Use of social media in crisis communication

kortom

vereniging voor overheidscommunicatie

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Introduction

The power of social media in a crisis was shown when the storm hit the music festival Pukkelpop (Kiewit, Hasselt) on 18 August 2011. Festival visitors, people at home, helpers, … all massively used social media like Twitter and Facebook to disseminate information, to seek or offer help, to avoid traffic chaos,… The analyses and insights into the use of social media over the days and weeks after were interesting, innovative, and valuable. In short, the association for government communication took on the task of actually doing something with these analyses and insights and to translate these into a policy proposal for the use of social media in crises.

Because social media is not easily categorised, it was important to involve everyone who could contribute to this policy proposal. In this way the expert group was formed. This had 43 members and was a multidisciplinary group. Its task: to formulate proposals for a social media policy in crises. Thematic proposals were formulated via four work groups, under the direction of a chairman. The thematic work groups were: organisation, integration, monitoring, resources and agreements.

This document is a coordinated proposal from the reports of the work groups, discussed and supported by the entire expert group. In short, be very aware that this document is only an initial draft, that a number of elements require further study and especially that this proposal will never be 'finished'. Media change continuously and this proposal will also have to adapt to social developments. This document is written for all aid organisations. Anyone who plays a role in crisis situations may benefit from it. However, this document will undoubtedly be most useful for discipline 5 (D5 – Information) in emergency planning.

Finally, it must be emphasised that use of social media in situations of crisis is not a panacea. Social media are only one of the channels that must be used in a crisis and do not in any way replace existing means of communication. The approach to the crisis and the organisation of crisis communication must be organised well first, only then should one consider the use of social media.
We wish you much enjoyment in reading this and hope that this may be a useful tool in your professional practice. Your opinion is very important to us. Any feedback is welcome via one of the following channels:

- info@kortom.be
- #smic
- @kortom_be
- http://kortom.net/wiki/index.php

Discipline 5

Communication in emergency planning

This document will regularly mention D5 or Discipline 5 in full. There are five disciplines in emergency planning as determined by the federal government. This relates to:

- D1: Fire Service
- D2: Medical Assistance
- D3: Police
- D4: Logistical aid (Civil Protection)
- D5: Information for the population

Under the direction of the mayor, governor and the Minister of Home Affairs and assisted by the emergency planning official they combat crises and incidents.

Part I

I.1

How to implement and use social media in crisis communication

The authority should best choose the social media that are most used or that has the greatest impact. This choice is rather arbitrary and dependent on the age. The current "brands" may be temporary and may be replaced in the future by new and other brands. Currently Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs are very popular. In the second instance LinkedIn, Netlog and Google+ are interesting to follow. Use of social media in crisis communication is not an issue of brand loyalty but of social evolution. For that reason, it is necessary to formulate crisis communication plans as independent from the media as possible.

1.1 What accounts are to be used?

Authority account

The authority has two options in a crisis: it can use its (existing) account or create a (new) specific crisis account. The recommendation from Kortom is clear: the authority should best choose the existing account of the authority concerned for official communication. This account has great credibility and a number of existing followers. That implies that the authority in 'peace time':

- creates its own account on the social media;
- promotes it amongst the population;
- uses this in day-to-day communication.

In this way, the authority develops 'followers', 'friends' and 'subscribers'. These are people who indicate via social media that they are interested in communication from the authority. The authority must therefore try to gain as many subscribers/followers of its social media network as possible. That is possible by regularly communicating via social media. The credibility achieved by this is very important in a crisis.

The development of this account in "peace time" deserves extra attention. The number of followers is not only important but also who your followers are. For that reason, the authority must monitor this beforehand and analyse the important influencers. These important influencers form the 'top' of social media users. It is important that they follow the authority's account. They can ensure that official messages are spread broadly in times of crisis.

