Trust Building Corporate Communications in Times of the Coronavirus
7 Tips for Communications Professionals

The impact of COVID-19 on businesses globally is still evolving. DAX and Wall Street stocks are under pressure and investors are growing increasingly concerned about a worldwide economic slowdown. To protect your organization's reputation as a Corporate Communications professional, you need to act with speed and accuracy, while considering the needs of multiple internal and external stakeholders.

Here are 7 hands-on tips for trust building communications in times of the Coronavirus:

1. **Communicate internally first**
   - If your organization hasn't yet, send a message about the importance of safety measures onsite and staying home if sick. Combine with reassurance and offering support for fears of exposure. Also have a message from leadership developed in the instance that your organization, one of its locations, or your supply chain is directly affected. Finally, make sure employees know where to find the latest information about the virus and provide links to sources (e.g. WHO, local health authority).

2. **Know your processes for contacting customers and suppliers**
   - Establish how to identify any customers who visited a location during a potential exposure period and have messaging in place. Ensure that your organization's communications/crisis team knows how to quickly access distribution lists and has permission to contact customers and suppliers.

3. **Have a media statement ready for confirmed/suspected cases**
   - *Example:* The safety and health of employees and customers is our highest priority. Following the diagnosis of an employee/customer with COVID-19, [Organization] has implemented all recommendations of the public health authorities.
   If an organization location is affected: The [Organization] location is open and operating, and we are working with our employees and customers to ensure their comfort and safety.

4. **Prepare Frequently Asked Questions**
   - Consider an FAQ detailing your organization's commitment to safety for its employees, customers, for use by your customer service teams, and potentially for your website if applicable.

5. **Review existing policies regarding health issues for your company**
   - Do employees have the option work from home?
   - Should employees self-quarantine depending on travel or suspected exposure/symptoms?
   - What support can the company offer employees who contract the virus? Who cannot work from home? Do canteens need to be temporarily closed?

6. **Scenario plan for impacts to operations and identify communication needs**
   - What if locations/offices need to close?
   - What if supply chains are affected?
   - Do in-person gatherings of employees need to be suspended/can they be conducted virtually?
   - Are there any international events in the near future that may be impacted / should be postponed?
   - Do you have a contact at the local health authority in the event that something needs to be escalated?

7. **Stay up to date on how the situation evolves**
   - In Germany, make sure you are aware of the recommendations of the local and state health authorities. The following organizations also provide official and trustworthy information and should be monitored:
     - Federal Ministry of Health (Bundesgesundheitsministerium))
       https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus.html

     - Federal Public Health Institute (Robert Koch Institut)
       https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/NCOV2019/FAQ_Liste.html
       https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/nCoV.html

     - Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt): Information on international travel destinations
       https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit/10.2.8Reisewarnungen

If you have questions or would like support, please reach out to our Corporate Reputation team: crisis-germany@edelman.com