



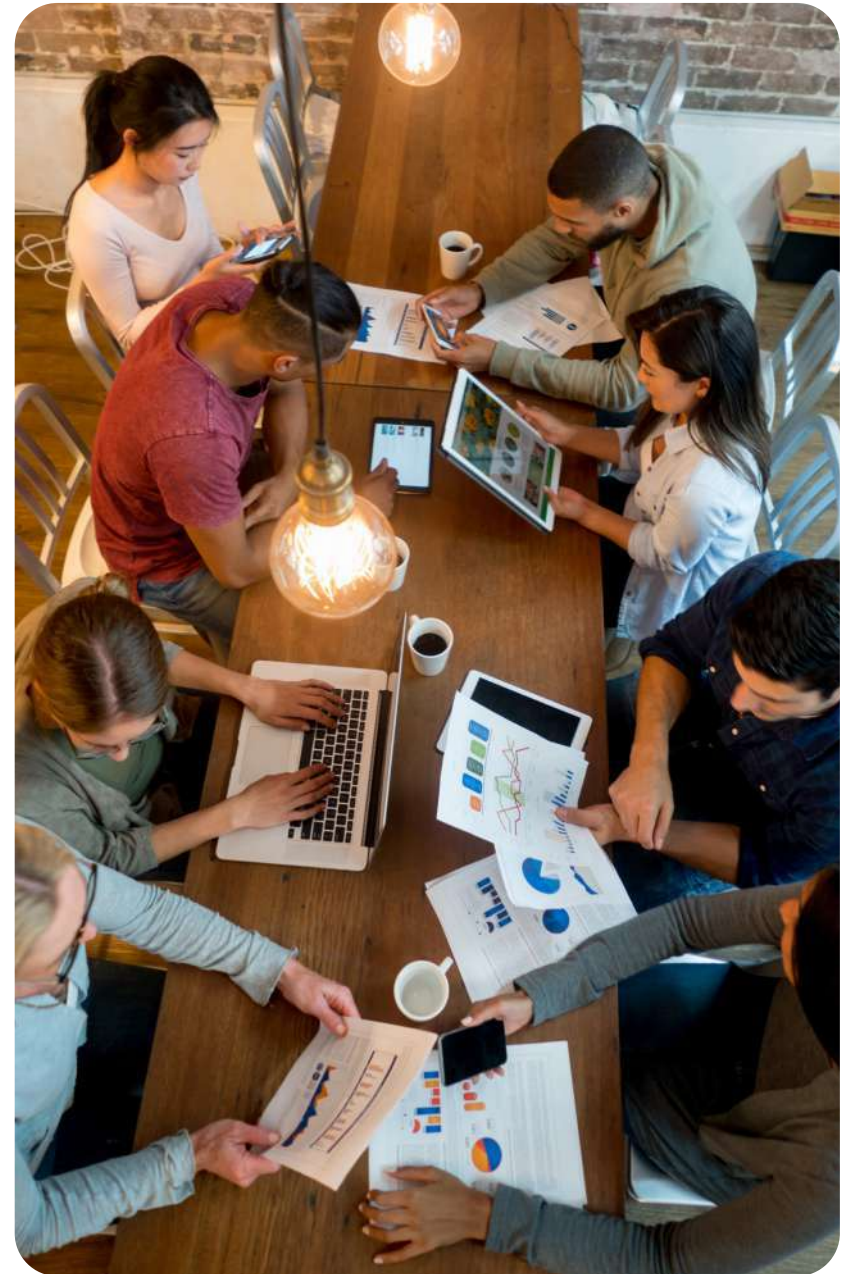
# PREPARE TO PROTECT: CREATING AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS PLAN



A faulty product, a marketing campaign gone wrong, or a slip of a tweet. It happens to the best of brands. A social media crisis can happen at any time, so preparation is key. After all, if you're going to put out a fire, you need a good hose.

Preparing your social media and customer experience teams to handle a crisis well can pay off. According to Pentland Analytics, companies that respond well to a brand crisis experience a 20% increase in value on average; those that respond poorly see a 30% decrease.

Too often, a brand's social crisis management strategy is reactive rather than proactive. Planning ahead to anticipate potential customer issues requires brands to think strategically about social media response management in a crisis. It means breaking out of company silos and integrating all elements of the customer experience equation including marketing, IT and customer service teams.





## Managing the risks in reviews

Monitoring online reviews is one important way brands can keep a finger on the pulse of what customers are thinking and saying about them. **Peter Ryan**, Principal Analyst and the head of Ryan Strategic Advisory, reported during a recent HGS Digital virtual roundtable that 50% of consumers won't buy from an organization that has a rating of less than four stars.

While there's a strong correlation between repeat business and responding to a review, too few brands are monitoring or commenting on reviews. While 70% of consumers indicate that they are more likely to buy from an organization that's responded to an existing review they've made, only 40% of consumer reviews are responded to by brands.

Failing to respond to consumer reviews is a major miss for today's businesses. In fact, businesses that reply to reviews at least **25% of the time** have an average of 35% more revenue and consumers spend up to 49% at companies that reply to reviews.