Part I

Account of the disciplines involved (fire service, police…)

The official accounts of disciplines involved such as the police and fire service enjoy great credibility. They may have a smaller number of followers, but these are highly interested in the operation of the discipline and may result in a faster and broad distribution of official crisis communication. These accounts are ideal to reflect process information and are a good choice in a short crisis (rapid development and quick end).

If an official phase of crisis management is announced, these accounts will follow the official account of the authority and support the account of the authority through the further dissemination of messages.

Accounts of people within the authority

In some authorities, there are well-known personalities like the Mayor, the police commissioner, the fire chief or the communications officer, who may or may not act as spokesperson. They are often active in social media. These people may activate a lot of people very quickly when necessary and enjoy a high level of credibility. The disadvantage is however that the information they disseminate is not official.

The use of these accounts is a good choice in a short crisis or a crisis in which a high level of citizen participation is required. They can support the official account from the authority and help spread official messages.

1.2 Management of accounts

Who manages the account in 'peacetime' is not so important. By using social media, the authority enters into communication with the citizen. Social media should not be seen purely as a sending tool. The authority must therefore enter into a dialogue with the citizen and the citizen expects that its questions are answered by the authority. Many questions may arise through monitoring, which then form a link for the provision of information and service. In crises this account must be management by a representative of discipline 5. If the account manager is another person in peacetime, then the necessary conclusive agreements must be made about this.

Part I

1.3 Organisation D5

Before the crisis

It should be clear that the organisation of D5 starts in peacetime, so not at the time an incident occurs. A good preparation and exercise are a must.

What does good preparation consist of?

- *Profiles/account*
  You create the required profiles/accounts in advance and make sure it is widely publicised (see 1.1).

- *Media*
  You view which media are the most important social networks for crisis communication at that time, also with a view to monitoring (see 1.5).

- *Hashtag (#)*
  Hashtags are a type of label you can add to your tweet (twitter message) to indicate that it is about a specific subject. A # helps to group messages on Twitter. During events, the organisers should launch a # in the first instance. This is usually already done during the event promotion. This # can be used when things go wrong and crisis communication has to be started. With incidents (fire, accident, …) the authority should best verify whether a # has already been launched. If not, the authority can launch one itself. #'s should be short and unique (to avoid interference). It also helps if the # can be typed easily on a smartphone (e.g. without digits).

- *Communication with personnel*
  When preparing social media for use in crises, it is useful to make this known in advance among your own personnel. The dissemination of messages takes place via user networks. A lot of members of staff will have their own network on social media that they can use. As a result the organisation's message will be strongly reinforced.

- *Communication with organisers*
  There must be prior consultation with the organisers regarding the organisation of crisis communication in the case of events (see Part II).

- *Crisis website*
  Social media are too limited to give much information. Furthermore the number of users of social media is too restricted. For that reason the use of a crisis website as a central link where all the information is published is absolutely essential (see I.2).

- *Practice*
  As with all other aspects of emergency planning, using social media must be practised in advance.

Part I

Organisation

Although the authority communicates via various channels, they must communicate the same message everywhere. This is possible by drafting a workflow within D5 that a message has to progress through. Within the coordination committee, the D5 representative must be able to contact the mayor/governor directly concerning the message to be disclosed. This authorised message may then be placed on the website, from where it can be posted on the social media. Once online this message may be commented, labelled or forwarded.

This means that there must be a person within D5 who monitors the (social) media. The communications may be adjusted to their instructions. This person is responsible for monitoring and using the (social) media. That allows a fast and accurate provision of information. Answering apparent questions with the media and public removes the media pressure and gives managers the opportunity to take control of them themselves. D5 must accept that they are only one of the many players on social media. The speed by which social media works further means that D5 will always be too late at the start of a crisis. Monitoring must make it possible to make up this delay.

It should be clear that the communications manager should not always need the signature of the mayor/governor to disseminate information when using social media. Agreements based on trust must be made between the two.

