CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

STRATEJİK HALKLA İLİŞKİLERDE KRİZ YÖNETİMİ VE VAKA ÇALIŞMALARI

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Abstract

Public relations, has been growing by expanding and improving its application areas. This field with the new technological tools has gained speed. This process of application and the target must be carried out in current and environmentally sound. From this point it needs to be done to be planned strategically. In the community life, there are many application areas of public relations. But crisis management is the most widely referenced in these areas. When encountered a problem, in daily life, public relations applications can be life-saving. Therefore, crisis management in public relations has a very important place. Whether a small local firm or a global firm in times of crisis, PR plays a guiding and solution-oriented role. For this role to be effective a variety of situations involved. Especially communication public relations strategy orbit institutions capable of managing the problem of proactive capabilities in the evaluation of the solutions and market opportunities will win. Should not be forgotten that at this point; If you want to get a sense of reactive crisis proactively on the basis of whether the solution lies in strategic public relations or strategic communication. The issues that should be considered have already been in public relations for decades, but it is started to be used under strategic heading in literature recently. Strategic public relations is the adaptation of the cornerstones of public relations like management, communication and organization to the environment.

In this work, the definition and concepts of crisis management in strategic public relations are explained by literature review. Then the role of public relations in crisis management is tried to be shewed in various case studies.

Keywords: Public Relations, Strategy, Crisis Management, Strategic Public Relations
Öz

Bu çalışmada stratejik halkla ilişkilerde kriz yönetiminin ne olduğu ve kavrulan literatür taramasıyla açıklanmış, daha sonra ise çeşitli örnek olaylarla halkla ilişkilerin kriz yönetimindeki rolü gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Halkla İlişkiler, Strateji, Kriz Yönetimi, Stratejik Halkla İlişkiler

1. Introduction
Since the primitive times human beings seek to find ways of communication with each other. The need of communicate gave rise to many different sources. The communication sources has expanded and changed in time. The advances both in social sciences and technology help the understanding of public relations as a discipline. That discipline controls, rules or changes the relationship among human beings and/or organizations. Even if it is considered as a discipline that is peculiar to some organizations or groups, PR is more than that. It has a responsibility upon people and organizations. It directs PR practitioners to find a better way for solving problems.

Actually PR is in every step of our lives, from our basic conversations with our friends to a professional PR practitioners with organizational decisions. The things it provides is crucial for a company or organizations’s future. A company cannot survive without getting help from PR practitioners. Because a company’s actions are connected with its public and if there is a human connection, communication channels are necessary. PR is the best source that rules the communication channels. It changes, adapts or plans the things that matters for an organization according to the situations. This way of organization is called ‘Strategic’. In PR the use of the term strategic is not old. Actually the usage of the term strategic is for adapting things and situations according to a PR plan. That is what PR practitioners have been trying to do for years. Strategic public relations has the same motivations with the Public relations that in use already. The term is new in literature by guiding things more carefully. The goal of strategic public relations isto understand the environment and act according to its benefit.

PR practitioners have long been dealing with many issues like organization, publicity and crisis management. Every organization has some ups and downs. The downs are dangerous for a company’s future. Because if a company cannot survive over a problem it
affects its reputation. For that reason, an organization needs the help of a PR practitioner to get over the problem. PR practitioners’ ability of management is necessary for solving the problem. There have been many examples of crisis management that save companies from bankrupt. It is the ability of PR practitioners to figure out the reasons and results of a problem. With a successful supervising any crisis can be turned into an opportunity.

In recent years, the concept of crisis management gained importance. The surveys related to crisis management uponorganizations helped PR practitioners to see and understand the concept better. Crisis management in public relations offers the researchers the chance of viewing both the nature of problems and audience. There are many researches on crisis management and public relations role on it. All these guide PR practitioners to follow the correct steps and get over the unwanted situations. In time, with the advent of new surveys and researches both the PR practitioners and companies will benefit from the new techniques of resolving the crisis.

Now, in order to have a better understanding of the subject, it will be beneficial to see the definitions of the concepts and terms.

