

# Communicating in Times of Uncertainty

- Crisis as opportunity
- Building adaptive organizations
- Communication planning and goal setting
- Communicating through the Coronavirus Crisis
- Key takeaways and discussion

# Danger and Opportunity in Crises



*“When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters - one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity.”*

- John F. Kennedy

危 机

Chinese character  
“wei”

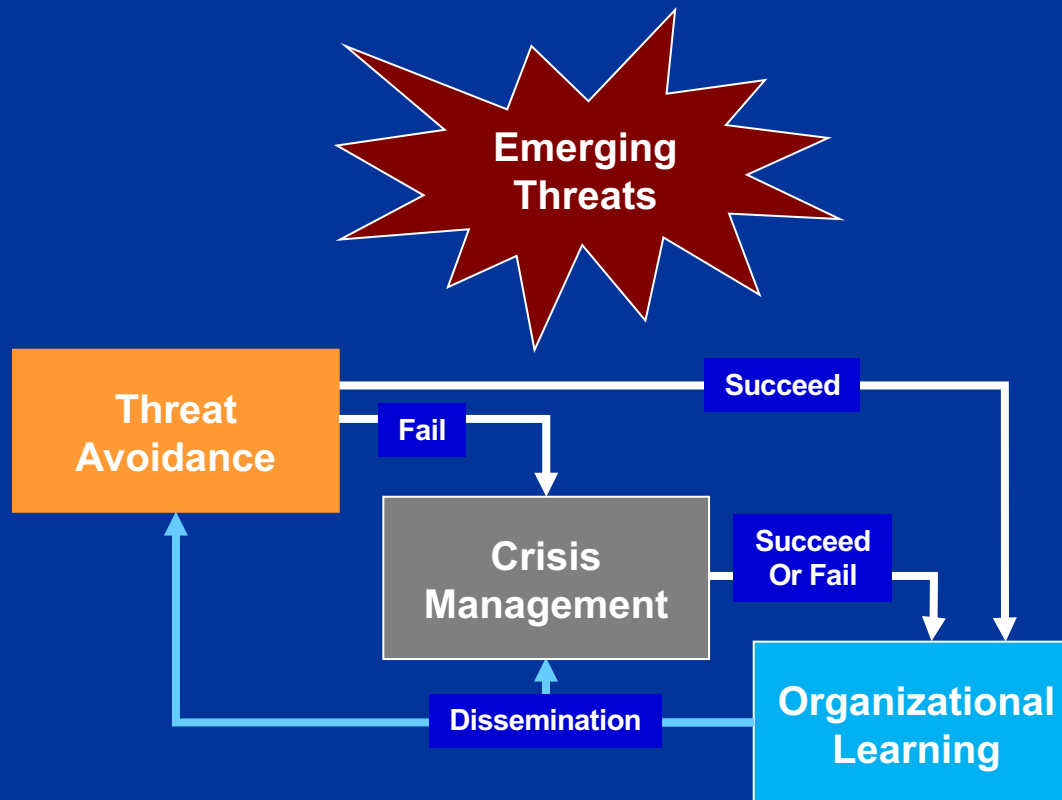
Chinese character  
“ji”

# Building Adaptive Organizations

Potential threats (and opportunities) emerge all the time, so...

1. Can we recognize emerging threats and, prioritize and mobilize to prevent them from hurting us?  
→ *Threat Avoidance*
2. If something bad happens, do we have the capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to it?  
→ *Crisis Management*
3. Once we have avoid threats or managed crises, do we learn and disseminate key insights?  
→ *Organizational Learning*

# The Three Pillars of Adaptive Organizations



Based on slides of IMD (Lausanne, Switzerland)

**“An organization’s ability to learn,  
and translate that learning into  
action rapidly, is the ultimate  
competitive advantage.”**

- Jack Welch

# A Crisis Communication Plan

During a crisis a company needs:

## Crisis Communication Plan



# Crisis Communication Goals

- First and foremost, aim to regain trust of critical constituents around the globe
- Leverage the situation to gain competitive advantage and reputational capital by addressing changes in a responsible, thoughtful way
- Resolve issue thoroughly to have a long-term effect, not only provide a short-term Band-Aid solution

