take to treat it. There's no prescriptive difference.

The first pillar

The first pillar is to be truthful. Steven Covey said that "we operate at the speed of trust," and it's true. Simply put: if you have a reputation for not telling the truth, then people — whether your employees or external stakeholders — won't trust you. And if they don't trust you, then they won't respect you. And if they don't respect you, they won't want anything to do with you. Being truthful and authentic in how and what you communicate is hypercritical to developing

trust for your organization and establishes you as honest and reliable. There is a direct correlation between brand reliability and financial success. Things like being predictably truthful, telling good stories frequently, telling them first, and getting ahead of the curve when there's less-than-flattering news are a part of the secret recipe. Fully understanding these standards and their subtleties is the difference between insulating your brand from legal liability and risk or causing your firm to operate outside its risk tolerance.

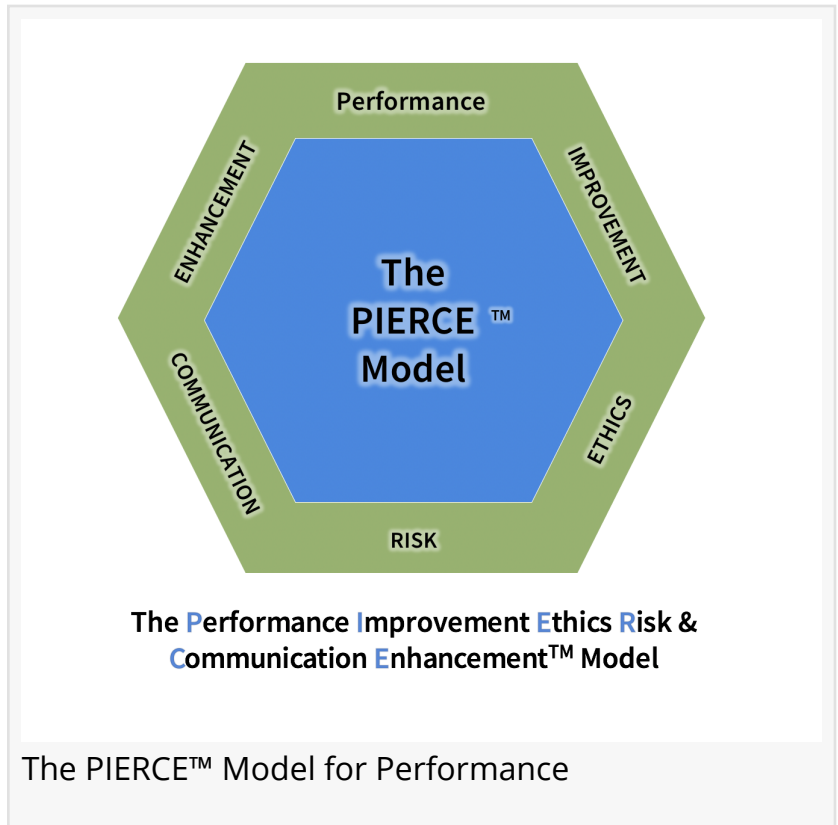
So, to be clear, this pillar instructs us to be authentic and truthful in our original communications. And then, if we are confronted with a crisis, it further informs us to be truthful when mitigating that crisis. And therein lies the issue. It's perplexing to see how many organizations' first inclination is not to tell the

truth when mitigating a crisis. They are what I call "emergency liars." They lie to fit the narrative of the emergency they're currently experiencing to make the pain go away. In actuality, it will make the matter worse downstream. Sooner or later, the truth comes out, and they'll have to go through all kinds of painful gyrations until they finally wind up admitting the truth, which they should have done from the beginning. Many times, they will doggedly refuse to ever be truthful, thus allowing the brand to be viewed as poorly structured and led, lacking accountability, lacking courage, and insulting the intelligence of every sentient being capable of detecting that they're being blatantly lied to — all things that decimate a brand's reputation and financial health, especially in America!

Every single organizational communication must have the

The Crisis Communications Playbook at a Glance

Enter Solomon Carter. Released in the August 2023 edition of the Society of Corporate Compliance & Ethics (SCCE), Compliance and Ethics Professional Magazine, Carter released “Crisis management and the four pillars of communication” which serves as the platinum standard for crisis communications and management. The executive crisis communications playbook, derived from The PIERCE™ Model (Performance Improvement Ethics Risk and Communication Enhancement) seems to offer leadership at every level easy to read, easy to understand and most importantly, easy to apply techniques that mitigate issues pre-risk. And dramatically reduces and mitigates incidents post occurrence in a way that can save organizations heartache, embarrassment, brand and reputation damage as well as financial ruin.



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Solomon Carter

Carter states “It occurred to me that there was a substantial void both fundamentally and at a very high level as it relates to the availability of proven best practices in crisis communications. The need for high level expertise and the methodologies derived from that expertise needed to be translated and distilled into a standardized playbook on crisis management and executive communications in general. Things like culture shaping, always providing a call to action, brand and identity protection and ensuring that all communications have a risk insulation consideration attached to it have been

largely missing as foundational requirements. As a result, I published “Crisis management and the four pillars of communication” which is derived from the PIERCE™ Model. It is also a part of the course that I developed and teach to new and advanced leaders at Emory Healthcare, as well as what I offer in consultancy. I’ve been asked by various elements within the leadership and communications space to provide a public educational opportunity and resource through my written work in this area and so this, represents that.” Carter said.

Final Thoughts:

At this juncture it would appear that institutions from education to healthcare, and the money-making mega-corporations whose products and services we use every day would do well to read, learn from and use the new crisis communications playbook. "Crisis management and the four pillars of communication" is the best, most straight forward and easy to apply set of real-world standards I've seen in the industry in over 30 years. For the ones who use it, their brands, reputation, identity, and relationships will be better for it. This long overdue resource is a hidden gem that I can't recommend enough and should be a staple in every executive's library.

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