AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR KADDIS SWEETS- CONSULTANCY PROJECT

by
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A project
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Elie Elias Kanaan   for   <u>Master of Human Resources Management</u>
<u>Major</u>: Human Resources Management

Title: <u>A Crisis Communication Plan for Kaddis Sweets- Consultancy Project</u>.

Note: Kaddis Sweets is a Generic Name, since the name of the organization has been changed for confidentiality purposes.

On the 28th of November, the Minister of Public Health, Wael Abou Faour, revealed a list of names of food organizations that were selling unsafe food products (Aarji, 2014). Kaddis sweets was one of those names. Inspectors from the ministry of health took samples from Kaddis Sweets, XXX Branch, whereby some samples passed, and some did not. The tests performed by the ministry showed that there were Listeria bacteria in an ice-cream stick. Kaddis were forced by the ministry to pull this product from all their branches, until they received a clearance on the safety of this product. After 15 days, another testing proved the ice cream was clear from any bacteria.

Kaddis justified what happened and blamed the ministry of mishandling their products. The spokesperson in that case, was the executive assistant of the CEO. She mentioned that the ministry did not take the samples in the right way and did not transport it correctly. Subsequently, this caused the presence of the bacteria, Listeria, in the ministry's labs. On contrast, when Kaddis Sweets did tests in their onsite microbiology lab, no bacteria were present. They have a food safety department that is certified for good manufacturing practices such as the ISO 22000 and HACCP, Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Points.

The hardest part of that was the media coverage. MTV interviewed the executive assistant, and questioned Kaddis's hygiene and cleanliness, taking some photos whether in the factory or in the show room, which they are proud of.

Therefore, the objective behind this project is to understand the sources of reputational and operational risks faced at Kaddis Sweets, what communication strategies they used during crisis, and role that their HR team played in preventing, acting, and recovering from crisis, to finally develop a full-fledged crisis communication plan with special focus on HR communication.

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To

My Beloved Family

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Kaddis Sweets is a family business that was launched in 19xx. It all started with Mr. Kaddis that used to bake in his home in 19xx, and let his passion and talent to evolve and become a business. This food production company started with a 50m^2 kitchen in XXX –Lebanon, and to date, has flourished into X points of sale with more than X production lines in the Middle East. They are known for their high quality- high price strategy.

Kaddis Sweets is one of the innovative and leading Arabic sweets companies in the Middle East. With X local branches in Lebanon and approximately 200 employees, they are continuously expanding with plans to spread around the world. Part of their vision states that they want to become the leading destination for traditional sweets in the Gulf and Middle East while maintaining the best hygiene and quality standards. Their mission is to continuously satisfy their customer tastes and keep on innovating (Kaddis Sweets, 2018).

Since it is a family business, the chain of commands runs from the CEO to executive assistant to the CEO, production manager, outlets manager, finance manager, marketing manager, and then the sales people. All managers report directly to the CEO.

In 2014, the Ministry of Health released a set of rules for all Lebanese food establishments and requested these food units to abide by them (Ghanem, 2015). This announcement included sudden inspections to wastewater removal methods, pest control practices, water supply networks, composition of equipment's used during production, conditions of storing and delivering raw material, as well as refrigerating

and freezing food products (Ghanem, 2015). Upon those specifications, the ministry labeled those Lebanese food establishments as "conforming" or "nonconforming" to the standards. Subsequently, a name and shame approach was implemented, and a list of Lebanese food establishment names circulated by the ministry as well as media outlets in Lebanon.

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strategies they used during crisis, and role that their HR team played in preventing,

acting, and recovering from crisis, to finally develop a full-fledged crisis

communication plan with special focus on HR communication.

Research Questions:

RQ1: What are the best HR practices when it comes to crisis management?

RQ2: What HR policies and reputation management practices are in place to

prepare for and manage crisis situations at Kaddis Sweets?

RQ3: What training and employee development initiatives are available to

prepare their organization for crises?

RQ4: What communication channels Kaddis Sweets use to engage with their

employees?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW- CRISIS MANAGEMENT & THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

Literature Review

Human Resource (HR) is a group of people who make up a business and/or organization's workforce (Lin & Lamond, 2014). In any organization, people are the most important resource. HR is a source for assistance with different personal and job-related manners (Welch & Welch, 2012). HR nowadays is rather the helping hand to guide you through organizational troubles.

In the increasingly competitive and fast-changing world of business, one way to stay ahead is by having and sustaining strong reputation and corporate brand. In many organizations, the main responsibility for corporate branding and reputation management rests with public relations, communications and marketing departments. Organizational crisis is a low-probable event that highly impacts and threatens an organization, whereby decisions must be implemented swiftly to reduce its impact (Pearson & Clair, 1998). The consequences of not preparing to respond appropriately, ethically, and quickly to a crisis can be dramatic. Therefore, the practices performed by the HR department are crucial because both organizations and managers are keen to reduce resource attrition, enhance managerial efficacy, and improve organizational performance and identification during crisis (Chang, Nguyen, Cheng, Kuo & Lee, 2013). Extensive research has been done to examine the links between human resource practices and performance to ideally increase productivity, reduce staff turnover, improve employee commitment, and enhance quality and efficiency (Dalal, 2005).

Crises are inevitable (Argenti, 2012) irrespective of the industry. At any time

and place, a crisis can happen.

You can barely find any information on crisis management in Lebanon, but some companies in Lebanon started implementing ISO 9001:2015, Quality Management System. ISO 9001:2015 is a certification an organization acquires that serves as a quality management system. This certificate means that the business consistently offers services and products that meet customer expectations and legal requirements by following a standard set of procedures effectively. Internal communication falls in section 5.5.3, whereby top management must ensure that appropriate communication procedures are being implemented.

There are some obstacles that are preventing businesses from being ISO 9001:2015 certified. The development of a successful institution is directly related to its owner(s) and managers (Majdalani, Ajam, & Mezher, 2006). The CEOs are considered the 'enabling foundations' to communicate the organization's vision (Park & Beger, 2014). To do so, the human resource department can influence the head of management to adopt certain business practices that can improve communication especially during crisis.

There is a gap in literature about crisis communication, specifically in the Arab World and Middle East (Thomas & Stephens, 2015).

Definition of Crisis

A crisis is an unexpected and sudden accident that threatens a firm's operations and induces an image or reputation threat (Coombs, 2007). Hermann (1963) characterized crisis by a surprise with a short time to react upon. Guth & Marsh (2005) proposed that a crisis might cover some of the following features or all of them: disruptive, stressful, unpredictable, or dangerous.

Issue vs. Crisis

There is a fine line between the definition of issue and crisis. Issues develop over time, and usually are focused on one situation or topic. Since issues are daily challenges of industries, if issues were not recognized and properly dealt with, they can eventually change and become a crisis (Smudde, 2001). Issues and crisis should not be treated as an interchangeable term (Jacque, 2011). Each has a different management response and has distinct meanings. For sure, those two terms are related, as issues can predict that a crisis is likely possible to happen. Therefore, issue management can be seen as a powerful tool to prevent crisis. Issue management includes environmental scanning and analysis, strategic planning and future research (Jacque, 2011). It evolves around trends that have just started or already taking place related to the corporate environment. Issue management is a systematic and proactive approach to planning which eases change. Its users will be warned and prepared if they encountered a possible crisis. On contrast, crisis management is the opposite of issue management because it is reactive and attempts to restrain change (Jacque, 2011). Through environmental scanning and issue management, organizations will get to know ample information on economic, political, technological and economic factors that will affect the business in the future (Lupica, 1994). Therefore, understanding those changes will help companies anticipate potential opportunities and problems.

Crisis management on the other hand, deals with unanticipated events. Charles Stubbart (1987) mentioned that crisis management tends to deal with unclear problems and labels it as "wicked". It is called wicked because it has those four characteristics: complexity, uncertainty, emotional involvement and conflicts of interest (Stubbart, 1987).

