Crisis Communication and Unique Stakeholders: Opportunities & Constraints for Leveraging User-Generated Content

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Commodity of Risk & Crisis

The dawn of the 21st century has seen the emergence of several themes that require the immediate attention and critical analysis of risk and crisis communicators:

- Increasingly complicated world
- Technological advances have transformed how risk bearers (and hopefully professional communicators and managers) view, interact with, create and disseminate information, and engage in dialogue within affected communities in a crisis situation
- Push for transparency, government and major organization intervention, and citizen-centric government

How can we make the most effective use of new communication technologies in response to risk, crisis, issues, and incidents and facing stakeholders?

Research

- ✓ Food safety social media project
- IED risk communication project
- ✓ TVA ash spill project
- Disaster in Japan social media project
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Three Themes Emerged

1. Institutional and Community Infrastructural Barriers & Opportunities

2. Leverage User-Generated Data

3. Build Collaborative Decision Making Through Stakeholder Outreach & Environmental Scanning

Institutional/Community Infrastructural Barriers & Opportunities



Those who face the greatest risks during a crisis are often those with the least access to information and the least resources to "appropriately" respond to information

•Typically initiated by early adopters of new technology within department (small working group), little investment, limited training, hi on technology but not on understanding and communicating with stakeholders

•Limited ROI research puts less resources for under-the-radar or underserved populations

Institutional/Community Infrastructural Barriers & Opportunities



 Poorly resourced organizations and their stakeholders are challenged with keeping up with constant change – technology, policy, guidelines, training, information

•Most work using social media/technology for underserved communities during a crisis is happening outside the United States Perlstein, J. (2011)

•Lack of crisis communication plans (N=27) related to social media and "unique" stakeholders – hoaxes, intentionality, underserved populations, immigrants, non-English speaking, illiterate

Leverage User-Generated Data



- •Security of information and access serious concerns with intentionally misleading information
- •Lack of perceived control, especially related to misinformation
- •Speed v. accuracy + willingness to engage in uncertainty discussions
- •Still primarily about information push
- •Democratization of knowledge for whom?
 - Reliance on risk bearers to create/manage their own crisis communication system based on disconnected, for-profit infrastructure

Defining a Mobile Society

Nine in ten 18-29 year olds own their own cell (Ingram, 2010)

More mobile than traditional land lines (CDC, 2011)

Next few years more users will connect to the internet over their mobile devices than desktops (Ingram, 2010)

Universal challenge incorporating mobile technology in risk and crisis



Leverage User-Generated Data

- In general, social media are penetrating the US population independent of education or race/ethnicity Chou WY, Hunt YM, Beckjord EB, Moser RP, Hesse BW (2009)
 - Not as well measured is type of use
- Mobile technologies key opportunity to engage youth, underserved
- Youth and communities of color are the leading demographics in mobile usage
- Community-driven mobile initiatives for social impact are vastly under-explored and underfunded domestically Perlstein, J. (2011).
- Challenge for crisis managers/communicators if there is little or no redundancy in the system for those relying on mobile technology as their primary communication platform

Leverage User-Generated Data

In a crisis, those already in the vicinity are the "true" first responders

Mobile technology creates a participatory public & changes the dissemination of information

Enables citizens to:

- report experiences as they happen

 share life-saving knowledge when seconds count

 use text/picture messaging to share information they could not obtain from authorities

emotional outlet/support



Website Crowdsources Japan Radiation Data

a conective voice neuring others stay informed.



How to Submit a Reading

We too have been watching events unfold in Japan. We have created this site in an effort to display the reliable data readings as they become available. While we are careful to evaluate new data sources, we welcome new reliable data from those on the ground in this crisis.

To submit readings

1) Purchase a radiation detection device.

INTERNATIONAL MEDCOM AMAZON LAB SAFETY SUPPLY COLE-PARMER

2) Take readings in your area.

Collaborative Decision Making

- Most important use is to actively listen
- Trends provide snapshot of public opinion
- Transparency of management decision-making, especially related to non-key stakeholders, ever more apparent
- Inaccurate information shared and re-tweeted
- Social media for updates allows the organization to humanize the response and shared decision making
- Traditional media and agency comments are repackaged and critiqued
- Opportunity to analyze and advise in real time



Social Games & Relief Fund

Social games creators such as Zynga partnered with Facebook and Save the Children to donate money through virtual goods to either the American Red Cross or Save the Children's relief efforts through Facebook

Games: Cityville,
Playfish, Farmville



Theoretical Model



Summary of Major Findings

- The main effect of message source on intent was significant, with professional sources leading to greater intent to comply than user-generated sources:
 - Participants divided into users and non-users of social media. Main effect of source remained significant for non-users, but was not significant for users.
 - Social media use was significantly related to cohort. The younger the participant, the more likely he/she used social media.
- Message credibility did not influence intent. Confirmed and unconfirmed information produced equal levels of intent.

Best Practices in Risk and Crisis Communication

Continuously Evaluate and Update Crisis Plans

PLAN AHEAD

Plan Ahead for a Prompt Response

Estab<mark>lish a C</mark>risis Comm<mark>unica</mark>tion Networ<mark>k</mark>

Accept Uncertainty

COMMUNICATE RESPONSIBLY

Form Partnerships with the Public

Acknowledge Public C<mark>onc</mark>ern

Be Open and Honest

MINIMIZE HARM

Be Accessible to the Media

Communicate Compas<mark>sion</mark>

Provide Suggestions for Self-Protection

Acknowledge and Account for Cultural Differences

Walk Away Points

- ✓ Need strategic leadership (and measurable success) to manage technical and other constraints related to unique stakeholders
- ✓ Utilize user-generated communication and systems
- ✓ We don't connect with products, services or devices we connect with people, values and purposes during a crisis
- \checkmark We don't connect to social media, we connect to each other
- ✓ Social media is being equated to interpersonal communication with resulting conversation and response often expected
- ✓ We are creating a risk and crisis communication and management system that is relying on risk bearers, through private companies' for-profit systems, to create content and manage their own crisis communication infrastructure



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