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A Content Analysis of Crisis Management Websites at Four-Year Institutions Along the Gulf Coast

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2011 Disaster Resistant Universities Conference

Welcome

- Currently
  - PhD Candidate in Educational, Theory, Policy, and Practice
  - Specialize in Higher Education Administration
  - Work in the College of Education
- Formerly
  - Associate Director of LSU Union and Director of Programs, LSU
  - Assistant Dean of Students, The University of Alabama
  - M.ED at the University of Arkansas
  - B.B.A at The University of Memphis

Why I Chose Crisis Management

Recent Events

- In the past 10 years, Higher Education has seen some high profile crisis events
  - Fire at Ole Miss fraternity house
  - Shootings at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, BRCC, and U of North Alabama
  - Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav in the Gulf Coast
  - These are just a few…

Research Questions

- What content is posted on colleges and universities websites with regards to crisis management?

- Who is the target audience for the websites?

- Are the different areas of the crisis matrix being covered in the websites?

Literature Review

Crisis

- A crisis is often relative to the point of view of the individual who is affected by the crisis (Baum, 1987 and Coombs, 2007)

- A crisis is a threat to basic human needs, disrupts everyday activities, and runs a risk of causing injury, harm, death, or destruction of property (Klan, 2003; Laufer, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997, and Mitroff, 2001)

Guiding Definition for Higher Education

- "A crisis is an event, which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution" (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007, p. 27-28)

Higher Education Institutions and Crisis

- Before 2001, many authors thought colleges were not prepared to anticipate crises and were resistant to change which included new crisis management strategies (Bothwell, 1986; Mitroff, 2001; and Parker, 1986)

- Recent events have shown it is important for higher education institutions to respond quickly in times of crisis and communicate with their stakeholders (Carman, 2003; Epstein, 2004; and Lawson, 2007)

Higher Education Institutions and Crisis

- Administrators have a role in protecting their students and other stakeholders (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007)

- Stakeholders on a college campus includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, local community, and governmental agencies to name a few

- Governmental relations can become very important, especially for institutions who may not have the resources available (Carrel, 2000; Cavanaugh, 2006, Curtin et al., 2005; Dunkel et al., 1998; Perrotti, 2007; Stein et al., 2007; and Zdziarski, Dunkel et al., 2007).

Crisis Matrix

Figure 2.1. The Crisis Matrix
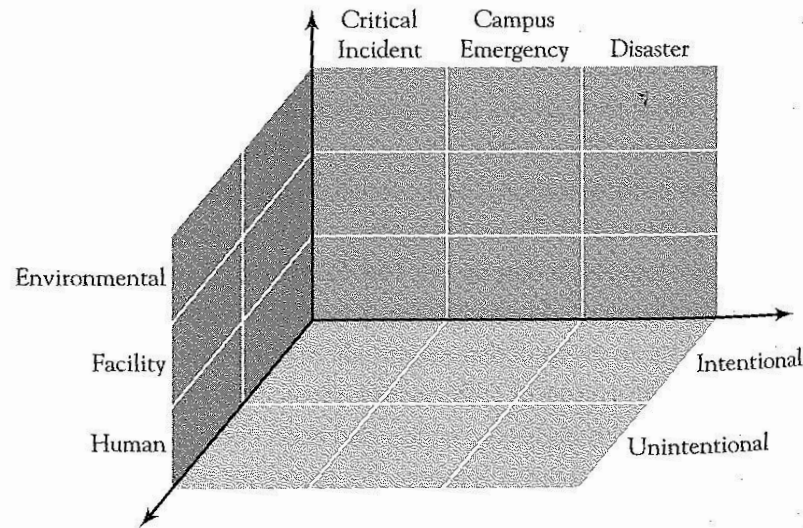
(Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel, 2007, p. 36)

Crisis Communication

- "…the speed with which an institution responds to a crisis by disseminating critical information to its various target audiences can become the primary factor in whether or not the institution is perceived as managing a crisis well" (Lawson, 2007, p. 97).

- Delays or inaccurate information given to the constituents could be harmful in a situation (McGuire, 2007).