D5 must be able to convince the national media to use the 'marquee' (continuous text on screen) in emergency situations. The marquee must be given the information of emergency numbers, websites, social media. D5 must be able to put messages directly on Belga; these messages must also include the emergency numbers and official social media. This option now exists for the provinces and federal government via Belga Direct.

For the rest the D5 must organise and manage crisis communication. It must describe what target groups need to be communicated to and via what media. The organisers must be involved in an event to support communication for those present via scrolling messages or a PA (Public Address or sound system).

Part I

Attitude

In a crisis, it is equally important to inform the citizens as to resolve the crisis itself. Without being exhaustive, here are a number of important elements:

- *Stealing Thunder*
  Ensure that you start communicating quickly (before it starts "thundering"). It is best if communication is already running before citizens actively start asking questions. D5 must therefore be so organised (people and resources) that communication may be started as quickly as possible after an incident.

- *Process information*
  Crisis communication is confronted by two problems:
  1) A gap between the information available and a request for information at the start of the incident
  2) all information must be validated first. To close this gap D5 may certainly give process information. At that time process information does not include more than what you could see if you were present as an eyewitness (e.g. a fire has broken out, the fire department has started extinguishing the fire, neighbouring residents have been temporarily evacuated, the medical team are on site, ….). As this information can be seen by bystanders it is not necessary to validate it and gives D5 some time to start up crisis communication.

- *Standard messages*
  Based on the risks in the specific sector, standard messages can already be formulated. This can be integrated in a standard message. For instance D5 can prepare a message about a gas leak stating the need to close windows and doors and switch off any ventilation systems.

- *Repetition*
  Regularly repeat messages on the various media, so that the official communication is picked up by as many people as possible as the correct information.

- *Answer questions*
  Questions can be detected via monitoring following the messages you disclosed. In times of crisis D5 should not and cannot answer all individual questions for individual problems via social media. If there are too many questions, the government should best set-up a call centre. Questions can be answered generally however via (social) media if a lot of the same questions are being asked. The authority's response may also be given in a longer contribution on a website. A reference to this may then be published on the social media.

Part I

After the crisis

After the incident is over the communication must continue for a while. Social media may be used to provide information on:
- salvage: what can people do to prevent further damage
- recovery: what can people do to repair the damage
- business continuity: what can people do to continue their activities without many problems
- end of emergency measures
- victim care
- reception facilities
- grieving register

Even later relevant information may also be given on:
- insurance/compensation
- results of investigative committees
- lessons identified and learned

Social media can play an important role in all this communication. They can even be a source of information or link to other more detailed sources of information.
After the incident, all the questions received may be brought together in an FAQ.

Part I

Deployment of people

The organisation of crisis communication by D5 requires the deployment of a lot of people and resources. Please refer to 1.4 for resources.
The following people have a task in crisis communication:

- *The communications officer*
  The communications officer is responsible for D5 in accordance with the RD on emergency planning. He is a member of the coordination committee and proposes communication actions to the chairman of that committee. His task further mainly comprises the collection of information that representatives from other disciplines report in the coordination committee, the drafting of communications messages, monitoring of the conversation on the incident on social media and correcting incorrect information. The task of D5 is extremely extensive and cannot be controlled by one person who is also responsible for the coordination. It is advisable for the communications officer to be assisted by a team that assumes responsibility for executive duties, including social media. Especially if there is a lot of media pressure, it is advisable for a communications worker also to be present on site to meet the press there. If it is scaled up to a higher phase of the disaster plan he works together with the communications manager from other authorities (local, provincial, federal).

- *Politics (mayor, governor, minister)*
  Political representatives have the ultimate responsibility for communication. They validate the messages drawn up by the D5 members of staff and get advice from the communications officers for policy decisions in connection with the information for the population. Political representatives also act as spokesperson.

- *The Dir Info*
  In accordance with the RD on emergency planning the DirInfo bears responsibility for communication on the CP Ops. This post is often not filled (or cannot be filled). As aforementioned a person from D5 must be designated for this in the case of great media pressure.