2. Public Relations

The beginning of the public relations as a professional field is not a new phenomenon. Today, public relations is a branch using various means of new communication. As there are many new definitions expanding day by day, it is difficult to speak of a common one. Among these definitions public relations defined as science, process, occupation, and art. The definition of public relations increases according to its function. The common points of these definitions of public relations can be listed as:

- To adopt a certain behavior for influencing and convincing people,
- Methods that managers apply in order to win the sympathy of the outside world and good faith,
- To adopt the public for the policies followed by the government (Ertekin, 2000).

Considering these public relations can be defined as task management, communication process and influencing mean of public. Establishing new meanings to the public relations is a process since the beginning of this discipline (Güllüoğlu, 2006). Public relations offers many advantages to a company like increasing sales and social protection guard. It helps organizations into their social environment and their relationships between groups providing social and economic development (Grunig & Grunig, 1998).

Asna (1974) described public relations as planned, credible communication effort that is intended to affect the specified target audiences, Jefkins (1995) and Cutlip et al. (1994) a process of planned activities about the company’s activities for the reorganization of work with future exchanges of information with the response from the target audience (Demir, 2011). According to Public Relations World Congress held in Mexico City in 1978, "public relations activities are planned program of activities of the practice of art and social science that analyze trends, predict outcomes, to advise the leaders of the organization, and both organizations and the public interest. This definition has been the most widely accepted definition in the international arena (Karatepe, 2008).

Public relations is startegic conversation. Because of its nature it is wide and most of the time vulnerable to misunderstandings. So, it is difficult to convey only a meaning. The function of Public relations is changing and growing day by day. With the fragmentation of the current media the sources of the public relations increased. Public relations is now everywhere, industries, governments and many nonprofit organizations. Of all these definitions J. Grunig and Hunt’s is the most widely cited definition of public relations.
They consider public relations as the communication and management between two parties, like organization and its publics [http://www.saylor.org/books].

A systematic way of addressing the public relations work coincides with the second half of the 19th century. During this period various propaganda techniques have been tried in political campaigns. In the US Andrew Jackson was the first who addressed the public with an election campaign and the first public relations agency was founded by a former journalist, Ivy Lee in New York (1903), consultation functions in public relations was revealed for the first time by Edward Bernays. Thus, initially in the form of press relations, public relations activities began to take on a professional look in time. Bernays has indicated in his works that with the application of organization’s management units policies publics could be influenced. During World War I and II PR has been used to raise morale and win public support (Asna, 2006). Public relations have gradually started to gain credibility and legitimacy of the profession and the first school of public relations opened at Boston University in 1947 and Edward Bernays gave the first lecture. In 1954, the first ethical codes of the profession has been developed by the American Association of Public Relations (Küçüksaraç, 2008). Today public relations is considered as an integral part of the management.

2.1. Strategic Public Relations

Strategy is a term that comes from the Greek strategia, meaning "generalship." According to Steiner, strategy entered the management literature as a way of referring to what one did to counter a competitor’s actual or predicted moves. Steiner (1979) also points out in his notes that there is very little agreement as to the meaning of strategy in the business world. Some of the definitions then in use to which he pointed include the following:

1. Strategy is that which top management does that is of great importance to the organization.
2. Strategy refers to basic directional decisions, that is, to purposes and missions.
3. Strategy consists of the important actions necessary to realize these directions.
4. Strategy answers the question: What should the organization be doing?
5. Strategy answers the question: What are the ends we seek and how should we achieve them? (Nickols, 2012)

Henry Mintzberg (1994), points out that people use "strategy" in several different ways, the most common being these four:

1. Strategy is a plan, a "how," a means of getting from here to there.
2. Strategy is a pattern in actions over time; for example, a company that regularly markets very expensive products is using a "high end" strategy.
3. Strategy is position; that is, it reflects decisions to offer particular products or services in particular markets.
4. Strategy is perspective, that is, vision and direction.

