



L'Evate

Crisis Communications Plan

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L'Evate is committed to providing vital, accurate information in a timely fashion to all key audiences in the event of a crisis involving the organization. L'Evate is also committed to taking appropriate and timely actions during a crisis situation to bring an end to the crisis as soon as possible.

What is a crisis?

A crisis is an event or occurrence that creates or threatens to create unwanted attention for L'Evate that could damage the reputation or future viability of the organization.

A crisis isn't just a bad situation. It's a decisive moment or turning point. If handled properly, a crisis can actually enhance L'Evate's reputation rather than harm or destroy it.

What is the difference between an incident, a potential crisis, and a crisis?

An **incident** is a situation with no real threat of media attention, such as the natural death of an L'Evate member, alumni, or family member.

A **potential crisis** is a situation that could garner media attention, such as an event that would require police or emergency crews (e.g., a bomb threat during an L'Evate event or a vehicle accident while traveling to a program day or annual retreat).

A **crisis** is a situation where media will absolutely be involved and there is a certainty of unwanted media attention. Examples include a high-profile leadership scandal; injury that is the organization's fault; an unexplained death of a L'Evate member during a program day; etc.

Potential Scenarios

- Community-wide catastrophe or disaster (tornado, flood, etc.)
- Industrial accident, violent crime, bomb threat, etc. during program day or retreat
- Investigation of fraud or theft
- Health hazard (viral outbreak)
- Vehicle accident with L'Evate members during program day or retreat

Critical steps in a crisis situation

When dealing with a crisis, it is critical to:

- Contact the Crisis Management Team who will be involved in the crisis communications
- Immediately put the organization's plan into action
- Quickly gather the facts of the situation and make an announcement as soon as possible
- Remember to address all audiences
- Keep communication lines open as the crisis happens, as it develops, and after the crisis with a clear wrap-up plan

Who is notified in an incident, a potential crisis, and a crisis?

In an **incident**, the Executive Director will inform the Crisis Management Team and the L'Evate Board of Directors simultaneously via email. The Crisis Management Team will likely not take any further action but will stay in touch with the Executive Director to determine if there are any changes in status. The Executive Director may choose to communicate the incident to L'Evate members and/or alumni via email once all details are understood.

In a **potential crisis**, the Executive Director will notify the Crisis Management Team via phone and email with recommendations for next steps. The Crisis Management Team will determine if/when it is necessary to engage additional resources to carry out the communications plan.

In a **crisis**, the Executive Director will notify the Crisis Management Team of the situation via phone (and/or email). This team will immediately work together to create statements for key audiences and distribute the information quickly and accurately. The team will also determine if/when it is necessary to engage additional resources to carry out the communications plan.

Crisis Management Team & Contact Information

The Crisis Management Team consists of the following L'Evate members:

Executive Director	First Chair-Elect
Board Chair	Marketing Chair

This team may ask for additional assistance from other members as needed.

Crisis Management Team Roles & Responsibilities

This team is the conduit for emergency communications charged to work with the Executive Director in the case of a potential crisis or crisis. This team is responsible for supporting the Executive Director and helping communicate any incidents, as deemed appropriate by the group. In the case of a potential crisis or crisis, this team will work together to create recommendations for the Board of Directors, all necessary statements (internal and external), and direct all communication activities related to the potential crisis or crisis to maintain and protect the organization's positive reputation.

Crisis Notification Protocol

In the event of a potential crisis or crisis, there shall be only one spokesperson for L'Evate – the current Executive Director – so the organization provides a unified, consistent message to the public. Should the Executive Director not be available, the Crisis Management Team shall designate a spokesperson. The spokesperson must be kept informed of the latest developments.

The Crisis Management Team shall identify the key audiences who need to be informed of the situation and in what order. The key audiences will likely include:

- L'Evate Board and L'Evate alumni
- Current L'Evate Clas

- Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce
- Public Officials and Media
- General Public

Key Messages & Potential Scenarios

Once the crisis has been identified, the Crisis Management Team will develop the appropriate clear, simple messages for the identified key audiences. The messages will be delivered repeatedly and clearly by one voice; these messages will demonstrate concern about what is happening and for the people involved and will explain whatever solution LDH can provide.