- Effective communication plans will contain information regarding how to prepare, understanding risk communication, assist with crises when they happen, provide directions (to faculty, staff, students), develop media relations, how to issue warnings, reduce rumors, clarify uncertainties, help with recovery, develop trust, and provide learning opportunities for the future (Lawson, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

Crisis Communication

- Communication During the Crisis
  - Internal Communication
  - External Communication
- Post-Crisis Communication
- Internet and E-mail

Internet

- The internet, through web pages, blogs, e-mail, tweets, text messages, and social networking has become the first place people look for information when an event is unfolding and can be a very important tool in disseminating information (Carman, 2003; Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Fernandez & Merzer, 2003; Kennedy, 1999; and Mitroff, 2001).

- The information given out through electronic media needs to clear and concise focusing on the essential information (Carman, 2003; Curtin et al., 2005; and Joly, 2008).

Research Method

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

- "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18)

- "…content analyses are most likely to succeed when analysts address linguistically constituted social realities that are rooted in the kinds of conversations that produced the texts being analyzed. Repetitive, routine, public, and institutionalized phenomena are easier to infer than are rare and unconventional ones" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 77)

Methodology

Sample Size: 18 Universities along the Gulf Coast

- Dillard University
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
- Florida Gulf Coast University
- Florida State University
- Louisiana State University
- New College of Florida
- Loyola University
- Southern University at New Orleans
- Texas A&M Corpus Christi
- Tulane University
- University of Central Florida
- University of Florida
- University of Houston
- University of New Orleans
- University of South Alabama
- University of South Florida
- University of Southern Mississippi
- Xavier University

Methodology

- Coding Frame: Actual content of the website
- Coding Categories: Crisis Matrix and how the college or university tries to communicate their message
- Coding Protocol: A primary list of items was developed along with development of coding items based on observation.
- First Observation of Louisiana websites was in November 2008.
- Second Observation of larger sample was in February 2010.

Results

Manifest Content

- Number of designated Crisis Website: 14 (78%)
  - Names
    - Emergency Alert
    - Campus Safety
    - Emergency Information
    - Emergency Notices
    - Emergency Information and Crisis Planning
    - Emergency Communications
    - Emergency Management
    - Emergency Preparedness
    - Weather

Manifest Content

- How many are linked directly off the front page: 7 (39%)
- Number of Clicks to a website with some type of information

Number of Click	Number of Schools
1	9
2	5
3	3
4	1

- References to Text Service: 12 (67%)

Manifest Content

- Off the Main Page or the Crisis Page
  - Mention Hurricane Preparedness: 13 (72%)
  - Mention School Shootings: 3 (17%)
  - Mention H1N1 or Swine Flu: 6 (33 %)

Manifest Content

- Link to outside references: 10 (56%)

- Contains a Frequently Asked Question Section: 4 (22%)

- Information specifically targeted for:

Specifically Targeted	Number of Universities
Students	5 (28%)
Parents	4 (22%)
Faculty Staff	8 (44%)

Manifest Content

- The Crisis Matrix – Looked at 2 of the 3 portions of the cube (did not look for intentionality)

Crisis Matrix Category	Number of Institutions
Disaster	14 (78%)
Critical Incident	4 (29%)
Campus Emergency	7 (39%)
Environmental Crisis	14 (78%)
Facility Crisis	7 (39%)
Human Crisis	3 (17%)

Latent Content

- Schools in the Southern Louisiana area, which have been directly impacted by the recent hurricanes, have clearly dedicated websites for crisis management.

- Some institutions have put large pdf files on the webpage (the notebook online)

- For the institutions that were not linked directly off the main page, a lot of searching under different terms had to be used to find the website

- No exact common name used, but "Emergency" most used in one way or the other.

- Don't seem to be accessible by mobile phone devices

- Some additional latent examples….

Latent Content

- Many are linked from the public safety/police page, but some of these public safety/police pages do not have links on the main page.

- In general, those that are not listed on the main page in a bold position, you would have to be familiar enough with university lingo to find. Would a parent know to look on the Dean of Student's page?

- Those that have hurricane plans seem to be pretty detailed overall with additional connections to outside resources

Comprehensive General Information by Links

Information Distributed by pdf

Updating Information

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

In the event that the campus community must be notified of an emergency or crisis on campus, the following mechanisms could be used:

- Notices on the Southern Miss Web home page
- E-mail alerts to all faculty, staff and students
- Phone messaging system
- Voice messaging utilizing alert siren
- Media alerts sent to local television and radio outlets

COMING SOON

- A text messaging system will be ready for opt-in enrollment to begin within 45 days.
- Radio-driven remote public address warning system will be functional in all residence halls, The Cochran Student Center and Payne Recreation Center within 45 days.
- Funds in the amount of $200,000 have been dedicated to creating a campus-wide public address system to be completed by fall term 2008.