3. Crisis

Crisis, widely used in human life, organizations, and state issues, can not be exactly defined and generally expressed negativity and uncertainty. Cockram and Van Den Heuvel emphasizes the confusion of concepts by reviewing the work done by many scholars and institutions who are interested in crisis. In Webster’s Dictionary crisis, turning point for better or worse situation, defined by the narrow perspective as to reach a critical stage of the condition. Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer, a more comprehensive and in terms of an institutional point of view the perceived threat of the primary goals of an organization and a high level of uncertainty created specifically as describing the series of crises and unexpected events or non-routine events (Bingöl, 2012).

Crisis, unexpected and can not foreseeable, a quick, hasty answer should be given, by making organization’s prevention and adaptation mechanisms insufficient current
values, goals and assumptions of the stress-threatening situation. In other words, the crisis are intangible events that affect people and organizational processes. Similarly crisis, can be defined as the changes required to ensure adaptation quickly or a more general framework the lack of intervention with threatening circumstances. Globalization and uncertainty confronts us a new paradigm of management and crisis management. This new paradigm requires administrators to make detail plans instead of approaching everyday activities and fully control the events surrounding the organization in a way to adapt to rapid change. Because after the crisis, the interaction between these people, nourishes the roots of innovation(Aslan, Atabey & Yörük, 2009).

According to Brewton(1987), crisis is a serious disruptions encountered in some activities, increase in regulation carried out in the state’s corporate sphere, negative perceptions about the business on public, financial difficulty and using management time inefficiently. Srivastava and Mitroff(1987) accept that the crisis emerging in business threatens the maintaining and the profitability of commercial life. To be mentioned an event of a crisis, the particular situation need to threaten one or more of the major objectives of the organization, allow for a short time of decision and emerge as a surprise(KeownMcMullan, 1997). According to another definition crisis is a tense situation which threatens the high level goals of an organization, sometimes endangering the life of the organization and which require immediate response shown; when the crisis prediction and prevention mechanism of the organization is inadequate(Can, 1997).

3.1 Crisis Management

Since the 1990s, crisis management has gained an increasing importance worldwide. Crisis management, has entered into interest and areas of competence of managers in the public sector, private sector enterprises as well as disease improvement and organizational continuity. Individuals and institutions in society are constantly faced with various risks and uncertainties. The smallest uncertainty that is ignored as negligible could be the start of big negativities for business, employees, society and even the country. Therefore, whether big or small, all business organizations since their establishment should analyze any possible risk and take precautions against them(Murat & Misirli, 2005).

Crisis management of an organization is a systemic evaluation and audit process that an organization runs for preventing crisis upon organization, product, service, production process and employees. In crisis management, being prepared before a crisis occur is an important thing. Crisis management is not a discipline to be learned during work. Crisis management is to prepare an emergency action plan focusing on applications such as infrastructure and public relations. Although crisis management has its own characteristics, it changes according to prevent crises and varies according to the perceptions of the managers. If managers perceive crises as a threat, their success will increase. Because being prepared against crisis, generating a crisis scenario, and review these prepared scenarios by team members, even through simulations doing crisis rehearsals will add a lot to organizations(Aslan, Atabey and Yörük, 2009).

J. Grunig and Repper (1992), claim that focus groups are important for a company to evaluate itself. This way of communication with publics can be helpful especially in time of crisis. When the publics are involved in decision-making process they can actively be involved in company’s decisions. Otherwise company’s communication campaigns would be mere persuasion activities. PR departments role in crisis management is also important. Because companies are vulnerable
to problems and this sensitivity needs to be controlled efficiently. A company can face many crisis like facilities, employees or campaigns. Apart from these, being a part of financial industry there is always a possibility of involving a crisis. The damage can be triggered if the company is not prepared to manage crisis. PR department’s role is very crucial to follow the right steps. The department’s participants should have some fictional scenarios in case of a crisis. Also there should be crisis management binders that included the procedures of crisis handling and emergency contact information and telephone numbers of the members of the department as well as important figures of the company(Akdağ & Arklan,2013). In case of a crisis or emergency situations it should be stressed well who should be call first, who are responsible from particular issues like having contact with people, media, etc. In summary everyone in a crisis situation should know what to do. The responsibility plan is to be clear and up to date.(Sung,2004).