Reviews are a critical element of a brand's social media crisis management plan as they serve as a mechanism to gauge whether a company values the reviewer's business and takes accountability for any shortcomings. Customers can clearly see how a brand addresses their feedback.



Consider the way in which Dunkin' responds to negative comments. In the example below, not only did the brand respond swiftly and with empathy, but also with the unique voice of the brand.



In this situation, not only did Dunkin' apologize for the inconvenience, but the company also provided a solution to the problem. This approach helps to turn a dissatisfied customer into a happy one and shows others that you take care of your patrons.

One restaurant brand is committed to making sure monitoring and responding to reviews is a key element of its social media strategy. The brand uses a tool to monitor customer reviews on sites such as Google or Yelp. It acknowledges positive reviews by rewarding select customers with swag or gift cards. Additionally, some of the customer comments are included in media campaigns encompassing TV, billboards and restaurant displays. Negative comments are often addressed personally via one-on-one responses, often resulting in the reviewer requesting that their negative review be removed from the site.

A top retail brand targeting the 18-to-24 demographic leverages reviews as teaching moments in training via role-play exercises to demonstrate what good social media response looks like. Similarly, positive reviews can serve as a motivating factor for employees who can see the contribution they're making to customers via their responses.

Technology is also playing an increasingly important role in social media crisis management, from customers who post videos to review sites to communicate complaints to brands that leverage automation to monitor trends with the potential to harm their reputation.

**Amanda Sternquist**, Global Social Care Practice

Lead, *HGS Digital*, noted, "AI is something that has come a long way over the last couple of years, especially with image and local detection technology. When individuals post videos lacking in context, for example, we can use that technology to capture the images, logos, products, and even the sentiment to help filter and triage those types of interactions to the appropriate teams."



“ By leveraging AI and automation, we can monitor those moments that could lead to potential harm for the brand and more effectively mitigate risks. ”

**Amanda Sternquist, Global Social Care Practice Lead, HGS Digital**

## Brand benefits of proactive planning

Managing reviews are but one element of a broader social media crisis management strategy. With more than **3.8 billion social media users** worldwide, modern customers share their customer experiences—both good and bad—across various social media channels.

More than ever, it's critical for businesses to plan ahead, because critical situations go viral faster on social channels than in traditional media. Effective social media crisis planning allows brands to:

### > **Deliver effective customer service.**

When it takes days or weeks to get a response from a company, people lose interest in the brand. In fact, **37% of people** who call out brands on social media expect to get a response in under 30 minutes. When brands are prepared for a social media crisis, their teams can provide more effective customer service faster.

### > **Protect brand reputation.**

Although it's difficult to predict a social media crisis, you can protect your brand reputation once issues happen. Identifying your company's core values and principles in advance can help ensure you are responding to customers in your brand's tone of voice. It will also facilitate the process of creating a communication guide that can save your brand reputation when worst comes to worst.

### > **Choose relevant social media management tools.**

In order to keep track of all the direct messages, mentions, and comments received in social channels, brands must choose appropriate social media management tools. "One of the biggest challenges we see from brands today and one of the biggest game changers is selecting a tool that can unify their strategy and give them access to everything," Sternquist said.

One major CPG company noted that challenges with APIs can result in the inability of social listening tools to identify those mentions that can cause potential risk in terms of reputation.

> **Educate team members.**

It is critical to train social media managers and moderators to detect a crisis in the early stages as well as the specific ways to react in order to quickly solve customer requests. Crafting a social media crisis plan ensures everyone who represents the company on social media channels is on the same page.



“ Leveraging technology is needed to ensure that you can get to the scale you need to respond to those issues that are meaningful to the business and be engaged where it is most critical. ”

**Sandy Cooley, Senior RPA Specialist,**  
Automation Anywhere

## Plan to protect: Creating a crisis management plan

We are taught to hope for the best, plan for the worst, and prepare to be surprised. Social media can be a fickle friend; the slightest slip-up can have a huge impact on your brand reputation and customer relationships. Below are a few strategies to put in place to prepare for the unexpected and manage the fallout.

> **Prepare and document a crisis communication plan.**

To ensure that all team members who handle direct messages and comments can solve customer complaints in compliance with your voice and strategy, create a social media crisis management plan that works well for your company. The plan should be documented and socialized with all essential company stakeholders.

> **Create a definition of a social media crisis for your brand.**

Not every negative comment constitutes a crisis. Define what constitutes a social media crisis and determine in which situations the crisis team needs to be mobilized. Is it a problem or a full-blown crisis? There is a distinct difference in the kind of response you'll want to deliver. Crises tend to impact larger audiences requiring a special response from the business to prevent escalation.