- *The spokespeople from the disciplines*
  The spokespeople from the disciplines have the advantage that they are often informed very quickly. They have good sources of information available and have sufficient knowledge of the sector to give process information. The use of the spokesperson from a discipline mainly relates to giving process information at the beginning of the incident. Through fast access to social media via a smartphone he can put process information onto social media. Because this can fill the lack of information in the first phase of the incident, they are an important partner for D5 at that moment.
  The spokesperson from the disciplines also has experience from their day-to-day practice of giving information on the deployment and on the incident. In the further phase of the incident the spokesperson of the discipline may act more as an advisor to D5 and as an intermediary between their discipline and D5 to ensure the technical – content of the story is disclosed as correctly as possible.

- *Het bedrijf/de organisatie*
  Businesses and organisations can provide important information that D5 can use. In addition they have their own networks available and their own press contacts. Some businesses or organisations have also built up their own social networks.

Part I

1.4 Overview and use of resources

It is important to use as many channels as possible. Each disaster progresses differently and has a different impact on means of communication. If the mobile phone network is overloaded, the website has to stay online. If the website crashes, it is important that telephoning is still possible. We will discuss the various channels here.

Social media like Twitter and Facebook

Social media are an interesting complement to the range of communication from the government. Blind trust in social media is not advisable however. Social media channels are managed by commercial companies. They can appear and disappear on the market from one day to the next. Furthermore their server may also be overloaded, which will make the platform temporarily unavailable. For instance, the risk with Twitter is that if events occur simultaneously the most important will push the less important from the news stream. Nevertheless, no organisation may remain blind to these additional channels of communication.

Social media can be used quickly for crisis communication. However the government may consider protecting their own profiles from external input (comments, panic, …). Controlling one's own social media is legitimate in an emergency. For that reason, the privacy settings of a number of social media should be changed in an emergency so that only desirable messages may be placed on it. This makes it possible only to show the crisis communication. Responses continue to be possible and desirable.

- *The #-issue*
  In short argue for not imposing #'s. The problem with hashtags is that they can be created randomly at any moment by any Twitter user. In crises, this may result in a proliferation of hashtags, in which the official communication may be lost (see also 1.3). For that reason, it is much more important to make the official communication as recognisable as possible.

Website

The authority's website should be central during crisis communication to the outside. Starting up a type of dark site on the authority's website is advisable. This dark site contains a number of pre-programmed pages offline that may be published immediately in the case of crisis communication (see I.2). If the emergency plan is announced, D5 can immediately start up this dark site and make it available via a striking link on the homepage of the website. In the first instance, only limited information may be made available. However this limited information must at least contain the links to the various approved social media, the crisis newsletter, the SMS service, …

Example
Homepage: clear button with a short description of the crisis – link to the dark set that has been published online.

In the first instance: There is an emergency in …. We have no information at this time. Once information is available, it will be published on this page. You can also follow the news via: [various links to social media, SMS, telephone, crisis newsletter, blog, …]"

Part I

SMS
Sending SMS remains a popular way for young people to communicate with each other. It is cheaper than phone and is also available on ordinary mobile phones.

e-crisis newsletter
Another way to inform the various target groups during an emergency is to build a list of e-mail address. People who have subscribed to this e-mail list receive a regular update about news about the crisis from the moment they subscribe. The existence of the media list may be disclosed beforehand or made known via diverse information channels. In that way, the public authority creates a crisis newsletter. People who bought a ticket to an event and have to give their e-mail address for this may also be included in this mailing list.

RSS
Updating the RSS feed (see I.2), is important in emergencies and to point people to these feeds.

Location Based Services
Location Based Services (LBS) are applications available on mobile devices thanks to the mobile network and use the geographical location of the device. D5 must have the possibility automatically to send an SMS to people with a mobile phone who are within range of a specific mast. This SMS must be a clear message to people involved in the crisis and should not create panic among people who are not involved in the crisis.

For example
If you are currently at …, please proceed to emergency exit B.

