

# THE 14-SECOND REASON TO TALK

How Ready is  
Ready Enough?

by Gerard Braud

**T**HE SHOOTINGS IN TUCSON are one more reason for us all to have a frank discussion among leaders within our organizations and then take action. While this is a unique 14 second public spectacle, what is not unique is the potential for this to happen in every workplace. Employees are stressed as they are asked to do more with less or to make up the workload of employees who have been laid-off. And those who have been laid-off feel they are at the end of their rope.

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So how do leaders and their organizations generally behave after a major shooting makes the news?

### There are 3 types of responses.

**1 The Denial group.** They say, “That’s horrible and I hope that never happens to us.” They never take steps to prepare for dealing with such a crisis.

**2 The Bucket List group.** They use this as a reason to finally write plans to deal with a crisis.

They put the words on paper, check it off of the to-do list, then put the documents on a shelf in a red binder to collect dust, never to touch it again.

**3 The “Be Prepared” group.** They keep their plans alive by updating them to new vulnerabilities and new communications tools, such as social media and mass notification systems. They have 3 distinct plans, which include the Emergency Response/Incident Command Plan, the Business Continuity/Risk Management Plan, and the Crisis Communications Plan. They know one plan without the others is unacceptable.

This group will budget time and money to test their plans and their people at least once a year to make sure the plans work and that everyone knows their role when “it” hits the fan. They know that a crisis impacts their bottom line.

If you are in the denial group there is no help for you because you just don’t get it. You’ll invent a thousand excuses of why you don’t have a plan.

If you are in the “Bucket List” group, you are only one or two steps away from being prepared. You should do the following:

- Buy Swiffer® Sweeper cloths and dust off your plan.
- Read the plan to make sure it is up to date.
- Conduct media training for the top leaders

who would serve as potential spokespeople.

- Plan and conduct a realistic crisis communications drill, complete with fake media.

If you are in the “Bucket List” group or the “Be Prepared” group, here are things to consider in planning your Media Training and your Crisis Drills:

### Media Training

- Media Training is most effect in small groups of 4 or fewer people in one day.
- Media Training success is achieved when each person is on camera at least 3 times during a training day so you can see and achieve growth and improvement throughout the day.
- Media Training requires a trainer who will be frank and honest with you.
- Media Training can be supported with books such, *Don't Talk to the Media Until...* so that after the lecture, the training is reinforced with an easy to read and use reference guide.

### Crisis Drills

- Crisis Drills should test 3 key areas, including the Emergency Response/Incident Command Plan, the Business Continuity/Risk Management Plan, and the Crisis Communications Plan.
- Crisis Drills can be a live action or table top drill.
- Crisis Drills should include at least 2 news briefings so spokespeople can get ample practice.
- Crisis Drills should include fake/mock media at news conferences, and where possible, should include fake broadcast reports during the drill.
- Crisis Drills should include fake Social Media posts so role-players understand the changing impact Social Media will have on the crisis and on your crisis communications.
- Crisis Drills require a good debriefing and evaluation after the drill.

In each step, you'll need to budget time and money, the costs of which are minimal compared to the financial damage the company will endure when they poorly handle a crisis.

And while we cannot reverse the horrible events in Tucson, we can learn from the event and take steps to protect employees where possible and to be poised to respond should the worst happen. ■



**Gerard Braud** is known as the guy to call when “it” hits the fan. He is widely regarded as an expert in crisis communications and media relations. He has appeared on television more than 5,000 times and has been quoted in more than 500 publications around the world. He is the author of *Don't Talk to the Media Until... 29 Secrets You Need to Know Before You Open Your Mouth to a Reporter*. Additional resources are available at [www.braudcommunications.com](http://www.braudcommunications.com).