

Organisational Communication – Annotated Bibliography

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Penny Appeal

Penny Appeal is a global charity with headquarters in the UK. Operating independently, it has partner offices and branches around the world, including one in Australia. The charity aims to end cyclical poverty through programs that empower communities; promote sustainability; provide humanitarian relief and care; and emergency assistance. Penny Appeal's work is faith-based and its target audience is predominantly Muslim.

In August 2020, Penny Appeal found itself at the center of investigation after allegations about a safeguarding issue at one of their orphanages (Gittins, 2020). Penny Appeal failed to update the registration of an orphanage it runs with its partners in the Gambia. However, Gambian authorities claimed they found cases of sexual abuse, child exploitation and below standard accommodation conditions. The orphanage was temporarily shut, pending the outcome of a full investigation related to accusations of child exploitation, sexual abuse and other child protection matters.

News about the crisis followed a major uproar on social media. This damaged Penny Appeal's reputation through the spread of fake news, sensationalism, cancel culture and rumours about the charity as a whole.

In response, Penny Appeal issued a media release and statement from its interim CEO. The charity's crisis communication involved admitting that it was horrified by the allegations, recognising its responsibilities and working towards reviewing its operations. Since then, Penny Appeal has not engaged in further crisis communication and it seems that the charity has brushed the issue under the rug while it awaits the investigation's findings. Therefore, Penny Appeal needs better communication planning and strategies to restore its reputation or protect it from further damage in the future.

Crisis Communication in the Rhetorical Arena

This journal article puts the rhetorical arena theory into the spotlight. The rhetorical arena theory is presented as a space that opens for different actors and stakeholders to talk to and about each other, during and after a crisis (Raupp, 2019).

Raupp (2019) also draws on the approaches of multivocality and narrative analysis to account for the variety of perspectives through which stakeholders interpret issues.

The journal also draws attention to the arena of news media and how the struggle for rhetorical power and media access can shape its discourse. It implies that the more power an actor has in its network and the more access it has to the media, the more impact its voice can have in the rhetorical arena.

It is imperative for Penny Appeal to be aware of what a rhetorical arena is and how it plays a role in understanding crisis communication. When the crisis broke out, many voices in the news and the

nonprofit industry, including stakeholders, donors, competitors, celebrities and the wider public emerged. All of them had an opinion about Penny Appeal, which they communicated to each other. One example was the negative commentary from celebrity boxer Amir Khan who was known to have personal issues with Penny Appeal.

Refuting Fake News on Social Media: Nonprofits, crisis response strategies and issue involvement

This journal article discusses the implications of fake news on organisations and their stakeholders. It mentions the impact that fake news can have on a charity's brand image and trust amongst its publics; ability to recruit and retain volunteers; stakeholder loyalty, and economic success.

The article therefore evaluates the effectiveness of crisis response strategies like denial and attack when a nonprofit organisations find themselves in the middle of a crisis. It encourages organisations to develop response strategies to fake news so that they can respond in a timely manner.

In the article, (Vafeiadis et al., 2020) recommend segmenting individuals according to how highly involved they are in the issue, and then tailoring crisis response strategies accordingly. They argue that individuals that are less involved or interested in an issue, process information and crisis communication differently than highly involved individuals do. Denial postures benefit organisations when they are communicating to less involved individuals, whereas more aggressive response strategies tend to work better for highly involved individuals.

An Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides further insight into information processing by shedding light on the central route and peripheral route that individuals take. This itself can inform the framework of an organisation's crisis communication.

Penny Appeal's brand image, reputation and economic success has been significantly impacted by the crisis. The journal article will be particularly useful in finding the right balance between denial and aggression to counter fake news that has dominated the crises discourse on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Crisis Communication Planning and Nonprofit Organizations

This journal article places emphasis on the importance of crisis communication planning and strategies to address the many crises that nonprofit organisations are at risk of experiencing.

After educating about the evolution of crisis communication, the paper promotes a three-stage crisis management approach: before, during and after the crisis. In the pre-crisis stage, there is a focus on planning and preparation as opposed to waiting for a crisis to occur. Haupt and Azevedo (2021) suggest that nonprofits plan during noncrisis periods so that they have time to brainstorm strategies, assemble a crisis management hierarchy within the organisation, assess logistical needs and resources, and practice the plan with the organisation's relevant members and stakeholders. This would build the organisation's resilience capacity and allow it to have the best chance at reducing the negative impacts of crises.

This article would therefore be useful when demonstrating to Penny Appeal the importance of planning and developing crisis response strategies. It would be recommended that Penny Appeal avoids complacency while waiting for a verdict from the full investigation. Instead, the charity should capitalise

on the time it has before the verdict to plan for negative scenarios as a crisis is bound to arise from an unfavourable investigation outcome.

Furthermore, this article would be useful in helping Penny Appeal develop a plan as it provides templates of crisis communication strategies employed by various organisations. These templates can be used to make a personal one that is tailored to Penny Appeal's crisis situation.

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