Key messages might include:

- The mission of L'Evate is to enhance leadership abilities, foster opportunities and improve the quality of life in the community.
- Our top priority is the safety and security of our members. We are extremely grateful there were no injuries from this accident. (adjust as needed)
- We thank all the emergency crews who have responded. Their jobs are difficult, and they are all doing an outstanding job.
- L'Evate is a community-based organization that provides participants with insights into how our community functions.
- The alumni of L'Evate consists of more than 500 community leaders.
- The current L'Evate class has ____ participants.
- We are deeply concerned about this situation and an investigation is now underway. Right now, we can only share [*available details*]. The actions of our program members and board members are a reflection of this organization, and any violation of the law or inappropriate behavior is taken very seriously. L'Evate does not condone nor will we tolerate this type of activity/behavior.

Statements NOT to be released by L'Evate

- Projected financial impact: "It would be inappropriate for me to estimate the financial impact of this situation."
- Speculative information: "At this time, we are confirming details and will provide more information as soon as we have it." "We are cooperating with the authorities investigating the cause, and we need to refer all questions to (investigating agency)."
- Specifics regarding L'Evate members, alumni, sponsors or companies partnering with L'Evate for events.
- Identity or health status of victims: "The appropriate law enforcement officials will handle the release of all identity-related information. It is simply not our place to share this information."
- Specifics on any security measures in place in anticipation of a potential crisis or crisis.

- Reason/cause: “(investigating agency) is investigating the cause. It would be inappropriate for us to speculate before they conclude the investigation and release their findings.”

Immediate Communication & Media Management

Anticipate the tough questions and be available. The Crisis Management Team will create a Q&A document for the spokesperson, including the tough questions the media or the public might ask. The spokesperson will be available to the media both in person and by phone.

Identify which mediums are available to communicate the message. The time of day, day of the week, whether it is a holiday, and whether or not there is a power outage will help determine which methods of communication can be used to communicate the message.

Confirm external plans to release information. The Crisis Management Team will work with local law enforcement to confirm their release of any information, where applicable. This timing information will be used to drive L'Evate's communication plan.

Communicate the message and the facts. The facts of the crisis, an official statement, and the key message(s) should be communicated to L'Evate's key audiences. For internal audiences, use email and/or phone. When possible, inform internal audiences (L'Evate members and alumni) first.

For external audiences, issue the approved official statements through the approved communication channels (L'Evate website, etc.). In the case of a crisis, a press briefing may be necessary and should be held as soon as possible after the crisis occurs.

Control the message. The spokesperson will stick to the facts and the main messages, thus controlling what information is disseminated. This information should be completely truthful and forthcoming. All "bad" news should be told up-front and all at once; otherwise, it will trickle out slowly, and the negative media coverage will continue day after day.

Do not comment on rumors. During times of crisis, rumors run rampant. This is natural and should be left alone by the organization. The spokesperson must stick to the approved statements and approved communication channels.

Control the flow of information. The Crisis Management Team, working through the Marketing Committee, will be proactive and control the flow of information to key audiences. This process could include holding a series of press briefings for the media, providing a timetable to the Board, the media, and other interested parties, etc. All media calls are to be directed to the spokesperson.

Keep track of all media calls and requests. The spokesperson should keep a list of all the reporters to whom he/she speaks with. This will enable the Marketing Committee to look for news clippings and to later evaluate how the crisis was handled.

Respond to the media quickly and fairly. In the event of a crisis, the media will shape public opinion about how L'Evate responds; therefore, it is important to cooperate with the media, to be sensitive to media deadlines, and to provide all reporters with the same information—no exclusive stories.

Post-Crisis Evaluation

After the crisis or potential crisis has passed, the Crisis Management Team and the L'Evate Board should evaluate how everything was handled, then refine the plan as needed for future effectiveness. A debrief of every action taken and how each action fit (or did not fit) into the overall crisis communication plan should be part of the evaluation.

View/review media coverage. The best way to evaluate L'Evate's dealings with the media is to watch and read the media coverage of the crisis, then adjust future media strategies.

Test and review the plan annually.

Please see the related "L'Evate Crisis Communications Quick Reference Guide."