

[Crisis Communication Failures: The BP Case Study](#) by Daniel De Wolf and Mohamed Mejri from *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics* is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](#) license. © 2012, International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics (IJAME). UMGC has modified this work and it is available under the original license.

## Case Study Example

This document shows how you might use an exemplar to inform your own original work. If you were writing your own case study, you might look at how an exemplar case study was organized and formatted, and you might look at what information was included in each section. The text in the left-hand column comes from a case study that appeared in the *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics*. The text in the right-hand column explains the components of each section. This is the kind of analysis you might conduct when using an exemplar ethically and responsibly.

### Sample Abstract

#### Introduce the topic that will be covered

On April 20, 2010, an explosion of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico caused the largest maritime disaster oil spill in US history and caused BP to suffer considerable reputational and financial losses.

#### What will this case study focus on?

BP used many tactics and tools to communicate with stakeholders during and after the crisis. However, crisis management and communication experts' opinions differed on whether BP's crisis communications were effective or ineffective.

#### Methods

This paper assesses BP's crisis communications through a content analysis of secondary data collected from various sources (newspapers, magazines, annual reports, and blogs).

#### Recommendations

The findings were that BP made three major mistakes that other organizations can learn from in preparing and executing their crisis communications efforts.

### Sample Introduction

#### Set the scene, explain the problem in detail

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in April 2010 was the largest maritime disaster oil spill in US history. This accident was caused by an explosion that resulted in the death of 11 people. It took five months after the explosion for BP to seal the oil well, and over the course of those months, some 780 million gallons of crude leaked into the sea. The damages from the spill occurred not just for BP, but for the environment, the economy, and regional tourism. The company was simultaneously facing two main issues: the biggest oil spill in US history and considerable financial and reputation losses.

#### Restated focus/purpose

Our goal was to analyze the Deepwater Horizon disaster and learn from BP's response to inform crisis planning in other organizations.

Crisis communications planning can help managers build a positive public perception preemptively,

anticipate possible crises, be more prepared to manage and resolve a crisis when it happens, and even prevent crises altogether.

## Sample Conclusion

### Sum up main points or findings from the body of the essay

There are three major lessons that can be taken from BP's response. First, as many companies do, BP failed to communicate during the early hours of the crisis. The initial hours after a crisis can be crucial to influence public perception. Second, stakeholders want to feel informed, safe, and connected during a crisis. Regular communication with all stakeholders should be insured before, during, and after the crisis. The company should be honest about what it does and does not know. This will ensure it is perceived as credible. Third, crisis communications should be a proactive function rather than reactive.

## Conclusions

If other organizations conduct crisis planning and truthfully communicate early and often with their stakeholders, they have the potential to fare better in a crisis or prevent a crisis entirely.

## Sample Recommendations

### Recommendations

- related back to the issues discussed in the conclusion
- stated briefly but clearly
- written as directives

Three lessons can be learned from the analysis of failures in BP's crisis communications strategy:

- Communicate as soon as possible after a crisis.
- Ensure regular and truthful communication with stakeholders before, during, and after a crisis.
- Crisis communications planning should be proactive and ongoing.

### Recommendations for further research

Recommendations for future research include the following:

- an analysis of how crisis communication affects the way people perceive responsibility in the crisis, and

an analysis of how commitment to corporate social responsibility initiatives affect an organization's reputation and image.