

The decision by lebron james case study examples

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Introduction

Public relations means harnessing favorable relations and reactions for organizations and products through effective utilization of communication tools and channels (Bernays, 2004). There are numerous types of public relation strategies, but the most effective one is crisis public relations, which is used in defending organizations and individuals facing a challenge in reputation. In crisis communication, there are many strategies all with the aim of: sustaining connectivity, accessible to news media, sustain information security, and streamline communication process (Griffin, 2008). Therefore, effective communication in a crisis can vastly transform an unforeseen situation into an expected one, hence responding accordingly. A case study that needed an effective crisis communication is LeBron James' decision to sign for Miami Heat from his home club Cleveland Cavaliers. The situation was referred around media houses as 'The Decision', which ended in a nasty situation where LeBron turned from being the most loved celebrity into one of the most hated sports icons in USA. Therefore, this paper will take an in-depth analysis of his decision highlighting the problem, developing a plan of avoiding the ugly turn around, action procedure, and the final evaluation of the strategies employed.

Problem Definition

LeBron James was born and raised in Cleveland in 1984. He was directly drafted to the NBA from Ohio high school. This meant the star by-passed the normal routine of drafts from college like other basketball players. Therefore, LeBron never got the opportunity of experiencing the normal negotiations

and attention given by other clubs. LeBron further did not make things easier for himself when he pledged loyalty to the Cavaliers through his season top scores (McNulty, 2010). He was an idol in front of the home team fans, and any thought of LeBron leaving for another team was seen as betrayal.

However, the contract for LeBron ended and it was up to him to decide whether to extend his contract with the Cavaliers or move on. There were rumors that Miami Heat had approached him in secret and offered him extra compensation if LeBron joined them. This made things difficult for LeBron as every Cavs fan expected him to deny the claims and pledge loyalty to his home team. On the part of LeBron, he seemed he had decided long ago that he wanted to leave for Miami. From his comments even before the decision he hinted that it would be a dream to play with one of the current two NBA greats, Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh.

On the decision day, LeBron chose to pick a prime time to explain where he would play the following season. The execution of the plan by ESPN and himself came off horribly from a PR point of view. The announcement from a neutral perspective looked already concluded in the beginning of the interview. There were no signs that LeBron was having a hard time in his decision, and that his decision to shift to Miami was decided upon in his 'dream' rubbed the cavalier fans wrongly. In his announcement, LeBron did not look directly into the camera to show fans his apologies and remorse. In addition, the reason that Miami provided him with the best opportunity to win titles compared to the Cavs did not make sense. The previous season the two teams performed similarly and that there was speculation that the

following season, the Cavs with LeBron would have a better chance to claiming the regional championship (Abbot, 2010).

Therefore, the problem that LeBron brought about that dented his reputation was because of: improper announcing of his decision; misrepresenting the Cavs fans that he would stay on; last minute change of heart, and moving on specifically to Miami; inadequate reason for his decision, and lack of sensitivity and empathy to the Cavs fans in executing his decision.

Crisis Communication Plan

The problem resulted in turning LeBron from a liked celebrity into one of the most hated sport personalities. Therefore, this situation LeBron finds himself in is a crisis according to PR, and it requires a communication plan to save his reputation. The plan that would be most helpful is as indicated below.

Introduction

A crisis is any event or situation that is about to damage the reputation of an individual or business (Coobs, 2004). However, if handled appropriately damage can be minimized. In our case LeBron should first have told it all, faster, and the truth. If he did this the damage would have been minimized. A similar situation can also be solved by contacting the top PR officer and the CEO urgently and early on. Involving the two officers early on makes implementation of the plan easier. The steps are as followed in forming the plan.

A crisis communication team formation

The team should consist of people who are key to diffusing the situation. They are people who might further clarify the situation to the public. The team will come up with a plan of action after which they would elect a spokesperson. According to Zaremba (2010) the precautions that must be followed in this stage are: ignoring the top management and allowing the lawyer only to get involved, never lying, or denying personal involvement, never ignoring the event, and never allowing the lawyer to make decisions.

