The Social Media to Aid Crisis Management

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**Introduction**

Social media is the interactive web 2.0 technologies, which enables its users to create and share content. It has become one of the largest source of information , and hence it is designated to use by almost every organization for their own purposes. These organizations include businesses, law enforcement, government, and many others. Social media has also been used in many emergencies and by crisis managers to communicate and create awareness, and hence it contributes to crisis management. This paper seeks to highlight the use of social media in crisis management in any organization. By displaying the power of social media, it also exposes how it is being used and what are the limitations of this technology.

**Social Media and its Use**

Social Media is an umbrella term, which is referred to as web-enabled technologies. These technologies work around the user-generated contents such as podcasts and blogs. The social media platforms enable to create and share information. Sharing information and generating online content is the lifeblood of social media networks. Social media users create their profiles and share data, which is managed by the social media organization. Social Media are interactive web 2.0 technologies and can be accessed by users using mobile phones, laptops, and other electronic devices. Social media is dedicated to transforming the way individuals, communities and organization communicate. In 2004, social media reared its complex head into this world when Facebook was invented. It took the standard from an online paradise for teens to global obsession. Now every organization is using social media to achieve different goals and objectives.

The social media and its tools have been improved and advanced rapidly, and they are influencing the society in many ways. Social media is now widely used by individuals, business organizations, government, and law enforcement agencies and even in court cases for different purposes. Social media is considered as an effective tool in crisis management. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are very effective communication tools and hence are used for crisis communication. In the modern world, crisis management inevitably involves social media by business organizations, government, and other organizations.

Since its advent, social media has captured and supported a large group of people who have moved their traditional social networks to an online environment (White, 2016). The revolution of communication being replaced by modern internet solutions is an ever-growing trend, and every other day new applications are launched. Social media has also been used in many emergencies and by crisis managers to communicate with each other and public. Social media allows disseminating of large information to a large group of people abruptly and conveniently. Social media and web technologies allow not only business organizations but also the government to solve any problems. In addition, they are proving as an effective mean of communication in crisis management and some other circumstances.

**Social media for Crisis Management**

 Social media has been a transformative tool in responding to and managing the crisis. It has created a lot of opportunities for crisis communication across almost all industries. Industries are using social media platforms for crisis communication and its effective management. During the time of crisis, the use of social media increases and hence a new aspect of crisis management is revealed, public participation. A web survey by American Red Cross discloses that the responders should monitor social media websites to send help quickly. In addition, active social media users consider social media coverage more credible as compared to mass media coverage. Social media is a tool which provides promotional support after the crisis by enabling the public to share information and demand resolution. This indicates that social media is no more a choice in case of crisis management, but the question is how to use it. Studies indicate that only 29% of US companies have formal social media policies.

 Social media can be used in risk reduction and crisis in many ways. Business organizations have been using the platforms offered by social media technologies for crisis communication with stakeholders (Roshan, 2016). It performs the listening function by giving voice to people and facilitates the exchange of information. Social media also reveals the mental and emotional state of people in crisis. It also enables to monitor a situation and improve reactions. Social media platforms can be integrated into emergency planning based on the information generated from these platforms. It is also used in crowdsourcing and collaborative development. In addition, it can also be used to make people feel that they are part of different initiatives. Twitter is a strong platform that can be used for donations in case of crisis, and it can also be employed by the researchers for research in this field. Social media has the power to turn a local event into a global story and hence the age of social media demands real-time crisis management and leadership skills in a business organization (Gruber, 2015).

**Limitations of Social Media in Crisis Management**

 Although social media is, a transformative tool employed in crisis communication and management by organizations offering them various opportunities for communications it also creates considerable challenges across all the industry sectors. It enables those involved in the crisis, eyewitnesses and authorities to share the video and pictorial content abruptly, shortenings the response time. Social media is known for dissimilating false information in no time whether done deliberately or inadvertently.

Social media platforms are prominent in sharing false information regarding a disaster or crisis. It affects the public emotions, those who rely on social media for the information of facts, and the false and doubtful information distracts causes after an incident or crisis (“4 benefits and 4 drawbacks of social media in a crisis,” 2015). Photoshop style images are spread on social media after an outcome to worsen the situation. Business organizations have faced a crisis which affected brand reputation negatively (Cariappa, 2016). The rumors and false information is the bad side of social media. Hence social media has advantages and disadvantages both in case of crisis mitigation and response.

**Social Media for success in the Marketplace.**

Social media is an unavoidable and indispensable set of delivery tools that can be employed in modern strategic crisis management. It has proven to be an effective tool in crisis communication and facilitated almost all the sectors of industry. The functions of social media can only be effective if its tools are deployed as part of a broader communications strategy considering all the areas and all the stakeholders. The potential ethical dilemmas of using social media is an important factor to be taken into consideration. Social media offers inevitable opportunities for success to a variety of organization including business, government, law enforcement agencies and even in court cases. However, its limitations must be taken into consideration before using it for the purpose. Hundreds of risks re-associated with the system of public mass communication but it contributes to the achievement of objectives. There is a strong need to use social media for institutions but to achieve success, there must be robust plans to tackle the unethical dilemmas which use of social media may harvest. An effective crisis management plan incorporating social media strategies can lead to the success of these platforms in disasters and crisis.

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