Crisis management is a field that is growing rapidly in both, academia and

practice. (Coombs, 1995). The main purpose of crisis management is to maintain a firm's image according to how the public perceives the firm. Therefore, a crisis management team should work hard to safeguard the current positive image of the organization from being damaged with negative influences of a crisis (Coombs, 1995).

Types of Crisis

Crisis can be classified into three types, or so-called clusters, according to the degree of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007). The first is the victim cluster. The organization in this cluster is seen as a victim and has nothing to do with the crisis. For example, if a natural catastrophe like an earthquake takes place and the organization could be damaged and thus has little responsibility for this crisis, and barely incurs any reputational harm. The second cluster is the accidental cluster, which is due to an accident. This means that it is the organization's actions, which led to this uncontrollable or unintentional crisis, and it can be due to equipment or technological failure that caused the accident. The last type is the intentional cluster, when the firm deliberately puts people at risk, performs inappropriate decisions or violates regulation or law in purpose, like human-error product harm crisis. Therefore, if the product is recalled from the market, the firm has a great responsibility in such an occasion and hence leads to severe reputational danger to the organization.

Stages of Crisis

Research has been made to classify crisis based on its definition, dimension and scope (Breitsohl, 2009). All crises are classified most likely into a four-stage pattern (Fink, 1986). The first is the Prodromal crisis stage, and it is the warning stage. That is, if a firm conscious of a potential crisis beforehand, they might have time to prepare and

prevent upcoming trouble. Then comes the Acute crisis stage, where the crisis outbreaks. Consequently, some damage might occur at this stage whether the firm can truly pass the crisis or is still hesitant. The third stage is the chronic stage, whereby the firm acts to respond and deal with the crisis. The last stage is crisis resolution where things return to normal.

In this project, Kaddis Sweets had a scandal, which is human-error product harm crisis, which belongs to the third cluster, and is due to a certain type of bacteria that was present in the ice cream.

Such type of crisis can form a negative effect on market share, sales, stock price, and brand equity (Shi & Chen, 2011). Therefore, by identifying the type of crisis, the crisis management team can predict the level of crisis responsibility stakeholders will assign to the firm, thus tailor the corresponding reactions to face the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Crisis Management

Having a well-managed crisis typically leaves stakeholders with a strengthened trust and a positive impression in the organization that faced the crisis (Brockner & James, 2008). Nevertheless; how should an organization act if is faces a crisis?

- *How to Handle a Crisis?*

Numerous factors are present when an organization begins setting its strategies, handling and communicating an opposed crisis. Coombs & Weiner's model (2007) is one of the most advised strategies a firm can follow.

- *Coombs & Weiner's Model 2007*

Coombs & Weiner recommend firms to effectively act to bypass all potential harm that a crisis can cause, even before facing a threatening crisis. Both researchers

suggest three phases for crisis management and communication. Each phase from pre-crisis, to crisis response, to post-crisis will be explained below.

Pre-Crisis Phase

The first phase, known as *Pre-crisis,* is the point of prevention and preparation. At this phase, an organization adopts preventive measures before a crisis happens (Coombs, 2007). To start off, an organization should never underestimate the likelihood of a crisis, no matter how successful the business is. Organizations must draft a crisis management plan (CMP), plan for severe outcomes whilst hoping for the best, select and train the crisis management team, and test several scenarios and methods to handle a crisis (Weiner, 2006).

When it comes to communication, organizations should develop a contact log having the entire media and third parties' questions, prepare for offensive and tough media inquiries and reactions, select and train the spokespersons that will speak in one voice as a firm, and finally assess the set plan while establishing a monitoring system (Weiner, 2006).

The crisis management team ideally has to include the following executives: information security specialists, legal consultants and lawyers, human resources personnel, finance experts, operations managers and public relations practitioners (Coombs, 2007).

According to Coombs, the CMP is the following:

Reference tool, not a blueprint. A CMP provides lists of key contact information, reminders of what typically should be done in a crisis, and forms to be used to document the crisis response. A CMP is not a systematic guide to how to manage a crisis… updated at least annually… The organization should continue to function as normally as possible, leaving it to the crisis management team to contend with the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

According to Weiner (2006), a successful CMP should include the following: (1) the criticality and level of severity of the crisis, and (2) the location, which is called the "situation room", that mentions where the crisis will be managed from.

For communication, a CMP is used to list all contacts and names of the outlined crisis management team and designated spokespersons that will speak in the name of the organization. Additionally, a CMP dictates the initial response and the messages that will be disseminated. Response templates will be formulated to assure the consistency of messages, as well as setting notification systems to determine which communication to use with stakeholders (Weiner, 2006).

According to the European Food Safety Authority in 2016, one spokesperson is preferred to represent the organization to make sure that the messages delivered are consistent. A spokesperson is generally a senior scientist, senior communications professional or a senior manager (EFSA, 2016). An organization should set its succession plan before any risk that might hit (Condit, 2014). The succession plan will list all important steps should a firm find itself no longer capable of proceeding the business (Condit, 2014).

By 2020, the majority of the baby boomers will retire, leaving it to the next generation to take over half of the workforce (Sondhi, 2018). When it comes to family businesses, employees that are not related to the family are happy with their current job, but still do not have any idea of what to expect when the CEO leaves (Sebastian, 2014). The owners of family businesses cannot just leave and expect their employees to continue thriving and growing in their absence, unless they have proactively developed a succession plan. In an ideal world, the succession plan will let the business grow when the CEO is replaced by a new one (Sebastian, 2014). This is a win-win situation for both the organization and the employees. The leaders would have everything clear

between themselves to eliminate conflict of interest, and the employees on another hand will not develop a resistance to change, that would lead to an organizational crisis due to the replacement of the CEO.

When the CMP is set, an organization should identify all of its external and internal stakeholders who might be affected by the crisis that surely would be expected to be taking about what has happened (Bernstein, 2016). The stakeholders of a firm are the concerned public offices, the government, media, customers, employees, suppliers and others.

Management Plan/Crisis Response Phase

Both operational and communication components should be set in the second phase. During this phase, management must respond to the incident after a crisis hits, and right after developing its set of CMP (Coombs, 2007). An organization should equally communicate externally and internally, since it is a drawback if employees in the organization knew what happened from the media (Condit, 2014). The organization should be the primary and focal point of communication that updates all stakeholders (Condit, 2014).To have a better communication with the public, organizations first should be open, honest, quick, consistent and accurate to communicate with the public even though they had little updates to share (Coombs, 2007).

Establishments always need to watch out their tone and to be as sincere with their stakeholders (EFSA, 2016). Organizations should draft a holding statement, and should include what has happened and how, and what they are doing about it (EFSA, 2016, p.13).

Ideally, after issuing those holding statements, organizations should share it with its stakeholders and make sure it is translated into different languages in case the stakeholders do not speak the same language (EFSA, 2016). After that, organizations

should set clear and easy key messages (EFSA, 2016). The most important aspect of key messages is that those messages should be very transparent (EFSA, 2016, p.12). If this was not the case, stakeholders will have the doubt that the firm is trying to hide some facts. Finally, the firm has to select, train, and make the spokesperson prepares to share those key messages and holding statements because they will represent the firm (EFSA, 2016).

Post-Crisis Phase

The *post-crisis* phase is the last phase of crisis management, whereby the firm return to its normal business operations and attempts to improve itself for a possible crisis in the future (Coombs, 2007)

After facing a crisis, an organization should gather all the efforts they put into place to assess and evaluate how they handled the past crisis. They should see what has worked with them and see which area they need to improve on (Coombs, 2007). Whilst performing this step, the organization can search for new ways on how to better prevent and prepare for a crisis, as well as to respond to the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith (2008) advise that an organization should still track their issue on online media, monitoring blogs and others means of communication, although the crisis is no longer of attention to the firm at this stage. Consequently, the firm has to update its audience about its recovery process and what corrective actions they did (Coombs, 2007). Organizations should never stop communicating, particularly during and after crisis (Taylor & Perry, 2005). Therefore, after compiling the recovery efforts, organizations should submit a report to all its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

How to Communicate a Crisis?

