

# Domino's pizza: a crisis management case



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According to (PRSA, 2009), in 2009, the company Domino's pizza experienced a tremendous PR crisis because of a couple of their employees. In fact, in a restaurant's kitchen, in a slow working day, the two of them, with the employee uniforms, contaminated some food ingredients and then placed them onto sandwiches and pizza; they recorded a video and later posted it on YouTube. This video reached more than one million views in just three days because it became viral. The company realized that social media has the power to turn small incidents into huge marketing crises.

This is a real case very interesting to analyze from the point of view of public relations and ethics. Because something simple could be the cause of the failure or success of significant companies, and what would construct the difference are the decisions taken in crises. In this review, we will be looking at this case from the point of view of the public relations professional and the ethical bases and how this addresses companies' direction.

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According to (PRSA, 2009), the vice president, the communication team and the rest of Domino's corporate members sooner became aware of this situation. The first reaction was anger, but they channeled into action. The company proceeded to intercept the store, the authors of the video, took away the videos, and the company pressed charges against them. One of the first actions was to find out if the contaminated food was finally delivered to a client, fortunately, it was not. Domino has had the plan to introduce the company to Facebook, Twitter and some other social media sites by 2009

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just before the crisis, but they did it during the crisis in order to communicate with the active core audience. The CEO decided to the response by YouTube instead of distributing a press release because even at a million views, they thought there were 307 million people in America, so they focused on that audience. They received criticism from the media during the first twenty-four hours, because people thought that they were not doing anything about it. The company understood that the most important thing was to keep the company's credibility with customers. Domino's pizza learned that is so important to keep in touch with media web community all times. (Randallreilly. com, 2015) stated that the company listened to their audience and later they admitted that their product was awful, so that, they started a campaign called Pizza Turnaround, in order to acknowledge the problems they were facing and reinvent their pizza, this along with an extensive media coverage, documentaries, promotions, advertising, etc.

#### Problem Statement.

The company's PR team faced an important challenge. The company had a disadvantageous place due to the lack of presence on social networks. Domino's faced the dilemma of obviating person's opinion by denying, and only focus on defending their brand or putting on the customer's side and reinforcing their product. This crisis could have undermined this large multinational company, so they had to deal with some ethical principles such as fairness, honesty, expertise and loyalty.

#### Personal Critique of the Case.

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In this context, it is important to point out the conflict management life cycle concept from (Wilcox, Cameron and Reber, n. d.) which has a proactive, strategic, reactive and recovery phases, and the way the company's PR professional applied it during this situation. The proactive phase involves crisis-planning, issues tracking by creating strategy plans in ways that address the emerging issue. The strategic phase allows organizations to place itself favorably in anticipation of actions. The reactive phase occurs when the issue or conflict reaches a critical level of impact; it involves the implementation of crisis management plan, crisis communication and conflict resolution. The recovery phase involves reputation management and image restoration.

PR professionals at Domino's pizza implemented both the reactive and recovery phases as well, once the issue became critical. They initiated a crisis management plan by establishing communication channels with the target audience through social media. They also implemented reputation management and image restoration when they decided to reinvent their pizza with a campaign called Pizza Turnaround by using an extensive media coverage, documentaries, promotions, advertising, etc. Once the crisis was overcome, they started implementing the proactive and strategic phases of establishing constant communication with customers through social media channels, with a strategy to pay special attention to customer feedback.

## References

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