Part I.2 gives information about how to offer these resources in an integrated way.

Part I

1.5 Monitoring

Good monitoring is an extensive task. In this document, we give an initial look at why, what and how. A separate handbook is required to describe all the monitoring options and tools. Here we will only give an initial study.

What does monitoring add to trying to control a crisis? Monitoring is simply listening to then observing carefully. In the offline world that means listening carefully and looking around via reports in the media, calls through the information number, etc. Now that a large number of contacts also take place online, it is important to listen and look carefully there as well. In this environment, we call it monitoring.

Purpose

The purpose of monitoring during emergencies is twofold: receiving information whereby relevant actions can be taken and sending information to direct the emergency and inform the people involved. Receiving information relates to:

- establish what is happening
- gain an insight into the classic 5 W-questions (who, what, where, when, why)
- observe how an emergency is developing
- gain an insight into the entire scope of a crisis
- gain an insight into the parties involved, stakeholders, target groups, public, channels, ...

Relevant actions relate to:

- actions for managing the crisis (crisis management). In this way monitoring makes it possible to check whether there is an unforeseen need for assistance, maintaining order or providing information;
- communication actions in the broadest sense, i.e. also possible PR actions to communities.

How

Monitoring with crisis communication and reputation management must be realised both with a planned event and with an unplanned event (emergency).

We distinguish three phases and types of monitoring:

1. Before the emergency (environment in which the crisis develops, organisational preparations for an event, ...).
2. During the emergency (general development of an event 'in peacetime' and while the emergency develops and may result in an emergency and crisis management).
3. After the emergency (both after care and evaluation).

Part I

Before the emergency

The authority determines what things it wants to monitor online. The authority can do this itself via free help programmes such as Tweetdeck, Hootsuite, Social Mention, or Google Alerts. The authority can also subcontract the monitoring to a specialised agency. The authority may in that way view or look ahead at what appears about the authority or an event. In this way they can follow the conversation flows before, during and after an emergency and sense what is happening on social media. In short it is certainly advisable to do this.

A shortlist of items the authority should arrange before an emergency:

- *Monitoring team*
  - Set-up a monitoring team (own team or professional agency).
  - Bring the monitoring team and other operational teams into contact with each other. Exchange information, methods and expectations.

- *Hashtags*
  - Determine what hashtags will be used and what for.
  - The hashtags that are used officially (#event, #EV11 [abbreviated name of the event with the year], #EV11help, #EV11save) must also be included with minor variations when monitoring. People make typos and switch parts around (e.g. #EV11save => #saveEV11 or #EVsave). These variations must also be included in the search functions.
  - Communicate the use of these hashtags.
  - Implement the hashtags as monitoring.
  - Hashtags are very common on Twitter. This is used much less on other networks.

- *Social networks*
  - Inform the major social networks of the coming event and what hashtags are used. This should prevent Twitter from seeing a flow of messages as spam and blocking everything.
  - Investigate what social networks are used by the target group and be present there so that the event can be recognised as a point of contact.
  - What do you want to monitor: key words, hashtags, mood, interpretation, trends …
  - Testing; everything must be tested well in advance to see whether everything is running as it should (#EV11test). The authority must supervise that the test results are sufficient to allow the event to take place.

Part I

Possible sources and channels for input in monitoring

Even though this memo is about social media, nevertheless it is important to gain a good insight into all possible forms of input that may be important with monitoring. That also helps the reader in their preparations, and a helicopter vision also puts matters in perspective. It also gives an image of the various types of 'presence' as it is also often reflected in social media: this relates to:

· media (local, regional, national, international, global), including their online presence (whether or not via press overviews like Mediargus or AuxiPress)

· specific: archived media, with specific attention to the availability from digital television, "Just missed"

· websites (traditional, blogs, microblogs, social network sites and aggregators); in Flanders the main ones are Facebook, Flickr, MySpace, Netlog, Twitter and YouTube + specific: online monitoring tools, RSS

· call centres, whether or not linked to emergency numbers; a very important source

· hospitals, reception centres and other places

· radio traffic in the ether and anything that antennas can receive as signals, from CB-traffic to seismic vibrations

· cameras (CCTV, ...), mobile masts and GIS-sources

· drivers of public transport, taxis, ...

