

>> **Twitter. The backbone of crisis communication**

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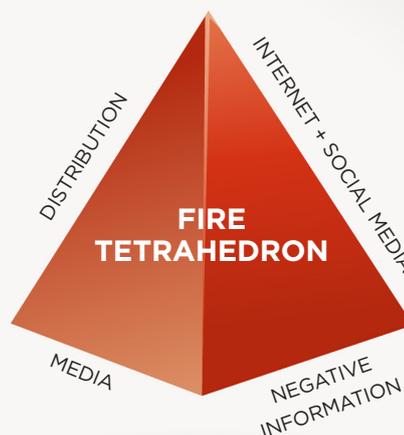
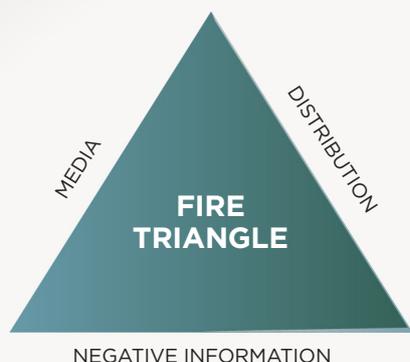
As occurs with everything related to communication, when it comes to communicating risks and crises, it is actually a matter of reputation; maintaining the credibility and confidence of a brand, organization or people facing a situation that could harm their legitimacy or credibility to operate and interact with society. Being unprepared for a crisis is, obviously, a very risky decision, particularly within the current digital ecosystem. In fact, only 16% of the companies consider this preparation to be important. However, having a Manual for crises, and correctly implementing and defining it is absolutely essential. In this scenario, Twitter has become the central nervous system that governs crisis communication. The Small-world theory supports this approach.

As Manuel Castells points out in *Comunicación y Poder*, 2008 (Communication and power) "a message travelling through the network can reach hundreds of thousands of people as described by the **small-world** effect: networks of networks that exponentially increase their connectivity. Thus, each issuer leads to another issuer that identifies the message as reliable information from a known source (in many cases, a personally trusted source). These are trusted networks where the shared content generates empathy during the mental processing of the message".

When Castells wrote this, back in 2008, he referred to mobile phones, SMS, Facebook and Myspace. But it certainly seems as if he anticipated the revolution that Twitter would entail and which would transform it, in the words of @AdolfoCorujo, into an external nervous system that connects the network.

The emergence of new technologies, particularly Internet, Big Data and artificial intelligence pose a huge challenge. The communicative paradigm has changed. Until recently, it was relatively simple to control a small communication crisis and stop it in time. It was a matter of controlling what I call *the fire triangle of crisis management*. The base of the pyramid is the negative information that the company generates. This data is picked up by the media, reinterpreted and produced to distribute it among the population. Thus, by controlling any of these elements: informative origin, media or distribution channels; the fire could be put out. It was only necessary to break the chain reaction during any of the three processes that the sides of the triangle represent.

However, the current situation is much more complex. A new element has been added to the triangle, which now has become the *fire tetrahedron*. I am referring to internet and social networks. Organizations can no longer control



information easily. Any employee of a company, just with his Smartphone, becomes a potential media. Employees are joined, as regards criticism and negative information distribution, by customers and citizens. They are not mere information consumers anymore, but have also become producers of information and some of them particularly influent bloggers.

The network society has transformed the scenario, through its democratization and empowerment of citizens and clients. At least, the most influent members (within the political communication sphere only 20,000 people regularly converse in Twitter according to the II political barometer Sensitis). All thanks to self-communication and specially twitter. Because it is exactly within the microblogging network and the trending topics where many media collect information. In fact, several media, quite unprofessionally, are influenced by the trends of these networks and share false data without verifying the information. A good example can be found below regarding the Earthquake of Ossa de Montiel which took place on February 23, 2015. A true "Fake".

Therefore, operating with this new fourth side has become a challenge that greatly transforms the whole process of management of crisis communication and forces, even further, to develop a communicative prevention strategy as an essential tool to be able to protect our reputation during a crisis.

