

Negative opinions in the public domain can have catastrophic consequences for the reputation of a business. Years of hard work to build your brand and reputation can be severely damaged in just one day if communications are not professionally managed and negative press and perception contained when a crisis strikes.

FIX THE ROOF WHEN THE SUN SHINES

Containing any crisis is all about planning, preparation and process. The CHA Group is unique in that we deal only with crisis & reputation management; we often work with in house or external PR organisations dovetailing our unrivaled experience and crisis strategy into the existing set up.

We have worked at the sharp end of the Aviation industry for over 15 years. This document gives an insight into just some of the campaigns we have handled.

Our job is to prevent the story from appearing in the media and if that is not possible, to contain it and to close it down as quickly as we can. Through a system of communication, social media monitoring and press awareness we can get a crucial early warning that can stop the escalation of a damaging story.

For a no obligation discussion with our managing partner or for more information please contact us via e-mail aviation@thechagroup.com or via telephone 01452 741260.

SERVISAIR BAGGAGE HANDLERS STRIKE GATWICK 2003

A two-week strike that had the potential to cause chaos to the travelling public and to worsen relations between the management and the unions in an already difficult situation.

The CHA Group wrote and implemented the communications plan and strategy. By deciding that the best strategy was to contain this multi-faceted dispute to one area only, we restricted the agenda and focused media attention on a single issue.

By being very selective as to our media outlet partners, we were able to carefully place stories and give a steer to selected journalists, eventually agreeing to one structured live interview, on the Radio 5 Live Drive Time Show, where we knew we would get a sympathetic reception.

This had the desired effect and within five minutes of the interview ending Brendon Gold, from the Unite Union, was on the phone requesting an informal meeting the following morning and the long running dispute ended with management achieving the majority of their aims and strategies.

It was crucial to the strategy that we restricted the agenda despite union attempts to widen it to a more confusing multi layered dispute. Media partner selection was crucial and ultimately successful.

AVIANCE EXIT FROM GATWICK AND SUBSEQUENT SALE OF ALL UK ASSETS 2008

Working for both Aviance and its parent group Go-Ahead PLC our brief was to prepare and implement the communications plan for the withdrawal of Aviance from London Gatwick and the subsequent disposal of the whole Aviance business to interested parties whilst protecting the parent group share price and restricting any impact on its reputation.

The strategy in this instance was to create a multi layered press response to be used pro-actively as the situation demanded. Mass NDAs were used to maintain security prior to the announcement to the London Stock Exchange.

The CHA Group were co-opted onto the Aviance board and worked as part of the senior management team throughout the planning process. We worked alongside the Group finance and communications teams. We led and implemented the communications strategy for the entire project, writing the timelines and agendas for the management and we participated in the wider management briefings.

Our Digital Department also created a secure live Q&A website for the staff to ask questions regarding their employment and contractual position.

SWISSPORT BAGGAGE HANDLING MEDIA STORM 2014

This case study perfectly illustrates the rapid rise of social media and its potential to create and develop a media storm starting with a local operational difficulty and leading to a national and international media feeding frenzy.

During a night shift at London Gatwick a good many flights were arriving off schedule and the baggage handling team were experiencing difficulties in servicing these late and unexpected arrivals within the airport's time scales.

Incoming passengers, understandingly, were upset at the delays and a small number took to social media to vent their frustrations. However, the Gatwick press office decided, without consultation with Swissport, to respond, "Baggage handlers are experiencing resource issues".

This was clearly designed to take the blame away from the airport, but it also had the effect of alerting the media to a possible problem. A freelance reporter from the Daily Telegraph began monitoring all social media and responding immediately to all posts saying “we are running a story about this please DM me and tell me your experiences”.

This whole scenario from start to finish took less than 35 minutes. The consequences of this 35-minute problem, caused mainly by circumstances outside of Swissport’s control, became a major news story for two days.

We had calls from most national media outlets, frontline TV and Radio broadcasters including BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky as well as senior MPs and the Cabinet Office. Many of them sent reporters and camera crews to the airport. The story was further manipulated to include criticism of zero hours contracts, complaints from Trade Unions about terms and conditions and any other red herrings that people could raise.

The CHA Group closed the story down by the evening of the second day by careful management of information, thereby restricting the oxygen of the additional claims, by liaison with the Unions and all other parties involved and by the use of “friendly” media and off the record briefings.

We also arranged statements and interviews with partners and clients, which were very helpful in explaining how off schedule aircraft can cause extreme difficulties especially during night shifts.

Because of this experience and other similar situations, The CHA Group now has a full social media, blog and forum monitoring service that is operational for all our clients to get an early warning of potential issues, which has helped to close down many issues that could have had similar consequences.

ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGNS

As well as the above case studies, some of the additional cases that The CHA Group have handled include:

- Withdrawal of Swissport from all ground handling activities at Gatwick Airport (October 2015)
- London Gatwick communications during 2005 Sharm el Sheikh bomb attacks
- Insolvency of Icelandic Airline, from initial customer media relations up to appointment of liquidator

AWARDS & INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

The CHA Group was proud to receive a PR Industry Gold award for our work on the Aviance withdrawal from Gatwick and subsequent sale.

In addition, we have also won another PR industry Gold award for crisis management as well as one silver and two highly commended.

HOW DOES IT WORK AND WHAT DOES IT COST?

The CHA Group operates on a retained basis. In line with your other insurance policies, this allows us to be in possession of all the information when a fast moving situation arises. However, mindful of budgets and the need to operate on a sustainable basis, we keep this fee as low as possible and this includes initial set up costs, monthly monitoring by our digital team and regular reports.

As part of our retainer, our digital team will monitor all social media that could involve interest or effect on your business in the UK and Eire. (We can also offer international monitoring if required). We monitor blogs, Twitter, Facebook, chat rooms and other online media for threats or other potential negative postings and then advise you and if required act on your behalf.

The retainer also covers access to our 24/7 press office, available to clients to tell us of any problems or potential problems and for the media to call when they require a response or guidance.

We only make additional charges (chargeable in 15-minute segments) if we have to act on a live story, kill a potential story or create and/or deliver a strategy that mitigates a breaking or potential problem across any media. Our hourly rate for additional work will depend on the type of work and the personnel involved, and a tariff that is agreed with the client at the start of the contract.

Every monthly invoice includes an electronic time sheet to give a precise breakdown of costs and any pre-agreed expenses incurred.