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Exxon Valdez Crises and the BP Crises

The BP Oil Spill of 2010 and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in 1989 are among the major oil spills in history. Many similarities can be drawn from the two crises, with BP having the better chance of learning from the events that followed the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Two major similarities can be identified from the two crises, especially in terms of public relations blunders. One similarity regards the response to the crisis. According to Mulkern (1), after the spill, both companies put emphasis on science over people. For example, after the spill, Exxon blamed Alaska for not permitting dispersant use in stopping the spreading of the oil. On the other hand, BP also put emphasis on science and engineering by outlining how it was planning to stop the spillage. The problem with this approach is that both companies ignored the immediate people who were affected. While Exxon was trying to divert attention, BP provided solutions that failed to work and thus both companies did not demonstrate compassion for the affected people early on.

The second similarity is about the assigning of blame and top executives. According to analysts, both companies made attempts to shift blame. For example, Exxon blamed the Captain of the tanker, Mr. Joseph Hazelwood, after the spill. On the other hand, BP CEO Hayward claimed that the spill was not BP's accident since Transocean Limited owned the rig. At one time, BP's Hayward told the Guardian that the Mexican Gulf was a huge ocean and the amount of oil they were spilling into it was very tiny in comparison with the total water volume (Mulkern 1). In addition, the two CEOs did not go to the spill sites. In times of crisis, assigning blames and making insensitive blames only work to anger the affected and the general public. It does nothing to

repair the image or reputation of the company. Also, the top management needs to visit the crisis area so as to show concern and remorse for the events that have happened.

Works Cited

Mulkern, Anne C. BP's PR Blunders Mirror Exxon's, Appear Destined for Record Book. The New York Times, 10 June 2010. Web. 11 March 2013.