· victims and people involved specifically residents in the neighbourhood, relatives, ...

· people who play a role in crisis management, like help and security services and in the field

· people who do not play a role in crisis management in the field but also those involved, e.g. inspectors, neighbourhood leaders, counsellors postmen, priests, business people, respected people, union people, workers

· colleagues and distant relatives who are present

· market research, resident meetings, resident associations, federations, associations

· meteorological institutes

· other services, e.g. VRT news desk archive, ...

Part I

During the emergency

As long as there is no crisis, the monitoring serves purely as a confirmation of where people are and on what social network. This is a good preparation to know how to reach people in the event of a crisis. This is not obvious, for instance because a fun YouTube film can move entire groups of followers from Facebook to YouTube. It is important that the monitoring team knows where people are on social networks.

If it does come down to an emergency then the monitoring team will forward the monitoring data to the crisis team (organisation). This crisis team will disseminate the correct crisis information via the right platforms. The monitoring team follows whether this is also actually happening and how this is dealt with by people. The task of the monitoring team is then to observe, analyse, and provide the right information to the crisis team. The monitoring team does not put any messages on the social media itself.

- Measuring usage
- Adjusting and filtering where necessary
- Topics, identification of potential interference

Part I

After the emergency

Monitoring after a crisis is realised on a diverse range of data that can be summarised in two data flows. These data flows also occur after an event, even if there was no crisis. The first data flow is the flow that comes in live during the crisis (an agreed period, a few days, before and a period after the crisis). This flow should be compared to a second data flow that includes data from afterwards looking back over the same period. These two flows must be compared to check whether the correct information was received during the crisis, what the effects were, what the strengths and weaknesses were and what could be done better another time.

This monitoring afterwards is also done on the basis of what columnists write or of what is broadcast on the news or information programmes. Both the actual after-care and the way it is responded to must be monitored. The data obtained from monitoring must be used in the evaluation of the events or the crisis.

The summary of these results can be placed somewhere centrally (e.g. on the Kortom website, municipality) so that people who want to organise an event can get their basic information from here.

Example:
At the chemical fire in Moerdijk (NL) in January 2011 the majority of social medial messages (>80%), were Twitter messages. And there were hardly any messages on Facebook. During the Pukkelpop storm in August 2011 there were almost as many Facebook as Twitter messages. Is this a shift in social networks? Or does this relate to a different country, age group or technical facilities in data traffic at that time?

The risk and crisis barometer from the Dutch National Crisis Centre (Nederlands Nationaal Crisiscentrum - NCC, June 2011) it is also apparent that only 14% of those surveyed trust information from Twitter and that media usage is still strongly oriented to more traditional media.
A good and fast evaluation gives the necessary input for the following crisis. You help your colleagues to anticipate. Naturally, other input from non-social media will help form the complete picture whereby the role of social media in the whole can be clearly illustrated. How monitoring was carried out and the impact it had will also become clear then.

Part I

I.2

Integration of the different means of communication

This section includes a proposal for creating an 'online crisis communication centre'. This is only discussed here and does not include any technical specifications. Nevertheless, communication people with a technical feeling or ICT-skills will be able to use this as a basis. If not it would be advisable to discuss this model with the IT department in your organisation with a view to its actual realisation.

Although the WordPress example is given below (free tool), the organisation could choose not to be dependent on third parties and to develop its own online crisis communication centre according to the same principles. Indeed, the website should, in the event of major disasters be able to process large numbers of hits without crashing. For that reason it is advisable to provide a redundant solution.

