

SOP: Crisis Management and Escalation Procedures for Online Reputation Issues

This SOP defines **crisis management and escalation procedures** for online reputation issues, detailing steps for identifying potential threats, assessing the severity of incidents, activating response teams, and executing communication strategies. It includes monitoring social media and online platforms, outlining roles and responsibilities, establishing escalation paths, coordinating with legal and PR departments, and providing guidelines for timely resolution and post-crisis analysis to protect and restore the organization's reputation effectively.

1. Purpose

To provide a structured approach to managing online reputation crises, ensuring timely detection, effective response, and swift resolution to protect the organization's brand and credibility.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all digital channels including social media, forums, review platforms, company websites, blogs, and news media.

3. Definitions

- **Online Reputation Issue:** Any negative mention or narrative that may harm the organization's public image.
- **Crisis:** An event or trend that may cause significant reputational, financial, or operational harm.
- **Escalation:** Moving an issue to higher management or specialist teams for resolution.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Social Media Team	24/7 monitoring, initial threat identification, and reporting.
PR Manager	Formulates public responses and coordinates media communication.
Legal Counsel	Advises on compliance, risk, and official statements.
Response Team	Executes investigation, response, and recovery actions.
Senior Management	Final decision-making during major crises.

5. Procedures

5.1 Threat Identification & Monitoring

1. Use social listening and online monitoring tools to track brand mentions and sentiment across all platforms.
2. Flag potential threats and categorize by severity (low, medium, high).
3. Create alerts for priority incidents requiring immediate attention.

5.2 Incident Assessment

1. Assess the validity, reach, and potential impact of the issue.

2. Document the incident in the Crisis Log.
3. Determine crisis level:
 - **Low:** Negative comment with minimal reach.
 - **Medium:** Viral complaint or widespread negative post.
 - **High:** Media coverage, legal implications, severe reputation risk.

5.3 Activation & Escalation

1. For **Low** incidents: Social Media Team manages and responds as per standard guidelines.
2. For **Medium** incidents: Escalate to PR Manager and Response Team within 1 hour.
3. For **High** incidents: Immediate escalation (**<30 minutes**) to Senior Management and Legal Counsel. Activate crisis response procedures.

5.4 Response and Communication

1. Draft response messages in collaboration with PR and Legal teams.
2. Issue public statements on appropriate channels.
3. Monitor feedback and update messaging as needed.
4. Engage privately with affected individuals if required.

5.5 Coordination and Documentation

1. Hold daily crisis meetings if needed; document all decisions and actions.
2. Maintain logs of communications, escalations, and outcomes.
3. Ensure all team members are updated throughout the process.

5.6 Resolution & Post-Crisis Review

1. Announce crisis resolution publicly, if appropriate.
2. Conduct a post-mortem review within 1-2 weeks:
 - Identify key learnings and process improvements.
 - Update SOP and training as needed.
3. Report findings to management.

6. Escalation Path

- Low-level: Social Media Team Lead
- Medium-level: PR Manager & Response Team
- High-level: Legal Counsel & Senior Management

7. Communication Guidelines

- Be timely, factual, and transparent.
- Avoid speculation and protect confidential information.
- Align messages across all platforms.
- Monitor public and stakeholder reactions and adapt accordingly.

8. Review Cycle

This SOP must be reviewed and updated annually or after any major incident.