UNIVERSITY SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The University of Southern Miss Police Department (UPD), with 28 full-time sworn officers, is a fully recognized and accredited law enforcement agency by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

- The UPD receives ongoing specialized training including "active shooter" scenario management.
- UPD in Hattiesburg has local agreements with the Hattiesburg Police Department, the Hattiesburg Fire/Hazardous Material Agency, the Forrest County Sheriff's Office, the Lamar County Sheriff's Office, the Petal Police Department, Forrest General Hospital and the Forrest County Emergency Operations Center. These agencies meet regularly and share training around crisis scenarios. All of these agencies are prepared to respond to a call for assistance from the University Police.
- The University of Southern Mississippi has a Critical Incident Response Team that includes representatives from the University Police, the student counseling center, the Office of the

School Shootings

Secure the immediate area:

- Lock and barricade doors
- Turn off lights
- Close blinds
- Block windows
- Turn off radios and computer monitors
- Keep occupants calm, quiet and out of sight
- Keep yourself out of sight and take adequate cover and protection, i.e. concrete walls, thick desks, filing cabinets (cover may protect you from bullets)
- Silence cell phones
- Place signs in exterior windows to identify the location of injured persons

Un-securing an area:

- Consider risks before un-securing rooms
- Remember, the shooter will not stop until they are engaged by an outside force
- Attempts to rescue people should only be attempted if it can be accomplished without further endangering the persons inside a secured area
- Consider the safety of masses vs. the safety of a few
- If doubt exists for the safety of the individuals inside the room, the area should remain secured.

Contacting Authorities:

- Use Emergency 911
- 713-743-3333 UHPD Non-Emergency
- police@uh.edu UHPD e-mail
- Be aware that the 911 system will likely be overwhelmed. Program the UHPD non-emergency line 713-743-3333 into your cell phone for emergency use or consider email. Email may be an option when unable to speak. Email is monitored by police personnel.

What to Report:

- Your specific location/building name and office/room number
- Number of people at your specific location
- Injuries and the number of injured, types of injuries
- Assailants(s) location, number of suspects, race and gender, clothing description, physical features, types of weapons (long gun or hand gun), backpack, shooter identity if known, separate explosions from gunfire, etc.

Police Response:

- Objective is to immediately engage assailant(s)
- Evacuate victims
- Facilitate follow up medical care, interview, and counseling
- Investigation

Discussion

Discussion Questions

- Should there be a standard terminology used in naming pages?
- Should there be a standard for the information presented on the websites?
- How much should you put on the website?
- What is the importance of the page being located off the main university page?
- Are links important? Can you simply put the information up as PDFs?
- Can you get the information from an iphone, blackberry, or other mobile device?

Discussion Questions

- Can there be to much information that could be detrimental to you (ie, could someone learn from the active shooter plan)?

- Is your website ready?

- What would be on the ideal crisis preparedness web site?

Future Research Ideas

Where to Next?

- Larger sample size, looking past the Gulf Coast
- Contact institutions directly to see if they have a "dark" website available to examine in case of an emergency.
- Discussion of standards for websites

Any Questions? Further Discussion

Thank you!

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Campus Websites

- http://www.dillard.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=706&Itemid=161
- http://www.famu.edu/index.cfm?PublicSafety#
- http://www.fgcu.edu/upd/
- http://alerts.fsu.edu/
- http://www.lsu.edu/safety/
- http://www.ncf.edu/police
- http://www.loyno.edu/emergency/
- http://www.suno.edu/Emergency_Plan/index.html
- http://police.tamucc.edu/
- http://tulane.edu/publicsafety/announcements.cfm

Campus Websites

- http://police.ucf.edu/

- http://www.ufl.edu/notices/emerg.html

- http://www.piersystem.com/go/site/1093

- http://ehso.uno.edu/emergency/

- http://www.southalabama.edu/weather.html

- http://usfweb3.usf.edu/absolutenm/templates/?a=813&z=51

- http://www.usm.edu/emergency_communications.php

- http://www.xula.edu/emergency/index.php