Basis

In this integration model, the website, more specifically the 'dark site' or 'black site' functions as the axis. All communicate leaves and arrives from here. The basis is formed by a website that can be integrated with any other existing websites in the organisation. This is usually a blog system that is very user-friendly and makes full use of RSS (Really Simple Syndication).

View this video clip for a basic overview of RSS.

In this practical example this relates to a WordPress blog that allows the publication of text, video, audio, online maps and pictures, and that can integrate Twitter, Facebook and other social media updates. This blog must be the central online communication system for the organisation during a crisis. Status updates, press releases, official reactions, interactive maps, images may be posted here throughout the crisis. This blog will (may) also become a central collection point for updates and information from third parties (filter, moderate and double-check are then required).

The role of RSS in publishing mode

An RSS feed (or a number per category, type of updates, etc.) is present as standard on the majority of blog platforms. The feed then automatically notifies the web that new content has been published. If the communications officer publishes a message of any kind during a crisis (text, picture, audio, or a combination of these), this content will automatically appear on the web. A great benefit is that, under the proviso of a simple configuration, this update does not only appear on the website but also automatically and in the right format on the authority's social media account. The communications officer can therefore go public on different online channels with the press of a button.

Part I

It is also possible to publish in different online formats here:
- from RSS to own website (HTML)
- from RSS to audio (MP3 – only in some languages)
- from RSS to e-mail (via an e-mail programme / emailing list)
- from RSS to mobile (SMS)
- from RSS to PDF
- from RSS to other websites/blogs in HTML

The role of RSS in aggregation mode

You can also 'draw in' other information from the web using RSS. This can be practical in order to give an overview of the information and updates from other sites and social media. For instance in this way you can republish a Twitter feed (moderation and double check are required) on your own 'dark site'. You can even republish this 'container' of information as a 'widget'. In this way, you give other users on the web the possibility to republishing your confirmed information and that of others on their own website/blog.

Benefits of a dark site using a blog
- the set up takes little time (using your own IT-team or a consultant this is possible in less than 4 hours + training).
- can be integrated in an existing website.
- can be kept offline until there is a crisis. (This makes it possible to carry out scenario planning, to prepare reactive statements, etc... = time saving).
- can be managed entirely by a non IT person – PR manager, communications officer, …).
- fully and integrally uses the online social network.

Summary/Staged plan

Accounts:
- Create accounts/profiles, promote and use these accounts
- Extend your accounts by analysing influencers and monitoring
- Make agreements with account managers from the other disciplines and people within the organisation
- If D5 does not manage the central accounts => make agreements
- Communicate with personnel about the social media plans in emergencies
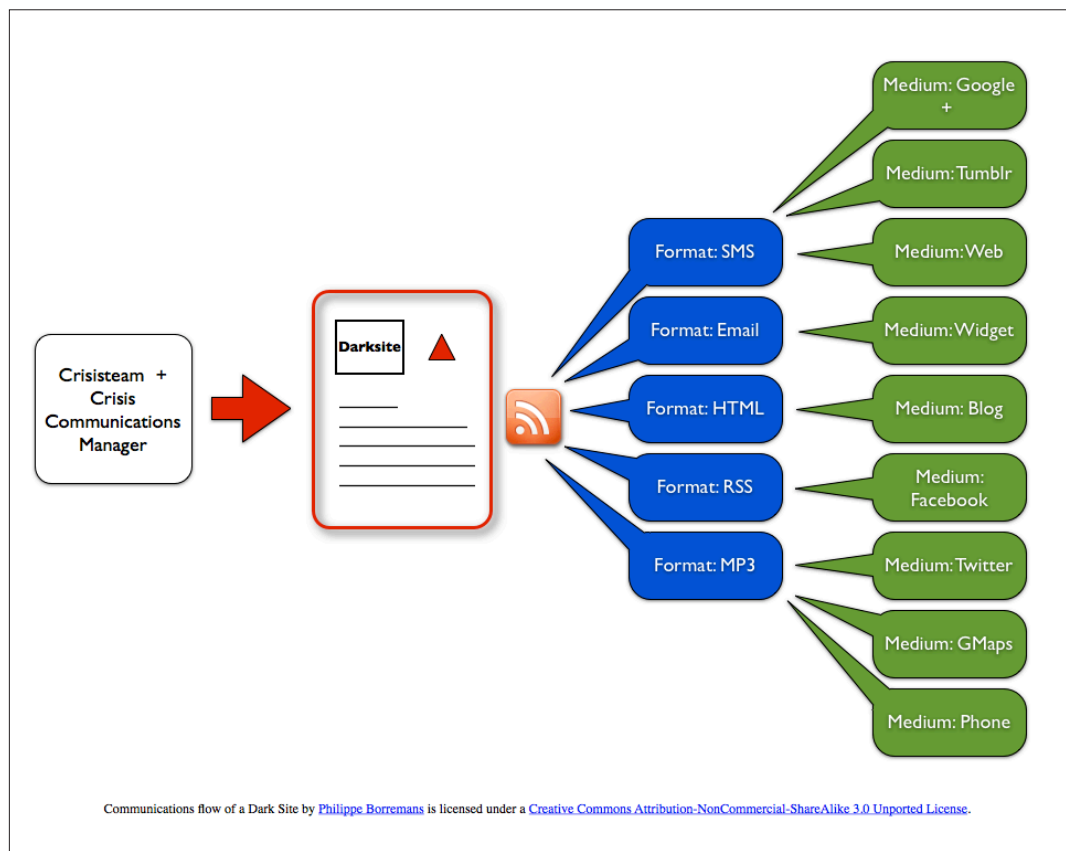
Website:
- Create a dark site with integration of social media and approved sources of information

