

# **BERNSTEIN CRISIS MANAGEMENT, INC.**

**Crisis Management, Response, Prevention, Planning & Training**

## **COMPANY DESCRIPTION**

### **About Bernstein Crisis Management**

Bernstein Crisis Management, Inc. is a national consultancy providing 24/7 access to its president, Jonathan Bernstein, and a network of carefully screened and highly experienced crisis management experts who are on call nationwide and in many markets overseas. Bernstein Crisis Management engages in the full spectrum of crisis management services: crisis prevention, response, planning, training and simulations. The business was created and has been operated since January 1994 on the premise that its clients' executive leadership wants *direct* assistance from senior-level crisis management professionals.

Simply put, Jonathan Bernstein or — if he's already 100% engaged, one of his skilled alternates — is directly available to the CEO or the designated client contact, to help the organization survive any breaking crisis and/or to plan for avoiding future crises.

Bernstein Crisis Management serves clients that may suffer or are suffering threats to people or property, reputation damage, business interruption and/or loss of share value. While response to breaking crises constitutes a significant portion of the consultancy's business, its services are also in high demand to help clients avoid and/or minimize the impact of future crises. The Bernstein Crisis Management approach to crisis prevention focuses on making clients not merely prepared, but actually resistant to the prospect and effect of crises.

Headquartered in Southern California, Bernstein Crisis Management regularly serves clients from coast to coast, with some engagements internationally. The Internet and modern telecommunications technology make it very easy to service most client needs remotely, with in-person visits being largely reserved for strategy and training-related meetings.

### **Plain Talk from a Crisis Manager: A Message from Jonathan Bernstein**

There are very few consultants for whom crisis management, in all its aspects, is a full-time job. I'm one of them. I don't do brochures. I don't do press releases promoting your business. I'm a crisis manager, and have a couple of decades of experience under my belt.

I believe a number of my peers are as good as I am. Some are better. But my clients will tell you (and I'm always willing to give you confidential references) that the top reasons they value my

services, beyond my crisis management skills, are:

1. I'm accountable. I do what I say I'm going to do when I say I'm going to do it — or I give you a *very good* reason why I've been delayed, a rare occurrence.
2. I'm accessible. I'm your guy, not just the head of an account team who you don't see much after the work gets started. I take calls at any hour, I'm on email most waking hours except when traveling, and I don't take more work than I can handle. If you catch me at a time when I'm fully occupied, or if you need more than one top-level consultant, I have pre-screened and established ongoing relationships with a network of my peers — all with at least 15 years experience — whom I can add to the Bernstein Crisis Management team on very short notice.
3. I work where I'm needed. I have worked in-person with clients based in almost every state as well as — by teleconference, videoconference and Internet — with organizations overseas.
4. I understand crisis management's role in legal matters. I've done more work than most in my field in matters involving litigation, complex business transactions, labor and employment issues, etc. I know how to work hand-in-hand with your legal team.
5. I understand the role of the Internet in crisis management. I have been using the Internet for crisis prevention and management for more than 25 years, since before the modern World Wide Web was created.
6. I'm affordable. Crisis management pros are relatively rare and our rates reflect that fact, but as a consultant with a virtual agency versus a lot of "brick and mortar" and staff to support, I can keep my rates relatively reasonable.

### **Crisis Management Services**

Current services are:

#### **1. Crisis Prevention**

If auto safety was like some crisis management programs, we'd be buying seat belts and air bags while our cars were skidding toward a wall at high speed.

Crisis prevention costs are always a tiny fraction of the losses that are typically incurred as a result of crises for which there had been inadequate preparation. There have been many

Bernstein Crisis Management clients that incurred millions of dollars in legal, operational and public relations/marketing costs that could have been avoided with adequate preparation.

Crisis prevention, at its best, is the organizational equivalent of a medical full body scan. Bernstein Crisis Management offers and has often been a pioneer in the delivery of crisis prevention activities designed not only to prepare clients for potential crises, but also to make them *crisis-resistant*.

- ◆ **Vulnerability Audits** — A multi-disciplinary risk assessment to identify current and potential areas of operational weakness and system flaws that could lead to, or exacerbate, crises. The scope of a vulnerability audit can vary, depending on client preferences and needs. Some options include:
  - **Crisis Document Audit** — A simple review of existing client documents related to crisis preparedness and response, such as crisis communications plans, emergency response policies, disaster plans, etc. This audit includes creation of a written evaluation and recommendations for improvement.
  - **Executive Session Vulnerability Audit** — A single session in which the client's executive team is led through a series of educational and thought-provoking discussions to uncover and begin to address organizational vulnerabilities that could escalate to crises. After that, the consultant prepares a written report of findings and recommendations. The length and scope of an executive session vulnerability audit can be customized to best suit the client's needs and resources.
  - **Comprehensive Vulnerability Audit** — A series of interviews with employees at all levels of an organization, each conducted in complete confidence so that the interviewee feels comfortable disclosing information he/she might not otherwise discuss. This is often complemented by interviews with representative members of key external audiences, and concludes with preparation and presentation of a comprehensive audit report to the senior management team.