Positioning

The next step is to view the crisis in the eye of the public and position oneself. The different positioning aspects in the case of LeBron James are: errors of judgment, insufficient standard operating procedures, human error, and misuse of confidential information (Hale, Dulek, and Hale, 2005). Since people tend to never forget what they heard first and last, it is important to consider consequences such as legal, operation, and financial in the position taken.

Media Policies and Procedures

The media should be involved early on with a center selected early on by the crisis team. Rules established with the media should not be altered. Furthermore, the aim should be to control the interview so that attention is not shifted to other staffs.

Practicing Tough Questions

The media are well known in querying tough questions which are known to escalate the crisis. Therefore, a spokesperson will work with the individual in a crisis in preparation of answering the tough questions.

Preparing Statements

Statements are prepared early on in the event, and whenever any new development unfolds. The spokesperson is the one that is supposed to read them to the news media. Apart from reading them, they can be sent through various communication and media outlets.

Sample News Release

This procedure follows statement preparation and its main objective is in advertising to the public of the acknowledgement of the crisis and its investigation approach. Furthermore, it tells the public of future of news releases.

Key Audiences

The specific groups that should be targeted for communication who might of help in this situation are: the community where individual lives, fans both local and international, business partners and endorsers, and trustees of the individual.

Contact Log

The last plan is to make sure that all communication between the media and other parties involved are recorded. The procedure helps in post-crisis

analysis and enables the callbacks required to be answered (Halek et al., 2005).

Action Plan

An action plan is a tool that could be of great help to any team, so that they can have a logical sequence of events towards a desired goal (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Once a communication crisis plan is drawn, the team headed by a spokesperson should have an action plan that is divided into three elements; specific tasks, time horizon, and allocation of resources.

The goal which is to diffuse the challenge on an individual's reputation should be explained first. Also, all members having more than one task should be identified. Measurements adopted to achieve the goal, and appraisal strategies for the goal should be highlighted to the crisis team members. People selected for completing the task should have at their disposal adequate and suitable resources. For instance, in the crisis team the resources that are crucial are phones with recorders to keep tabs on inquiry calls, note pads to sketch brainstormed ideas, and funds to organize press releases and media interviews. Identifying the right amount and quality of resources to be used is very important.

The time frame of an action plan can cover many years, but in our case it should take two weeks. The goal to be achieved is the determining factor of the time frame. LeBron's crisis occurred a month away from the beginning of a new season in basketball. Therefore, two weeks should be enough to effectively implement an action plan. The extra two weeks would be for both

parties to adjust to the decision and come to terms so that they both move on with their lives. The time frame is as follows:

The combination of both the crisis communication and action plans would be essential in averting any negative publicity that might have arisen from LeBron's decision. The formation of a team to handle the situation is to provide professional advice, and organization of how the crisis should be handled. In LeBron's case the absence of a crisis team was evident as he decided to tackle the problem alone. Once a spokesperson is voted, the entire task is supposed to revolve around him/her. The spokesperson is to speak clearly, and truthfully of LeBron's decision and situation so that all parties do not feel like they are kept in the dark (Abbot, 2010). The instance the media realizes that information is hidden; reporters can ask some other party who of course will provide a different version of the story. Different versions have been proven to escalate crises hence not helpful.

In taking the issue at heart and seriously, LeBron would have been given a chance by locals. The personal interview he conducted should have been preceded by press releases and statements. Statements and press releases in crisis communication are seen to show seriousness in the task, it is not the individual's fault that the situation arose, and that he/she was doing everything to put the matter to rest (Abbot, 2010). The action plan helps in organization of the steps taken. Procedures by the task team should not be seen to be haphazard. Therefore, resources and tasks by every individual are identified and implemented to result to a calculated and assured positive conclusion to the crisis.

The paper provides a strategy of dealing with events that negatively affect reputations of celebrity individuals or organizations. The case study that was used in was LeBron James decision of switching to Miami Heat from Cavs. His strategy of breaking the news was against best PR practices hence the reason that his approval rating fell drastically overnight. Therefore, the plans discussed provide ways that he would have handled the situation to prevent what happened.

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