It is notable that organizations essentially structure their corresponding

communication on two levels, which are internal and external (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007). Internal communication embodies the interactions and communication among the members of the same organization. It is an important tool since employees will be able to exchange information, create an organizational culture, develop formal/informal networks and team up to achieve a primary goal (Berger, 2009). On the other hand, external communication is related to the organization's communication with its environment (Juris, 2004), by building connections with stakeholders and customers (Stuart, Sarow & Stuart, 2007), to eventually promote a positive brand and image of an organization.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of a manager/supervisor is knowing how to convey and communicate correctly inside the association, especially with individuals from his/her team (Moreno, 2010). In western countries, studies showed that a successful manager is committed to communicate between 55-95% of his/her time with coworkers (Cornescu, Marinescu, Curteanu & Thomas 2003). Ideally, managers utilize 70% of their time to read, write, listen and talk, as well to communicate (Bordean, 2011). The level of communication increases due to the progression of the hierarchical position into a higher managerial level. Organizational communication is important because it provides personnel with information they might need in their work and develops a fair relationship between managers and employees, as well as motivating them (Paus, 2006).

Before managers or communicators start crafting messages to their employees, they must understand their employee communication motivations and needs (Heide & Simonsson, 2015). Similarly, it is also essential to understand employee communication motivations and needs because the most complex group in an organization are its internal audience (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). Employees invest in the organization

both, at the emotional and financial level (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). Emotionally because they develop relationships at the work place, and financially because they can be customers or shareholders of the company.

To decide which communication strategy an organize should use, they should first decide whether the crisis is due to an external or internal organizational issue (Jin, Liu & Austin, 2011). In addition to that, the nature of the crisis also affects the communication strategy that should be approached and applied (Jin *et al*., 2011). To maximize communicate outcomes and to guarantee a wider spread of information, organizations are advised to communicate the crisis they face by using all means of communication (Taylor & Perry, 2005).

Media Relations, Channels and Other Means of Communication

Whether an organization is facing crisis or not, organizations need good media relations. The EFSA in 2012 stated that organizations should invest in media relation at "peace times" so prepare for potential hard times. The media can play a dual role especially during crisis. It can support organizations to rectify the false messages that were circulated or play as their enemy by accusing the firm (EFSA, 2012). Many organizations view media as their enemy, which should not be the case (Weiner, 2006). Instead, organizations should respect the role of media and cooperate with it, and not do the opposite (Weiner, 2006). The printed publications, press, websites, social networking, and digital publications are used to deliver a crisis message to the public externally (EFSA, 2012). Internally, Coombs (2007) suggest that having an intranet site is a good investment.

RQ1: What are the best HR practices when it comes to crisis management?

Crisis management refers to the behaviors and organizational acts which make

organizations prepared to manage catastrophic happenings in an effective and safe method (Lockwood, 2005) Nowadays organizations are paying more attention to HR policies to achieve high performance and sustainable competitive advantage in business operations. By using human capital efficiently and reasonably, the notion of HR management concept has evolved (Vardarlıer, 2016). One of the most important features of the human resource department is ensuring ethical issues are being practiced guaranteeing the best fit for the organization (Lojić, Škrbić & Ristić, 2012). Similarly, as Zaidi (2005) mentioned, the HR department is considered as the culture keeper, and the guardian of an organization's principles and values between the whole industry. Human resource experts have a strategic responsibility when a crisis takes place, and by being prepared, this would reduce anxiety in the organization. Therefore, the HR department has a critical role in an organization which comes before, through and after the crisis.

What we found practical and helpful whilst framing of HR roles in crisis management was Watkin's (1989) metaphors for HR. HR people are seen as the problem solver for organizations, as well as change agents (Watkin, 1989).

Problem solver: The human resource department is responsible for solving problems for the purpose of improvement (Swanson & Holton, 2001). To that end, HR professionals must constantly take a proactive role in identifying variables or issues that are intrinsic to a crisis system or may cause a potential crisis. HR professionals should pay more attention on problem finding rather than problem solving by constantly evaluating and scanning how the external and internal environments affect performance to identify the issues that might threaten the organization (Lockwood, 2005).

Change agent. Crisis leads to a worse or better organizational change (Barnett & Pratt, 2000).

Therefore, creating a crisis-prepared mentality is a major task for HR practitioners (Pearson & Claire, 1998). Having a culture that teaches members and leaders to look for crisis signs, as well as training interventions would promote organizational learning (Roberts & Bea, 2001). Those learnings would help organizations have better crisis communication systems (Argyris & Schon, 1996).

Based on this literature, we deducted the following HR practices:

Development of Crisis management teams (CMTs): the CMT's responsibility is to identify and asses the organizational crisis readiness, and develop the infrastructure needed to manage both anticipates and unanticipated crises (Kash & Darling, 1998).

Crisis communication is essential for decision making inside the crisis management team to ensure that organizational decisions with internal and external sources are shared effectively (Hale, 2005).

Crisis training, simulations and drill take place in the planning phase and those are considered as individual or organizational exercises that develop crisis preparedness and awareness (Shaw & Harrald, 2004).

Business Continuity Template, BCPs are written documents that illustrate how the organization will continue operations during and after a crisis situation. According to a survey done by the SHRM Disaster Preparedness, 63% of organizations have BCPs.

If a firms' HR department is adopting proper internal communication strategies, then the employees' perception and satisfaction will be greatly affected by it (Smidts, Pruyn & van Riel, 2001). Employees consider their organization as prestigious if it had proper communication channel, which eventually boosts their self-esteem (Smidts *et al.*, 2001). Additionally, employees who consider their organization practicing organizational communication will be more committed (Carrière & Bourque, 2009).

Given a crisis's undesirable consequences (Coombs & Holladay, 2012), organizational crisis threatens organizational performance and its legitimacy. Empirical studies show that crises not only negatively impact organizational legitimacy but also its reputation, organizational image, and relations with their key stakeholders (King, 2004).

Senior managers tend to target external stakeholders (Mitroff, 2005) thus ignoring their employees (Landen, 2003) to maintain stakeholders' positive impressions during the crisis.

Emotions During Crisis

Organizational crisis is vastly associated with negative emotional states (Lord & Kanfer, 2002). Emotional states of fear, anger, sadness and surprise following an organizational crisis arise when faced by crises (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Given social media, emotions and opinions can be shared online or privately by employees to let their ideas be heard and reached. Eventually, this will shed the light on a new challenge that faces managers to monitor those issues produced and dispersed via social media (Coombs, 2008).

The basic definition of prestige in social stratification model stands for the repute a person can get whilst holding a social position (Bose, 1985) and the values recognized to the titles provided (Hope, 1982, p. 1029). De Roeck & Delobbe (2012) mentioned that an employee's commitment and self-satisfaction are influenced by the reputation and the prestige of a firm, and how the community around them views this organization. Therefore, if a firms' HR department is adopting proper internal communication strategies, then the employees' perception and satisfaction will be greatly affected by it.

It is essential to understand the factors that allow personnel to quit their job. Hence, having the intentions to quit the job has a negative impact on the organization's

goals and missions (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007). Intention to quit a job happens when an employee plans to quit his/her current job and seek to find different job for various reasons. Employees who consider their organization practicing organizational communication will be more committed (Carrière & Bourque, 2009).

CHAPTER III

KADDIS HISTORY & BUSINESS MODEL

We decided to use Coombs SCCT (2007) and Benoit IRT (1996) to view what communication strategies did Kaddis use to face their food safety product harm crisis.

Food Safety Product-Harm Crisis

Product-harm crises are well-publicized and discrete occurrences where products in the market are found to be dangerous or harmful (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994). The presence of more stringent product-safety legislations, as well as the increasing complexity of products with more demanding customers all add together to make product-harm crisis more difficult to deal with (Birch, 1994).