Length of time and cost required varies considerably depending on the size of the organization.

- ◆ **Crisis Communications Plans** — Based on some level of vulnerability audit, creation of a response structure and written plan that will guide and optimize reaction to future crises.

This includes ensuring that there is close coordination between the teams involved in the operational and communications aspects of crisis response.

- ◆ **Disaster/Incident Response Planning and Training** — Also based on a vulnerability audit, ensuring that an organization is prepared for the operational response to a crisis, complementing its crisis communications planning.
- ◆ **Senior- and Mid-Level Staff Training About Crisis Management Fundamentals** – prevention and/or response, from one-hour luncheon presentation to multi-day sessions.
- ◆ **Media Training** — Comprehensive instruction and practice on camera, enhancing spokespersons' abilities to optimize results from both "good news" and crisis-related interviews. More details on media training are provided later in this description of services.
- ◆ **Crisis Prevention & The Law** — All of Bernstein Crisis Management's crisis prevention services can include legal counsel to help clients more thoroughly evaluate multi-disciplinary legal compliance and factor legal considerations into crisis prevention systems and activities. The agency works with clients' existing legal counsel and/or can recommend national-caliber attorneys from its own network of contacts.

## 2. Crisis Response

Using effective strategy and tactics to avoid, or at least minimize, the negative impact of pending or breaking crises. In essence, fire-fighting. Crisis response addresses the needs not only of external stakeholders, but also of employees — *because every employee is a PR representative and crisis manager for the organization, whether you want them to be or not.* Activities that are a subset of crisis response include:

- ◆ Key message preparation.
- ◆ Preparation of draft and/or final versions of internal and external communications with all of a client's important audiences, including media (usually "behind the scenes" but on rare occasion serving as spokesperson for a client).
- ◆ Creation and/or coordination of Internet-based crisis-response activities, to include blogging (more on that later).
- ◆ On- or off-site oversight of client crisis response activities to the extent clients do not have specific capabilities in this area. De facto, acting as if Jonathan Bernstein or the

Bernstein Crisis Management alternate consultant is the client's "senior vice president of corporate communications" in the absence of such internal capability.

- ◆ Situation-specific media and presentation training.
- ◆ Close coordination with legal counsel when litigation or possible litigation is involved, to ensure all tactics and messages are compatible with legal strategy.

### **3. Media Training**

Jonathan Bernstein is author of the popular training/reference guide, [\*Keeping the Wolves at Bay: A Media Training Manual\*](#), which is heavily focused on crisis-related media relations. The two decades of experience he brought to that publication he also brings to media training clients nationwide.

Formal media training:

- ◆ Helps you develop and refine key messages, to see "what really works" under the stress of simulated interviews (and good media trainers make you forget it's simulated).
- ◆ Optimizes your chances of achieving balanced coverage.
- ◆ Improves skills that transfer to many other types of public speaking — e.g., community presentations, court testimony or testifying at hearings.
- ◆ Allows you to identify who's an effective spokesperson in general, and who, specifically, may be better for different types of interviews — TV, radio, print or online. And who, perhaps, should not be a spokesperson.

The company's expertise in Internet-centered communications has been extended to media training as well, using webcams to conduct pre-media interview and/or refresher media training for clients anywhere in the world where there is a good broadband connection.

### **4. Crisis Simulations**

Using Bernstein Crisis Management- or client-produced plans and procedures, agency professionals will conduct and/or oversee realistic simulations of crises that could affect the client organization. This helps ensure that:

- ◆ Plans cover all likely contingencies.

- ◆ Current employees are capable of effectively implementing them and have the necessary skill sets to respond effectively to unanticipated emergencies.
- ◆ Plan elements and strategies that may have been appropriate at the time of plan creation are still viable and, if not, that they are updated appropriately.

Simulations can run the gamut from table-top exercises to single-situation drills or multi-day exercises.

## 5. Online Crisis and Issues Management

The Internet provides every organization with the greatest challenges, and the greatest opportunities, since the onset of electronic communication. Jonathan Bernstein and a number of his on-call consultants have extensive experience using the Internet to prevent or mitigate damage from potential or actual crises.

Internet-centered services include:

- ◆ Creating "dark" websites ready to be launched when/if a crisis actually occurs.
- ◆ Rapidly creating and launching incident-specific websites, to include the availability of webmaster services if desired.
- ◆ Training organizational staff members and allies on how to blog effectively in support of an issues management situation.
- ◆ Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for the purpose of reputation management (see item 6, below).

## 6. Sports Crisis Management

A crisis in the sports world is unlike any other. In this highly charged, media-driven industry, athletes, executives, sports organizations and institutions are exposed to intense public scrutiny fueled by fans hungry for information and a news cycle that never stops. Sports figures are tried by the media long before they step into a court of law. Reputations are destroyed overnight and in cases with legal implications, the right to due process is often compromised by the perceptions formed in the court of public opinion. A sports crisis must be expertly managed by professionals who understand the unique dynamics of the industry.