# How to Communicate During a Crisis

- Define the problem
- Gather relevant information
- Centralize communications
- Communicate early and often—both inside and out
- Get inside the media's head
- Communicate directly with affected constituencies
- Keep the business running



# What to Say During This Crisis

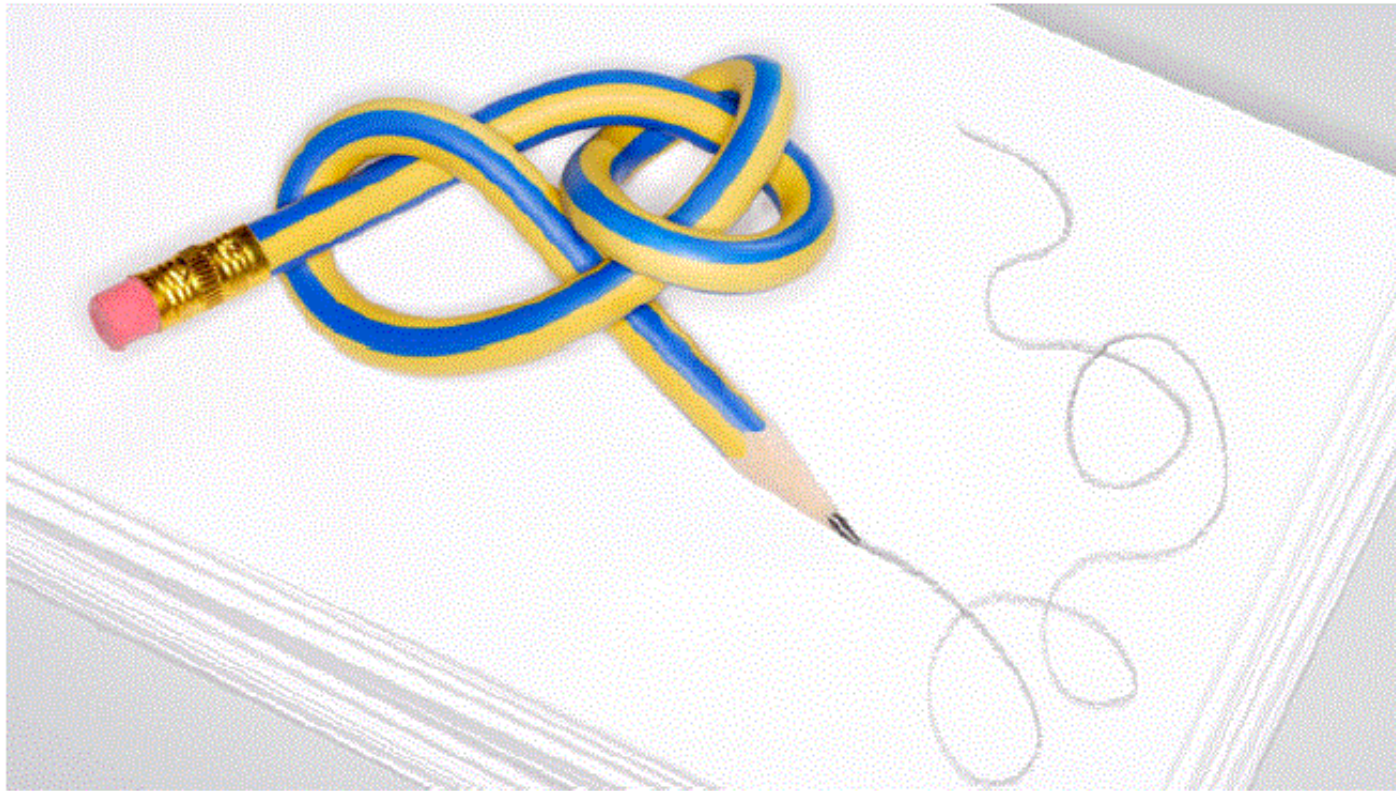


LEADERSHIP

# Communicating Through the Coronavirus Crisis

by Paul A. Argenti

March 13, 2020



Nicholas Rigg/Getty Images

# Communicating Through the Coronavirus

- Step 1: Create a Centralized Comms Team
- Step 2: Focus first on your employees
- Step 3: Communicate regularly with customers
- Step 4: Reassure shareholders
- Step 5: Be proactive with communities

# Communicating Through the Coronavirus: Relevant Cases

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## Coronavirus Update

We're here to help our customers who may be impacted by COVID-19.