When it comes to food safety crisis, appropriate crisis management is very important throughout the crisis. Doeg (2006) showed that the most important aspect of dealing with a food safety crisis is based on trustworthiness and accountability.

Businesses should put crisis communication strategies into practice to maintain their reputation and rebuild legitimacy during a crisis. Similarly, Pearson & Sommer (2011) have demonstrated the importance of having creativity in the management of crisis by organizations. They made a point that all modern companies must have an effective crisis management crew in force. They came to an agreement that creativity is vital to change crises into opportunities. Numerous researches focused on the significant role of having a tailored training to build a preparedness crisis communication plan. This latter, coupled with the presence of a food safety training and having a food safety culture, will tend to reduce the chance of having a food crisis once again (Le *et al*.,

2007).

Image Restoration Theory

Image restoration discourse is a main paradigm when it comes to analysis crisis communication (Benoit, 1997). It is a feasible approach to understand and develop messages that relate to a corporate image crisis. The concepts of this theory can be helpful and used as an ethical framework for crisis management. It can either be used retrospectively as a responsive strategy or prospectively and as ethical guideline.

Benoit (1997) claims that image restoration discourse stresses on message options. Image restoration literally asks the question "what can a corporation say when faced with a crisis?" (Benoit, 1997). According to Image Restoration Theory, specific message strategies can be used to ensure that the public will receive the most ethical responses when a crisis takes place. An image is how the audience perceives a source, the words they link to, and how they act to this source (Benoit & Brinson 1994). The image can be influenced of what other actors say to the audience. Therefore, as businesses face threats to their reputations, they often use image restoration discourse to mitigate the crisis and recover from it (Benoit & Brinson, 1994).

Image restoration is linked to articulating the series of strategic messages that repair the image of the individual or organization under attack (Sellnow, Ulmer & Snider, 2007). A crucial way for organizations to recover from a crisis, is that they maintain or regain their social legitimacy (Sellnow *et al*., 1998). Organizations that want to be viewed as socially legitimate must function in a way that is consistent with the society's expectations (Sellnow *et al*., 1998).

Benoit (1997) developed a typology of five wide categories of image restoration strategies that deal with image threats. Those include the following: *denial*,

evasion of responsibility, *reduce offensiveness*, *corrective action*, and *mortification*.

Five restoration strategies can be used a tool for organizations to regain this social

legitimacy:

Denial

Denial is the of the image restoration strategies, whereby the accused shifts the

blame elsewhere or simply denies the accusation (Benoit & Brinson, 1994). This

strategy is most convenient to use when the organization is guilty (Benoit & Brinson,

1994).

Evasion of Responsibility

Another approach is evasion of responsibility, when the corporation does not

deny committing something wrong, but claims that the problem was out of their control

(Benoit & Brinson, 1994). There are four forms of this lack of responsibility. The first

strategy is provocation, when an organization mentions that its act was due to another's

offensive act, and thus the behavior is a result of a reasonable reaction to that

aggravation. Additionally, corporations can avoid being responsible by using a strategy

called defeasibility. Their justification would be that the harm was due to their lack of

information or control on chief elements of the situation. The third strategy is saying

that it was an accident. If companies can convince their audents that what happened

was by accident, the damage to the business image would be much less, and the

organization will be held less accountable (Benoit & Brinson 1994). The last option is

for the business to say that the offensive act was done with good intentions, in other

words, that the company meant well by their actions (Benoit, 1997).

Reduce Offensiveness

Reducing offensiveness is the third approach. In this form, the corporation

strives to lessen the perceived offensiveness of what happened (Benoit & Brinson,

1994). This plan takes six forms. First, a business can use bolstering that strengthens the viewers' positive feelings toward this organization, in order to counterbalance the negative feelings associated with the unlawful act (Benoit, 1997, p. 180). For instance, a company might show some of its positive acts or characteristic it has or made in the past as an attempt to boost its image and offset harm to its reputation (Benoit, 1997). Second, a business can use minimization to downplay or minimize the negative feelings related with the unjust doing (Benoit, 1997). Third, they can exploit differentiation, whereby they compare the act to other similar ones that had more invasive actions (Benoit, 1997, p. 181). Fourth, a firm can employ transcendence. In this approach, the company tries to place the act in a more fortunate context. Fifth, a business could attack the accuser and form messages that decrease the credibility of the accuser. The last form is compensation and the firm reimbursing the victim(s) due to what went wrong (Benoit, 1997).

Corrective Action

Corrective action is a fourth strategy organizations adopt for image restoration is. In this strategy, the company promises "to fix the problem" (Benoit, 1997, p. 181). Whilst applying this method, a company can promise that this wrong act will not occur again in the future. Therefore, they will develop a correction plan to prevent future occurrences.

Mortification

The final and fifth strategy for image restoration is mortification. An organization will apologize for the misconduct and ask their audience to forgive them (Benoit, 1997).

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Coombs (1998) additionally developed the situational crisis communication theory. The model takes into consideration the crisis situation and offers an evidence-based set of procedures for using crisis communication policies. This is good for companies faced with dishonors (Coombs, 2007). A more methodical approach is applied in this theory to recognize the crisis communication strategies (Coombs, 2006b). According to this theory, the firm can apply four different groups of strategies depending on the perceptions of accepting responsibility for the crisis: The first is deny which is basically to remove any connection between the crisis and the organization. The second is diminish, which states that the firm doesn't have control over the crisis or argue that the crisis is not as bad as people think. The third is the rebuild strategy, which tries to improve the business's reputation by providing aid to the victims which can be symbolic/materialistic. The last time is bolstering which tries to get sympathy or goodwill from the stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

Crisis management is a field that is growing rapidly in both, academia and practice (Coombs, 1995). The main purpose of crisis management is to maintain a firm's image according to how the public perceives the firm. Therefore, a crisis management team should work hard to safeguard the current positive image of the organization from being damaged with negative influences of a crisis (Coombs, 1995).

Given the above discussions from previous literature, the dominant issue of this research is to see how crisis communication can assist to protect the organizations' image and reputation during a crisis. We can say that different researchers have picked various indicators to eventually measure crisis communication strategies. Therefore, we split our framework into five categories: (1) Deny, (2) Diminish, (3) Rebuild, (4) Bolstering, and (5) Rebuild. We will also use sub-categories; as for each type, there

might be more indicators. Consequently, we developed a detailed list of communication

strategies from the above literature with its definition. This allowed us to identify the

strategies implemented by Kaddis Sweets.

Table 1

Definitions developed from the above literature

Crisis Communication Strategies	Definition of Strategy	Type of Sub-strategy	Definition of Sub-strategy
Deny	Delivering statements that refute the existence or occurrence of the crisis	Simple Denial	The organization merely claims that there is no crisis.
		Scapegoating	Announces that some other group or person outside of the organization is accountable for the questionable crisis.
		Attack the accuser	The organization challenges the person or group by appealing that something is wrong with the firm.
Diminish	Statements that tend to lessen the organization's responsibility or accused person during the event or the perceived harm caused by this crisis.	Excuse	The organization claims helplessness to control the catastrophe or denies to cause the harm on purpose to reduce the responsibility.
		Justification	The organization declares that the standards used by the challengers to evaluate the impact of the questionable crisis are not appropriate in order to diminish the perceived damage caused by the crisis.
Rebuild	Declarations that admit the crisis did occur, then provide an apology, compensate and show the willingness for rectification and proactive works.	Mortification/ Apology	The organization confesses the crisis did happen and further apologizes to the community which asks them for forgiveness.
		Compensation	Offering the victim goods, services or money, to help reduce the negative feelings
Bolstering	Statements that declare to offset the negative feelings related to the issue as well as reinforcing the audience's positive feelings toward itself	Reminder	Reminds and/or praises stakeholders of the past good works done by the organization.
		Victimage	Tell the stakeholders that the firm is a victim of the crisis too.