In partnership with PRO Sports Communications, our team of professionals includes both crisis managers and lawyers who are experts in the business of sports. As former journalists, league and team personnel, and outside legal crisis counsel for professional sports leagues, we have led communications strategy for some of the decade's most monumental sports scandals.

We assist athletes, executives, institutions, and sports related entities with a variety of matters including, but not limited to:

- ◆ Labor negotiations
- ◆ Issues related to performance enhancing substances
- ◆ Eligibility violations
- ◆ Criminal & civil challenges
- ◆ Pre-indictment investigations
- ◆ Grand jury testimonies
- ◆ Disciplinary matters

Our services include:

- ◆ Comprehensive information gathering & assessment.
- ◆ Strategic communications plan development.
- ◆ Key messaging and Q&A development.
- ◆ Spokesperson preparation and media training.
- ◆ Media outreach and story negotiation.
- ◆ Development and distribution of key communications
- ◆ Press conference/ teleconference facilitation.
- ◆ Interview coordination and monitoring.
- ◆ Coordination with key stakeholders and their respective communications teams.
- ◆ Media and social media monitoring.

## **7. Search Engine Optimization for Reputation Management**

What do you want people to find on the first page of results when they search for your organization's name on Google (which has 60 percent of search traffic) or the other major search engines? You would probably prefer that they don't find:

- ◆ a vicious blog started by disgruntled former customers; or,

- ◆ 75% of the links leading to websites or blogs critical of your business; or,
- ◆ websites and blogs that you don't control, with your own sites buried on later Google pages; or,
- ◆ your name prominently and negatively mentioned on legitimate (e.g., Better Business Bureau) or quasi-legitimate (RipOff Report) consumer-focused websites; or,
- ◆ your organization's name connected with an investigation by any regulatory or enforcement agency.

These are all situations that Bernstein Crisis Management has helped clients manage recently, with a steadily increasing number of organizations finding their primary crisis to be the damage they are incurring online. The innocent are portrayed as guilty. Minor offenses are portrayed as major offenses. Criticism that sounds legitimate is purely or mostly fictional.

There are quite a few crisis management tactics that can mitigate the situations described above. Increasingly, one of the most essential tactics has been a form of search engine optimization (SEO) focused specifically on preserving and restoring reputation, when the crisis is already in progress, followed by creation of an "SEO shield" to preserve reputation going forward.

Bernstein Crisis Management's team of experts includes individuals who can assist clients with SEO Reputation Management as part of a comprehensive set of strategies and tactics for online reputation management.

## **8. Strategic Reputation Management Planning**

Reputation is any organization's or individual's most important asset. Bernstein Crisis Management recognizes that and can assemble a team to develop a Strategic Reputation Management Plan whose tactics are matched precisely to the plan's objectives. Elements include:

- ◆ Establishing clear goals for Internet presence and communication.
- ◆ Search engine optimization for existing and proposed websites or blogs.
- ◆ Linking strategy.
- ◆ Pay-per-click campaigns (when appropriate).

- ◆ Creating a communications structure that can be repeated for new brands, new products and/or major new organizational developments.
- ◆ Creating a communications structure that optimizes achievement of financial goals.
- ◆ Tactics for crisis prevention and response.
- ◆ Traditional media relations.
- ◆ Methods of plan measurement.

## **9. Litigation-Related Consulting**

Attorneys are finding it increasingly useful to employ crisis/issues management public relations consultants when litigation is or may be involved with a case. Clients, too, favor a team approach that embraces important complementary disciplines.

Lawyers do battle in courts of law. Bernstein Crisis Management does battle in the court of public opinion, whether the publics are internal or external. These parallel conflicts are won more frequently when the forces work in a coordinated manner.

Bernstein Crisis Management, usually subcontracted to the legal team, participates in:

- ◆ Evaluation and analysis of public relations liability and damages exposure that could result from the litigation in question.
- ◆ Evaluation and analysis of public relations defenses and/or any proactive tactics that may be employed.
- ◆ Helping to anticipate jury and jury pool reaction to witnesses, experts and demonstrative evidence, as well as the case in general.
- ◆ Analyzing the ability of parties on either side of litigation to effectively respond to the public relations demands of the case and recommending improvements to our clients' response systems.
- ◆ Review of draft legal documents that may end up in the public record, with an eye toward identifying verbiage that could be harmful from a public relations perspective.
- ◆ For plaintiff's counsel, helping to intentionally generate more public attention for a legal matter.

## **10. Training, Public Speaking and Seminars**

In the post-9/11, post-Enron world, Jonathan Bernstein has been increasingly in demand as a trainer on crisis management-related topics, conducting one or two-day training sessions that can be customized for small groups of top execs or large groups of line-level employees. He is also available as a conference speaker and his presentations are usually easy to qualify for the continuing education credits required by many professions. Rates are set based on time required to prepare, present and travel.

References available on request. Call (626) 825-3838 or write to [jonathan@bernsteincrisismanagement.com](mailto:jonathan@bernsteincrisismanagement.com) for more information.