> **Develop an internal triage flowchart to execute actions.**

Once you have defined the right course of action to take, the next step is to outline your triage plan. Triage helps you determine whether to respond to a comment, what the tone of the response should be and who should provide the response. Creating a triage “if this, then what” flowchart will help visualize the process and provide clear guidelines to the social media crisis team. Standard responses using just a social media manager are usually at the lower end of the scale. As the crisis intensifies, additional measures are taken to ensure an appropriate response is delivered. It should be kept in mind that as the crisis escalates, brands may need to adjust their publishing schedule to demonstrate a complete focus on the issue. Pausing scheduled posts, ads and marketing emails may be needed in order to resolve the crisis.

## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Escalation Process				
<b>Flashpoint Issues</b> Extremely offensive, violent, or potentially viral content	<b>Influencer Level Interactions</b> Mention is published by someone with over 5,000 social followers/fans	<b>Trolls/Spammer/ Detractors Needing to be Blocked</b>	<b>Disruptive Imagery</b> Malpractice related, weapons, unauthorized photo of people/facilities, etc.	<b>Unsure of Response is Warranted</b>
Send details of interaction/concern with link to mention	Send details of interaction/concern with link to mention	Send details of interaction/concern with link to mention	Send details of interaction/concern with link to mention	Send details of interaction/concern with link to mention
Contact 1) _____ Contact 2) _____ Contact 3) _____	Contact 1) _____ Contact 2) _____ Contact 3) _____	Contact 1) _____ Contact 2) _____ Contact 3) _____	Contact 1) _____ Contact 2) _____ Contact 3) _____	Contact 1) _____ Contact 2) _____ Contact 3) _____



> **Build your crisis management dream team.**

Identify all the stakeholders within the business who have a role in the crisis management process. Whether you establish a communications task force or another type of team structure, make sure to outline specific roles and responsibilities for each member of the team, and make sure all members are aware of their responsibilities and expectations when a crisis hits.

> **Craft your key message.**

Draft a concise key message that effectively communicates your response and demonstrates the core values of your company. Get your message out there as soon as possible so the public and your customers can see that you have acknowledged the issue and are working to resolve it.

> **Create a message map.**

Identify real or potential crisis scenarios and draft appropriate responses for each situation to be used in the brand social media channels or review sites such as Google and Yelp. Make sure to involve all members of the social media crisis management team as well as company leadership and the legal team.

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## TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS

1. Implement social media crisis plan
2. Establish crisis management dream team
3. Ensure employees are aware of your organization's position
4. Review—and possibly pause—upcoming social calendar
5. Communicate with honesty, openness, and empathy
6. Cite only credible sources
7. Use social media listening and monitoring tools to stay informed
8. Avoid “trend-jacking” or activities that appear profit-driven
9. Leave room for questions
10. Don't ignore customer feedback

> **Engage with your customers.**

The goal of your brand's social media channels is to communicate directly with your customers on the channels where they spend their time. Resist the temptation to ignore them when a crisis arises. Once you communicate your broader crisis response message, you free yourself up for more granular outreach. That is the time to respond directly to tweets, record a video response, or customize a solution to a specific customer issue. It's important to stay calm, demonstrate empathy, think strategically and exercise patience during a crisis.

> **Select the right social media monitoring tools.**

In order to help avert a crisis, active social listening is key. Keep in mind that *96% of those who discuss your brand online* don't follow you on social media. This means you need to use social listening tools to catch the early signs of dissatisfaction posted across the web. Select the right technology to align with all your social media management needs to ensure you're not missing critical customer mentions.

> **Encourage followers to share feedback.**

When people follow you on social, *96% of them* are more likely to join the conversation with your brand. In fact, GetVoIP found that customers are 97% more likely to be loyal to your company if you implement customer feedback. Keep in mind, however, that dissatisfied customers quickly lose interest in your brand if you fail to respond to their issue quickly.

> **Regularly assess your social media care performance.**

Whether your brand needs to better respond to an increasing volume of social media activity, monitor mentions and reviews across channels, or maintain your brand reputation during a crisis, your first step should be to evaluate your current social media performance. To make your social media investments count, start by obtaining a free *HGS EPIC™ Social Media Score Report* highlighting six key metrics.

“Social media crisis management and managing a brand’s reputation on social media is not a static exercise,” noted Ryan. “It’s something that is constantly evolving.”

Now more than ever, today’s businesses must develop and implement a strategic social media crisis management plan that focuses on social media listening and monitoring. By keeping its pulse on social media sentiment, a company will be well positioned to take swift action to address any customer feedback or issues that could lead to reputational damage to the brand.

The time is now to evaluate and ramp up your social crisis management strategy to prepare to meet new and emerging customer expectations in the social channels of today and tomorrow.

Need help getting started? [Contact us](#) for a free social media benchmark analysis or to learn more about our tiered HGS EPIC™ Social CX solutions.

With over 250 digital successes and stellar client satisfaction ratings, HGS Digital creates frictionless customer experiences that solve complex business problems and improve people's lives.

We work with leading brands across the world to improve their customer engagement, optimize their operations, reduce costs, and increase revenue. As a technology-agnostic consultant—with partners ranging from Amazon, Salesforce, Google, IBM, Microsoft, and more—we are well-equipped to help you select and successfully implement the right tools for your specific needs.



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