Organisation and resources:
- Make agreements with the mayor/governor concerning workflow
- Compile a D5-team and determine the roles and resources required
- Consider creating an e-crisis newsletter
- Formulate a # if necessary
- Practice D5, including social media

Part I

Communications flow of a Dark Site by Philippe Borremans is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Part II

Recommendations to organisers

As indicated above it is important to make agreements in the preparatory meeting with the organisers concerning crisis management and communication.

In short argue for making certain things mandatory when issuing a permit. For instance the submission of a crisis communication plan may be made obligatory, as well as a minimal presence on social media.

The following items may certainly be considered in the preparatory meetings:
- Formulate a media independent crisis communications plan, including the use of a scrolling information display system and PA system if present. The authority may give examples of these that are available or make their own template available.
- Ensure a minimal presence on social media. This must be disclosed to visitors and used in the event of a crisis.
- Use e-mail addresses for a digital crisis newsletter. E-mail addresses may be collected by mentioning the crisis newsletter in the disclaimer with online ticket sales, or by convincing stakeholders to subscribe.
- The organiser can print the url, and an emergency number if applicable, # and QR-code on wristbands.
- Communicate the official account, #, url … for the event.
- With large events the organiser should best consult with telecom operators regarding mobile phone coverage, LBS and Wi-Fi hotspots. In the first instance Wi-Fi must be available to the emergency services and possibly the press, Wi-Fi may then be offered to the visitor.
- During multiple day events, it is important to provide lockers where mobile phones can be charged.

Part III

Recommendations to individuals in crisis communication

Research has shown that people do not always realise the risks they are running. People are consequently not always prepared when it comes to an emergency. However it is important for people to be self-reliant. They must be aware of and have knowledge of the actions they can take themselves before an emergency happens. For that reason we have given a few recommendations for the use of social media, that people can use when in an emergency.

- Follow accounts from official bodies for correct information.
- Insofar as possible subscribe to the proposals of the authority or the organisers to keep informed in emergencies.
- Ensure that everyone can notify the home. Save the network by not sending any large data files.
- When retweeting messages, remove the official #. Otherwise you will overload the flow of information.
- Check whether there is already a # / safehouse before creating one.
- Use the official #
- Indicate whether you are ok on your own Facebook status.

Colophon

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