Table 1 – Cont'd

Crisis Communication Strategies	Definition of Strategy	Type of Sub-strategy	Definition of Sub-strategy
Recall	Declarations that the organization or accused person recalls the product to prevent the recurrence of the crisis.	Involuntary recall	The accused organization or person recalls the product only after being forced by a regulatory party.
		Voluntary recall	The accused or organization person starts to recall the product before the government interferes.
		Super effort	The accused organization or person starts an instant voluntary recall which is extensively advertised and made very easy for customers.

Method

Interviews and observations were used in this project due to the explorative nature of our questions. We used qualitative research methods to determine the level of preparedness of Kaddis Sweets in Lebanon to manage a food safety crisis. We also investigated how the HR department at Kaddis Sweets prepared their employees to face crisis.

Data Collection

We seek to explore the history of the organization with crises and the way the management handled it, with special attention to the human resources department's effort to defend the company during crisis. This study also analyzed the current policies and procedures in place to prepare for preventing, managing, and recovering from crises. The project investigated the perceived sources of risks that might result in crises, with special attention to those that come from internal sources (employees and managers). The study builds on the organizational experience with crisis and the macro and the micro environmental factors analysis to present a comprehensive crisis management plan with human resources policies, practices, and messages to be utilized

during various crisis scenarios. To accomplish that, we interviewed key informants from various departments within the organization. Specifically, we interviewed the CEO, HR Manager, Finance Manager, Marketing Manager, and Outlets Manager as deemed necessary and relevant during field work.

We came up with future action points and lessons learned that will help in crisis management by developing an internal communication tool and employee development plan at Kaddis Sweets. At the end, we will be able to prepare the HR department in terms of messaging, trainings and communication if a crisis happens again.

Data Analysis: Operationalization of the Definitions:

The food crisis at Kaddis Sweets took place in November 2014. As a result, the requirements for who, when and what were met and filtered from the whole readthrough. All codes were then operationalized.

The actor (Who): Kaddis Sweets

The stage of the crisis (When): Since the purpose is to examine the different crisis communication strategies and the level of preparedness at Kaddis Sweet in different crisis stages, we will check the different phases of the crisis. We will use Fink's (1986), four stage patterns of crisis:

The first stage for Kaddis Sweets, *Prodromal crisis stage***,** was when the Minister of Health began investigating samples in the market back in November 2014. All the days before the scandal was released to the media, were put into stage 1.

The 2nd stage (*Stage 2-Acute crisis stage*) is first two days after the revelation of the crisis to the public. It was not until January that a warning was eventually given to recall the product, as reports began to appear in the media for the presence of bacteria in ice-cream sticks.

The 3rd stage (*Stage 3-Chronic crisis stage*) is placed as the first month subsequently after the crisis was revealed. This phase is considered essential to capture Kaddis's immediate responses to face food crises. A crucial factor of having a successful crisis management is viewing the instant reaction of the organization in managing crisis (Coombs, 2007). Therefore, all media flaming was present in this stage.

(*Stage 4-Crisis resolution*), the 4th stage, is set as the lasting time until the crisis ended. In this phase, Kaddis recovered and provided corrective actions. (It took them almost 4 months to recover from the crisis)

Data Analysis

To analyze our data, we used the thematic analysis by Nigel King (2004). In research methods, thematic analysis is used because we want to analyze our information gathered. Following the research questions, we were able to derive meanings and have a better understanding about the messages inside the texts. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, organize, describe and report themes in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Precisely, for the thematic analysis, we will establish the coding categories in six phases. We will immerse ourselves in data to get familiarized with the breadth and depth of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The next step is generating codes. During coding, we will identify significant sections of texts and assign labels that relate to an issue or theme in the data (King, 2004). The third phase is developing the themes from the codes obtained to go to phase four to review the themes. Since some themes developed might require some changes (King, 2004), at phase 5, we will define and name the themes obtained. Finally, we will be able to report what our interviewees said, to illustrate it well in our research.

(What) evidence of crisis management: after developing the definition table of the Crisis Communication Strategies (CCS), judgments were made based on the theme

of the response made. In other words, all statements that used the word "plans" or "strategies" within each response were coded in the corresponding crisis stage.

We tried to find out first if any action or response of Kaddis was performed in the scandal. The next step was to identify the response time according to the specific time or published time in the news and media. The third step was labeling which stage it belongs to, and mark it as I, II, III, IV. Finally, we picked up the chief theme and put the summary of what happened, identify its type and mention which factor it belongs to. The following is summarized in the table below:

Table 2

Crisis Communication Type and Factor

Response Time	Stage	Theme	CCSs Type	Factor
November 28, 2014	One	The employees alerted the management that a sample was taken from the store.	-	-
December 2014	Two	Kaddis said they had their in-house Laboratory testing, and all their products showed no traces of bacteria.	Deny	Simple Denial
		The way the ministry transferred the samples, and also until they did the tests, it wasn't a day or two. It took them a week to take the raw sample.	Deny	Scapegoating
December 15, 2014	Two	Kaddis Sweets had to recall the sample until the product passed the tests again from the government.	Recall	Involuntary recall
December 30, 2014	Three	The spokesperson of Kaddis sweets claimed that they had also decided to recall the product and do extensive tests on it.	Recall	Voluntary recall
January 10, 2014	Three	Kaddis said in a statement they were constantly a heritage for the Lebanese people, and discussed how much they are keen on food safety practices. They discussed that they now have more strict rules when it comes to sampling to avoid similar accidents in the future	Bolstering	Reminder
March 1, 2014	Four	Kaddis claimed that they need an official document every time someone came to pick a sample from their outlet. Finally, the spokesperson apologized on MTV again on what has happened.	Rebuild	Apology/ Mortification

CHAPTER IV

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

SWOT Analysis: Before building a strategic communication plan, A SWOT analysis was performed to help analyze what issues Kaddis are currently facing and to determine which crises pose a serious threat.

Strengths:

- Robust manufacturing system based on mechanization and expertise: Kaddis has an established name in the Market. They sell traditional Arabic Sweets and operate in many areas in Lebanon and abroad (7 branches in Lebanon).

- The company has an enormous experience in the industry and it spans for more than 65 years. They have a strong relationship with its competitors and industry players.

- Kaddis is seen as one of most trusted and recognized brands in Lebanon. Authenticity and tradition are a hallmark of Kaddis. It has been trusted by families for generations. When you say Arabic Sweets, you directly relate it to Kaddis. It is rated as number 1 desserts in XXX, according to TripAdvisor with 4.5/5 stars.

- They have strong development and research capabilities with a culture that encourages development and growth.

- It is a family business that has high quality products due to their food safety measures (ISO 22000 & HACCP), and competes with top five retailers of Arabic sweets in Lebanon.

Weaknesses:

- Knowing that it is a family business, several decision makers are involved at

one time.

- Currently, they are facing Financial cash flow problems, their sales have decreased from last year by 10 to 15%.

- The presence of communication barriers that make a weak alignment between the goals and strategy of the organization with the manufacturing team.

- They have minimal customer service trainings, and there is not yet an established reward system for the showrooms.

- The majority of its sales rely on Arabic Pastry. Consequently, this makes the company prone to unexpected changes in consumer behavior, when customers would want to try something else.

- Competitor in the market are placing similar products at lower prices, especially in supermarkets. These competitors' pressure Kaddis Sweets to perform reductions in pricing.

- The company is extremely dependent on advertising to drive traditional sales and shape consumer opinion, which is costly. The word of mouth is only related to its loyal customers. Their customer is not a new customer every day. He/she is more of a loyal customer, more or less the age group of the CEO which is typically between 40-50s.

- It is costly to launch a new product line, as the production needs more personnel and equipment.

Opportunities:

- Distribution through Europe with wholesale market expansion. This is happening by exporting to London (Maroush 18 branches), France, USA, and African countries. Wholesale has lower cost for production and promotes the brand internationally.

- The growth of online retail in the Middle East can open new distribution channels that can bypass traditional sellers. They also developed an e-store, a website that ships worldwide.