ESSENTIAL DIGITAL MONITORING FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In this sense, it is not only essential to make a sound analysis of risks, vulnerabilities and aggravating factors, but also to identify our stakeholders. This is something that has already been done in the past, but now there is a greater reason to do so as every single one of them have become potential media. Efforts should be made to identify and categorize them and determine their influence. Therefore, the following years will be marked by the combined implementation of Big Data tools and artificial intelligence that will automate and facilitate the synchronous analysis of the conversation and its meaning to be able to predict the behavior of our stakeholders in order to enhance the decision-making process. Even nowadays, the state of the art is far from achieving full automation regarding the analysis of the data in its context.

"Nowadays, ignoring crisis prevention is not viable and, even less, without a 2.0 strategy. Not having a crisis manual is similar to driving without seat belts and airbags"

On the other hand, it is essential to make efforts during the pre-crisis period. Analyses will have to be carried out to study the network conversation and generate value contents that leads to the formation of a community of supporters and groups of influencers that can aid brands and organizations and defend their reputation. But all of the aforementioned points must be based upon brand transparency, accuracy, consistency, coherence, credibility and honesty. In this regard, I would like to mention a really important point which should always be taken into account, the *cursed triangle* of communication which consists of: rumors, concealment and lies. Crucial factors that need to be fought.

It is also important to previously work on the configuration of groups of social network influencers, as it could be key to channel support and favor the re-direction of the conversation.

DIGITAL AIRBAG FOR CRISES

What scenario will face a brand or organization that has not prepared or readjusted its crisis communication strategy for this new paradigm?

If the crisis is caused by them, that is, if it is not due to external factors, the reputation of the group will suffer a great blow and the economic consequences could be huge. Nowadays, ignoring crisis prevention is not viable and, even less, without a 2.0 strategy. Not having a crisis manual is similar to driving without seat belts and airbags. The chances of surviving in a frontal collision drop to 20% and serious sequels are unavoidable.

Therefore, it seems logical to take minimal risks. We all know that zero risk does not exist. There is no universal safety measure that can protect us from all threats. But a seat belt and a digital airbag could, in case of a frontal collision, send us to hospital for a few days and just have a rather unpleasant memory for the rest of our lives. A scar or mere wound that, in any case, can be healed.

I would not hesitate for a minute. Implementing a good seat belt 1.0 combined with an airbag 2.0 is an investment that could undoubtedly save our lives and preserve our reputation.



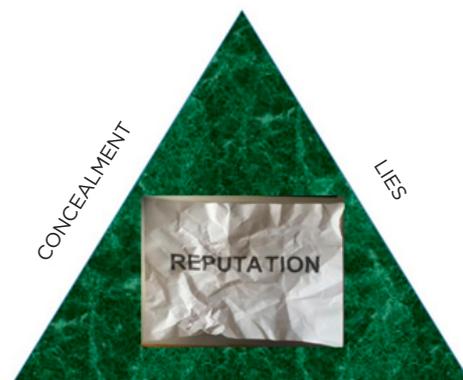
State broadcaster TVE tweets "Spain earthquake" photos that are from Christchurch quake and a blog. RT @keiruga

Traducir del inglés

24h @24h_tve · 6 min
Cercanías al pueblo de Ossa de Montiel, Albacete, después del terremoto. Via @Montesinos_Camp



THE CURSED TRIANGLE CRISIS COMMUNICATION



RUMORS

By @LuisSerranoR



» **Luis Serrano** is Area Director of Crisis Communication at LLORENTE & CUENCA Spain. Journalist, reputable expert in emergency and disasters communication and crisis management in social networks. He was Head of Press of the Emergency Center 112 of Madrid during 17 years and, for three years, member of ERICAM (Equipo de Respuesta Inmediata en Emergencias de la Comunidad de Madrid). He has a vast experience in the training of spokespersons in the field of emergencies and crisis management. He is professor associate of the National School of Civil Protection, Madrid, EIMFOR and teaches the Political Communication Master's Degree at the Camilo José Cela University. As a journalist, he worked for seven years in the news department of Onda Cero. He is author of *"11 M y Otras Catástrofes. La gestión de la comunicación en emergencias"* (11 M and Other Disasters. Communication Management in Emergencies).

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