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## From our CEO: We will fight this pandemic together

...making company, we are throwing our weight behind...  
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News Byte  
March 23, 2020  
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9,990 views | Mar 19, 2020, 11:03am EDT

### Zara Owner Starts Making Protective Face Masks To Fight Coronavirus

**CNN BUSINESS** | Markets | Tech | Media | Success | Perspectives | Videos | Edition

### Starbucks is giving out free coffee to frontline health care workers

By Jordan Valinsky, CNN Business  
Updated 1903 GMT (0303 HKT) March 25, 2020

# Communicating Through the Coronavirus: A Few Bad Examples

**FINANCIAL TIMES**

US COMPANIES TECH MARKETS GRAPHICS OPINION WORK & CAREERS LIFE & ARTS HOW TO SPEND IT

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## Coronavirus triggers boom in private jet inquiries

By Justin Harper  
BBC News

18 February 2020

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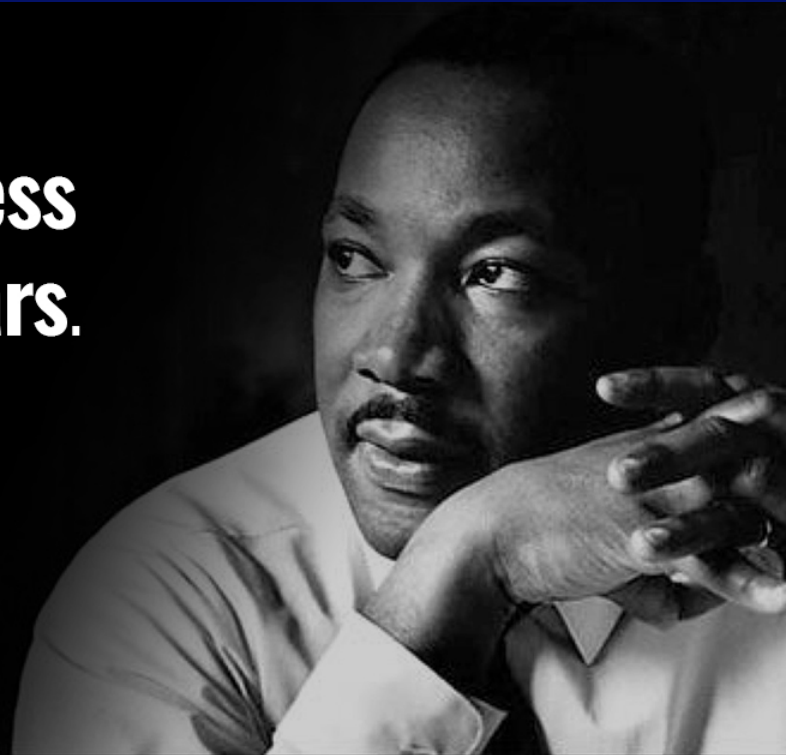
Eleven senior leaders could see tens of millions of dollars through their most recent compensation package if hotel operator's shares rebound

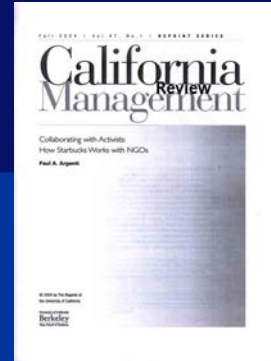
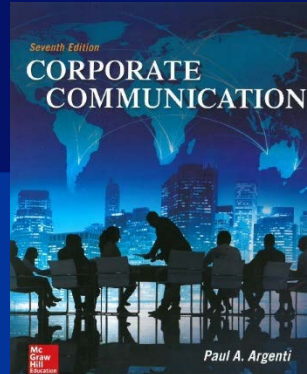
# Key Takeaways on Crisis Communication

- Think about the opportunity that comes with a crisis
- Decentralized management is fine, but strategically aligned communications in a crisis is necessary to “speak in harmony”
- Spotting predictable surprises can help avoid crises and present opportunities
- Organizations also need to think strategically about communication, especially in a crisis
- Learn from this crisis and start creating communication plans for the next one when it’s over

Only in the **darkness**  
can you see the **stars**.

*- Martin Luther King Jr.*





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