- The young population is looking for healthy products, so they can develop diverse products that cater to the needs of the younger generation. Increased interest in nutrition and health could increase demand on Kaddis's customized sweets that are sugar-free or high in proteins. They currently added a small healthy section in their showrooms.

- The changes in lifestyle, such as more women in the workforce, longer work hours increases the demand for patisserie foods when there is no time at home.

Threats:

- Competitors such as small to medium patisseries have an impact on Kaddis Sweets. They have similar products at a lower price which increases competition.

- There is pressure from fancy retailers such as Gustave or La Cigale, that force Kaddis to cut prices. They are currently cutting budget on marketing, suppliers, product cost, and other things

- New distribution methods, such as ordering desserts online from Instagram is challenging for them, since they don't have full serviced E-stores. They are only restricted to big shipments abroad, and none inside the country.

- Traditional advertising of desserts is no longer effective. The new ads include video streaming and are more creative.

- Consumers in some areas are eating fewer desserts and modernity is changing the consumer behavior to shift to modern desserts, which implies less demand for some of Kaddis products.

- A growing thought of labeling desserts as unhealthy and unnatural is

becoming common. People are moving their taste towards French and American pastry and not being interested in the Arabic desserts. This raises the demand for natural and fresh foods in some markets. This similarly increases the demand for organic and natural sweet alternatives.

- There is a possibility of increased government regulations and oversight in Lebanon. They have a very high cost, in terms of big expenses for the government, legal expenses, and supplier expenses.

- Lebanon's economic and political state is affecting all business in Lebanon.

RQ2: What HR policies and reputation management practices are in place that attend to crisis situations at Kaddis Sweets?

There are policies related to fraud at Kaddis. If fraud happens, there are certain HR policies that the HR takes care of. So, if the employee is caught with fraud, the employee is addressed by the HR and stopped from work. However, they don't have policies related to a financial or food safety crises.

Crisis Communication Plan:

Kaddis Sweets used 4 types of strategies: Deny, recall, rebuild, and bolstering**.**

However, when we asked the question for Kaddis Sweets on their confidence now to face a new crisis, we got the following reply:

In an interview with the outlets Manger, she shared, "Depends on the crisis. We are not confident we can face a financial crisis. We are confident we can manage a food- health or a food harm crisis".

Therefore, there was a need for a crisis communication plan to be drafted in their HR policies to face a possible financial crisis (Hypothetical Branch Closure, Appendix II). We used Coombs' (2006a) book called "Code Red in the Boardroom-Crisis Management as Organizational DNA" to draft a crisis communication plan for

Kaddis Sweets.

The plan includes three phases: pre-crisis, crisis response, and post crisis.

The Pre-Crises Phase:

In this phase, prevention aims to reduce the risks that tend to cause a crisis. Coombs (2006b) documented that firms are better able to face crisis when they have (1) a crisis management plan, which is updated at least once a year, (2) have a team responsible for managing the crisis, (3) conduct exercises that tests those plans, and (4), pre-draft few crisis messages.

Crisis Management Plan:

A Crisis Management Plan (CMP) can help in pre-assigning task, collecting information ahead of time, and use it as a reference source (Coombs, 2007). By having a CMP, Kaddis can presume that they have a designated crisis team that already knows what responsibilities and tasks they have during a crisis, and not only let the CEO take care of the developing situation.

The structure of the CMP will look like the following:

- *An outline of the purpose, goal and scope of the plan.*

- *A crisis response strategy which develops a framework to manage a crisis.*

- *An evacuation plan.*

- *Contact lists including vendors, staff, and law enforcements.*

- *Crisis procedures that state precise responses to a variety of incidents.*

- *Media management.*

- *Integration with other emergency plans.*

Crisis Management Team:

Since it is a family business, the employees expect someone from the family to address their concerns and to provide a sense of job security. The HR team is the one

that handles the complaints or any nagging from the employees when it comes to their money. Since it is a family business, this team is not well trained, and only uses basic communication like: "you will be fine, don't worry"

G:HR team meets the employees and assures the staff, supports and mention that everything is ok, and all your rights will be received, so don't worry.

The HR team is not responsible for decision makings when it comes to a financial crisis, but only have policies when it comes to fraud. Coombs (2007) shows that having a team improves crisis's decision makings. The team at Kaddis should be made up of the following: CEO, executive assistant to the CEO, production manager, outlets manager, financial manager, and the HR manager.

Designated Spokesperson:

Coombs (2007) also gives a great attention to training when it comes to media. Media training must be present before a crisis takes place, especially to the assigned spokesperson.

To answer, *RQ3: What training and employee development initiatives are available to prepare their organization for crises,* we found that no trainings are present at Kaddis Sweets, however, they only had customer service trainings take place once a year that tend to be forgotten. The trainings should include the following:

- Provide media trainings for the spokesperson. The media significantly influences the thoughts and opinions developed during crisis. For example, avoid saying "no comment", because when you say that, the audience will directly think that Kaddis are guilty and trying to hide sometime.

- Use clear information, without using technical terms. If sentences were unclear, people might think that Kaddis are doing this on purpose to hide something.

- For camera trainings, the spokesperson should not show nervous habits,

since people might interpret that in a wrong way. the spokesperson should maintain a
strong eye contact and not show or say nervous gestors as "umm" or "ahh"

- Not just brief, but give roles and responsibilities based on the nature of the
crisis to all the people in the organization about the crisis, since not only the
spokesperson may be interviewed.

Pre-draft Messages

Templates can be created to deliver messages. Both the Business Roundtable
(2002) and Leadership Council (2003) strongly recommended organizations to use
templates. The template is made in a way where blank spots are left unfilled, and the
key information is filled when the crisis happens. Time is saved during this phase, as it
will be just filled in the blank, and sent by text message, website, or email (Template
provided in Appendix IV).

The culture within the company is "not to talk", since the founders of the
organization prefer that everything will remain contained within the family. When we
asked the outlets manager if all employees should know about what is going on, we got
the following reply:

G: The culture within the company is not to talk, But I think it is more of a
religious/cultural issue that we don't want to talk to not harm anyone.

Communication Channels

Kaddis can create a distinct website for the crisis or add a section on its current
website. Crisis research shows that having a website for crisis is one of the best
practices to use and take advantage of the internet (Taylor & Kent, 2007). The website
should be designed before the crisis. Intranet can also be used to limit the access of
audience on the crisis, and only limit it for its employees on the intranet. Contact
information such as emails and phone numbers should also be updated before a crisis.

- Kaddis can use their current website to post a crisis or develop a unique website.

- Kaddis should be ready to use the intranet as one of the available channels for the employees that use this service.

- A mass notification system can also be used to reach all employees during the crisis, like a WhatsApp group.

The only people who know about a crisis are the ones that handle the crisis, which are people related to the CEO directly. A crisis should be communicated to all the employees. In Kaddis, messages were only communicated face to face, since they are afraid to be misunderstood otherwise by texts or emails. Messages need to be communicated clearly and holistically by the whole organization by email, intranet or text because it is the right of each employee to know what is going on. This helped us answer the following: *RQ4: What available communication channels do Kaddis Sweets have during crises?*

Crisis Response

A crisis response is related to what the management does and say right after the crisis occurs. It can be divided into two section which are: (1) The Initial Crisis Response, (2) Reputational Repair

Initial Response

The initial response by Kaddis should be quick, accurate and consistent.

A quick response is active and demonstrates that an organization is in control (Carney & Jorden, 1993). On the other hand, silence shows that an organization is very passive or guilty (Hearit, 1994). With proper planning, a quick response should be ready and shared the first hour a crisis happens. Accuracy is essential anytime when the firm communicates with its audience.

The audience want accurate information regarding what happened and how this event might affect them. Therefore, time pressure is always a challenge when there in a crisis, because there is a risk of leaking inaccurate information. A prompt correction should be made if a mistake was released. Kaddis should always be consistent and speak with one voice in a crisis to maintain their accuracy. Coombs (2007) also emphasizes that the employees have a supporting role, similar to the spokesperson one. Therefore, the crisis team should share all the information so the different employees in the organization convey a consistent message. Both, the spokespersons and the employees should be briefed on the exact information.

Again, in this phase, they should also take advantage of all communication channel available like the Intranet, Internet, and mass notification systems, and not their only source of communication, which is face-to-face communication.

In Kaddis Sweets, only one person handles and tracks any violation when it comes to social media and the internet. In the growing era of internet and social media, they can use track alerts on google or use other software to automatically inform the management of mentions.

G: We don't have external people watching the social media. The person who handles the social media pages, is the person who tracks any tag, or any complain. I would only know if we were tagged or if we were mentioned, other than that I wouldn't know.

In addition to that, they must be ready to provide stress counseling for the people affected by crisis, whether it was both their own employees, or the external part. This can also work fine be being always empathetic and feeling with the people.

Post-crisis Phase

In this phase, Kaddis will be returning to business as normal. There must be

continuous follow up on delivering their promises during the crisis phase. Kaddis should release updates on what corrective actions they have done, how they recovered and further investigations of the crisis. This is the best way to regain the trust of employees, stakeholder and customers.

Updating employees and other audience by using mass notification systems is also beneficial (emails, voice messages, text messages, phones, WhatsApp Group)

Kaddis should learn from every crisis. Just as what they learned from the food crisis, they were over confident and took pride of what they did. Their efforts should be assessed to see what was working and what needs to be fixed.

In the end of the interview, we asked the CEO if he would done something in a different way, and that was the reply we had:

G: It is not about ego, but we were more confident than we should that we have everything right, that's why we must always be proactive rather than reactive.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

How can Kaddis be better in detecting crisis? Well, they can listen to what is going on, and give their employees the opportunity to voice their concerns. For example, they can attend to the employees' concerns by better understanding the "water-cooler effect", as employees gather around the office water cooler and chat. Plus, we recommend Kaddis to have a better hiring process via business ethics: screening whilst hiring, better mechanism to scan fraud, and encourage whistle blowers by providing the right mechanism and channels.

Customer service training is important but not enough for front service employees; it is recommended to have trainings that explain how critical messages should be released.

Employees also need mentoring and coaching trainings. People don't leave organizations, they leave leaders or supervisors. If an individual is working with a supervisor who grows and develops them, it is more likely to have a better employer/employee brand. Having this positive reputation can be used to attract employees and retain them. A manager should coach their team to reach their goals and win at the end of the day, and not do the classical training and development sessions.

One of the main reasons why coaching is not very common is that organizations only believe it is important when there is a problem. However, coaching drives for results even though it might be time consuming. It is just as tailoring a suit for an individual because it is not a learning event, but a process for employees to learn better. The staff's ability to learn and work properly with their fellow members, as well

as their customers, is impacted by attitude. Attitude simply is a choice. You cannot instill easily a positive attitude or change someone's attitude who has a negative one, but you can influence them. All organizations yearn to develop a culture that is full of positive attitude at work, and people who are aligned with the purpose and mission of an organization, as well as loving what they do, are the ones that will do that extra mile. They will put more of their creative intelligence and discretionary energy to grow both personally and professionally with the organization.

Kaddis provide T&D trainings once per year on customer service only. Those are considered as a course refresher. Coaching is more focused than training and development in this case because it is a family business, thus gives the employees the opportunity to always aim higher and have a healthier work role. When your employees are happy, employee retention rates would be higher, yielding succession planning because all of them want to attain better goals. Coaching is a win-win situation and it's of a great benefit to an organization because both the coach and individual are benefiting. When the supervisor acts as a coach to his staff, this develops good working relationships. Simultaneously, when employees see that their seniors are willing to develop their potential and guide them, this touches the professional and personals aspects of them. To prevent internal crisis from happening, we recommend training the next generation of business leaders. Eventually, the successor will be mentored and trained on how to manage the processes, the people, the financial aspects and different aspects of running the business. If the successor is well trained, he/she can provide thoughtful leadership and insight before any transition begins and would be introduced to the whole team. Since it is a family business, and lots of their customers are related to the owners of Kaddis, customers will know that they will constantly receive the high quality of standards since they will already start developing new bonds with the new

successor. Succession planning can sometimes look into the processes performed in the organization and offer an opportunity to examine important fundamentals and, make changes now if needed, that will affect the business many years onwards. Therefore, Kaddis should promote a culture of transparency without creating a blame culture. Since they are dealing with food products, this is critical because it involves the health and well-being of their customers. They can adopt what the U.S. Institute of Medicine is doing to encourage an open culture of learning and disclosure without finger- pointing and blaming (Cauldwel, Steer, & Bewley, 2017). The staffs at Kaddis can be encouraged to embrace an open culture of reporting events and incidents that were going wrong, without being fearful that someone will get harmed.

Recommendations

HR Recommendations:

- Select and Train a Crisis Communication Team to deliver key messages internally and externally in the correct way.

- Have a better hiring process via business ethics. This would happen by performing competency-based interviews rather than just hiring because of family connections.

- Use all available communication channels, and not restrict to face-to-face meetings. (Introduce a mass notification system, i.e.: WhatsApp Group), and Track Alerts on Google.

- Always keep the employees involved by not hiding anything from them. Give the employees the opportunity to voice their concerns.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Formalize and draft a succession plan to ensure smooth transition,

with/without the presence of a crisis.

- Get out of the comfort zone, check what the market needs, and do an extra step to survive in the future.

- They should know how to prove themselves in the market, by adopting CSR Initiatives, Cooperate Social Responsibility.

Conclusion

Similar to running in a marathon, where the last mile is extremely important, the last part of this project is crucial as it provides a crucial ingredient on how an industry can survive during extreme risks. Taking into consideration the Turning Black Swans to White Swans theory (Taleb, 2007), Kaddis views that the food safety crisis is something that seems obvious now, but wasn't obvious by the observer in the past.

Sometimes, an observer might discard most potential outcomes, and does not take any action to be prepared for the situation when a scenario happens suddenly. Therefore, when the nature of the crisis is clear, the prediction and mitigation of its potential negative impacts can be achievable. It is very important to discuss, formalize and draft a succession plan to ensure smooth transition, especially if a sudden crisis takes. Kaddis should have a risk team that must notice warning signs sooner, identify threats before they happen, and always be prepared for the unexpected surprises. The SWOT analysis can change day after day, therefore, Kaddis must get out of their comfort zone, and always do a step-in advance to survive in the future. For sure Kaddis Sweets have a comfort zone, since they have been for a long time in the market. The present culture is "not to talk", but this is obsolete now and they can't keep up with the dynamics of their market. They should know how to prove themselves in the market as "a good citizen", by being socially responsible. They should know that their employee's

knowledge can be used for their organization's growth to ideally take effective actions

and solve problems in a creative way. In addition to that, an environment of learning

should be present to have a more cohesive atmosphere at work. For sure, leader should

have a strong ego, but have a big ego. What I mean from that is that leaders lead by

communication, values, and compassion, not by directing or controlling others. In this

way, leaders can bring more energy and understand the challenges that face the mission

and vision of the organization. Human resources play an essential role in terms of

management from the entry to the exit of an employee. The awareness of employees

within an organization crisis will increase if proper communication was established

between existing and new coworkers.

APPENDIX I

KADDIS SWEETS INTERVIEW

Kaddis Sweets Questions to all departments:

1) Everyday companies face challenges, to you what is an issue and when it becomes a crisis?

2) What do you consider to be your biggest fears when it comes to your company?

3) If someone in the organization received a message that might threaten the organization, which department would handle the bulk of it?

4) Please think back to times when Kaddis faced crises. What is the first crisis that comes to your mind? Why do you consider it a crisis? How did it start? What happened next? What was the hardest part about going through this crisis? Who was affected by this crisis? How did the employees react to this situation? Did any official communication go to address the employees, the customers, the media…? How did you recover? What did you learn from it? Would you have done things differently? Let's now try to think about another crisis.

5) Every day companies try to avoid crises. Yet, it is inevitable that crises do happen. How ready you are to face a crisis (you can give example of crises)? Do you have any communication strategy to use during crises?

6) Where you prepared to face crisis? What messages were conveyed in that phase?

7) During the crisis, what communication channels were used? Who receives those messages? What is the procedure for determining when and what material will be released? What did you tell the employees? How transparent should you be?

8) Did you face any challenges with the internal communication?

9) What methods of communication did you use? Was there face-to-face communication?

10) Do you have a crisis planning team? If yes, who is involved in this execution and planning? Who is on your crisis response team, if there is one already?

11) How long did it take you to deal with this crisis?

12) How did the employees feel during the crisis? Did their trust in the organization increase or decrease? Did the employees trust those internal communication messages?

13) How can you make sure that the employees will trust those messages coming from Kaddis Sweets?

14) What internal communication channels you have in place? In case of a reputational crisis, what channel would you use to communicate with your employees?

15) In case of crisis, who is the most likely candidate to serve as the company's spokesperson? Why him/her?

16) Do you recommend on doing something differently, other than the way you dealt with your crisis?

17) Did you communicate after crisis?

18) What are some of the lessons learnt that would help you next time when you face crisis?
19) How confident are you now to face a new crisis?
20) What do you do if your competitors faced crisis? Let's say the media covered a food poisoning case at ElHallab or Sea Sweet. How would that affect your business? How would you react?

21) Is there anything you would like to add or highlight that I skipped or did not mention?

CEO Specific Questions:

a) How would the board and members reply to a sudden crisis?
b) What should you communicate with your public and stakeholders about the crisis?
c) What do your competitors tell you about your crisis? What are your employees telling you? What are your customers telling you?

Finance Specific Questions:

a) Do you have a backup plan in case of a financial crisis?

Marketing Specific Questions:

a) Do you have reputational management section that precisely addresses social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube?
b) What types of trainings do you have to handle an unhappy customer live or via phone calls?
c) Who manages your online community? What kind of challenges they face? Do you have people that are constantly required to watch your social media pages, in case an anticipated issue might affect you and try to resolve it before being escalated?
d) What do you think people associate Kaddis brand with? Do you do any market research and public perception assessments? If not, why? How do you come to know what people think of you?

HR Specific Questions:

a) What was the HR's role during this crisis? Did the HR coordinate with other departments?
b) What HR policies and reputation management practices are in place that attend to crisis situations at Kaddis Sweets?
c) What trainings and employee development initiatives are available to prepare employees for crises? Tell me an example on how you managed emotions during the crisis?
d) What obstacles do you face while managing emotions during crisis?
e) What is the role of HR in times of crisis to keep the business moving?

f) What ethical considerations does the HR department have to do to foster an environment full of trust and leads by example?

g) What should you do **safeguard key talent retention when crisis is present?**

h) What is the role of effective leadership and transparency during crisis?

APPENDIX II

HYPOTHETICAL CLOSURE OF A BRANCH

Audience	Audience Background and Potential Reactions	Communication Objectives	Responsibility	Communication Channel	Timing or Frequency
Management Team	Corporate managers already know about the financial crisis.	Understand the rationale about decisions to be taken. Plan communications for their teams.	Executive Team	Email and updates	As soon as the decision is made
Employees	They are upset about this news and worried about their job security. Plus, they might possibly be angry at management.	The restaurant staff will need to: Accept the decision. Continue operations until the closing date. Communicate the decision to customers.	Outlets/HR Management	In-person meeting to broadcast the decision. Ongoing HR meetings for continuous updates. In-person meetings with written summaries about pay and benefits.	Soon after the management team took its decision.
Local Government	N/A	The government will need to know the time frame of the closure.	Executive Management	Meeting or phone call.	Shortly after the management team took its decision.
Customers/ VIP Customers	Customers will be disappointed to lose the branch.	They will Understand the rationale for the decision. They would Continue purchasing until the closing.	Outlet Manager	Email or in-person at the branch.	After the staff are notified
Media	Media are interested in a good story	They will talk about the reason behind closing. They will talk about other competitors.	Executive Assistant to the CEO	Press Release	Immediately after the branch staff are notified.
Suppliers	They are unhappy about losing a client	They should know the timing and what services are stopped.	Outlets Manager	Phone calls or email.	After notifying the media.

APPENDIX III

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR KADDIS SWEETS

Objective

This information below will guide the planning team to address the following fields:

- Developing a communications recovery team.
- Forming a process that communicates with employees for well-being and safety to make them aware of expectations and decisions.
- Designing a process that ensures all internal and external stakeholders are aware of expectations and decisions as management believes appropriate.
- Managing key vendor and customer communications.
- Formulating a media communications plan.
- Safeguarding a communication system exists with layings-off for communication.

Crisis Communication Team			
Name	Title	Number	Email

Communication Audience

- Corporate Management Team
- Employees
- Investors
- Customers
- Suppliers
- Salespersons
- Government officials/regulators
- Media/Social Media

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN ELEMENTS

Key Messages

Messages should be concise, clear and to the point.

Include Kaddis's general message and update as needed.

Responding to the Crisis

- Organize the communications team to take on communications-related strategic objectives.
- Develop the specific communication plan that includes:
    - Audiences identified.
    - Communications mechanisms use for each
    - Responsibilities and timelines for each.
- Allocate a team member to generate a secure timeline of the real events related to the crisis and responses undertaken.
- Inform other employees needed to:
    - Take care of the phone calls and keeps a phone log of all incoming calls with the actions taken.
    - Monitor all incoming emails, websites and social media accounts
    - Track media coverage and mentions.
- Craft key messages that are related to the specific scenario, portraying on general message points.
- Select and prepare the spokesperson that is most appropriate for the situation.
- Prepare probable response statements for email, text messages, telephone, social media, and website.
- Start contacting the ones affected by the crisis. Select the best mechanisms to reach each individual, that includes conference calls, face-to-face meetings, internet, email, media briefing, instant alerts and press release.
- Set consistent times for communicating updates when needed.
- Ensure those affected by crisis are kept informed via regular email updates, phone updates, Intranet messages and text messages.

Media Command Center

The center should include:
- Phones and Computers
- Internet and phone access
- Media and social media tracking

Employee Communications during a Crisis

- Use accessible communication vehicles (Intranet, phone, text, emails, Whatsapp) to call staff.
- Hold a short briefing reassure staff members and prepare them for crisis management. This can be done on-site or via conference call.
- Remind the staff of their current media policies.

- Provide the staff with key messages to communicate to vendors and customers as appropriate.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Pre-crisis

- Establish an employee notification method with redundancies.
  - Updated phone list
  - Email alerts
  - Text/data alert system
- Develop key client list and notification methods for communications.
- Create critical retailer and key supplier lists and notification process for communication.
- Conduct crisis training for potential team associates.

Returning to Normal

Almost one to two weeks after the crisis event is handled, the communications team should be debriefed for the following:

- Assess the short-term impact of the crisis
- Identify the probable long-term effects that must be addressed
- Evaluation of the team's performance.
- Track changes that ought to be made to deal future occurrences.

APPENDIX IV

MESSAGING FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Name: _____ Contact Phone Number: _____

Contact Email Address: _____

Headline One sentence, 7-10 words, that describes the major point of the release.

Main Paragraph Quickly answers the Who, What, Where, When and Why of the story.

We will be providing updates through [web site address], WhatsApp Group and regular media briefings when more information is available.

Message Map Template		
Stakeholder: Question or Concern:		
Key Message 1	**Key Message 2**	**Key Message 3**
Supporting Information 1-1	**Supporting Information 2-1**	**Supporting Information 3-1**

Source: Hyer, Randall N. and Covello, Vincent. (2005). *Effective Media Communication during Public Health Emergencies.* A World Health Organization Handbook, World Health Organization and the Center for Risk Communication.

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