In crisis management, communication, regulation, control, cost, culture, contingency planning, factors such as the complexity and interdependence of systems is important. Crisis management requires certain skills and be able to show a certain tolerance. Crises as it takes the strategic objectives under threat, crisis management is located in the strategic management. Crisis management teams should be trained in terms of both physical and mental(Kash & Darling,1998).

Crisis management has gained an enormous attention for decades. One of the reasons for this is the lost of the financial and reputational gain. Many companies that realized the effective crisis management with their public relations department, focus on alternatives in case of a problem. Here there are some case studies of companies, and organizations who faced serious crisis and how to handle it.

4. CASE STUDIES

Dominos pizza, a dünya çapında food chain, founded in 1960 by Thomas Monaghan in USA. Dominos is the biggest company that serves to houses in the world. As an internationally known company it has more than 10.000 corporate and franchised stores in 70 countries(wikipedia®). Like many other big firms Dominos experienced a fatal crisis which create a tsunami effect upon it. The crisis came out on April, 2009. Two workers uploaded a video on youtube, an online video share site, which has unethical images. As soon as the video uploaded it got 1 million views. The video raised many voices and the company got thousands of mails and phone calls. There are lots of reasons for an organization to face a crisis, like functioning of the organization, management style, the features of the employees. Any of the links within the organization can be a source of the crisis. In that peculiar case of Dominos, the source comes from inside of the organization, the employees. The role of the PR department into solving the crisis is very crucial because it leads all the communication channels and speakers. Before dealing with the crisis there should be some important steps that should be followed carefully. For example, the crisis environment should be checked with the reasons.

Companies like Dominos should be well prepared for any kind of crisis that may show up. It is the PR department that can do any adjustment related to company’s activities. In that case of dominos there were some things that PR department was weak. Firstly, before the crisis came out they should be well informed about previous cases like Burger King and KFC two well known food chains. Burger King had a similar crisis video on youtube (2008) in which an employee had a shower in the kitchen. Also the KFC crisis was not better than this. An employee’s unhygenic behaviours caused crisis. Because of these
examples Dominos should have been careful about its policies related to its internal affairs.

Social media was another obstacle. Because nowadays it is easier to reach any news than ever. This makes PR practitioners have a wide control over online media and environments. The crisis came out in one of the restaurants but more than a million people watched the video all over the world. They couldn’t prevent people from watching it but they could have controlled it according to their advantage. In times of crisis people lose their trust easily so they want someone who has authority to control or change the situation. It was Patrick Doyle, the CEO of Dominos in USA. He uploaded a personal video and apologize on behalf of those two workers. He also promised that this situation will eventually find a solution. As soon as that video comes out the organization and PR department start to rebuild their reputation. The speech involves apology from both the consumers and publics, how they care hygiene and the importance of the confidence that their consumers have towards them. Apart from these the speech doesn’t involve anything bad about the employees. this way the company accepts the fault and shows their sincerity. In that case the video was a successful one. On the organization’s web page an apology was released. There was some mispoints in that apology, too. For example ‘anyone who has camera can do it’ was totally irrelevant and unnecessary. Because instead of establishing the victim image it constitutes the criminal and powerful image. If these words wouldn’t take place it would be better. Despite these problems PR department of Dominos realized something which is very important for the future of the company. The place of social media in their organizational functions. They launched a social media campaign in Twitter. Along with other social media campaigns a positive and new image was aimed. In time it worked and in social media rumors about Dominos lessened. PR department organized social responsibility campaigns which helped Dominos to restore its image again. This was a successful action because after that they opened 30 new restaurants (Kesen,2012).

In sum, the crisis that Dominos faced was a difficult one but the strategies that PR practitioners followed were useful. They could see and control the situation well. Also the place of social media was realized. The public relations department started to use social media more actively than ever. It also showed the company how powerful the consumers are. Thanks to technology consumers can question and change the way company acts. This crisis brought more than it took. Dominos as a company learned that it should be careful about its employees, create a bond between each other and have strategic crisis scenarios. Through this crisis, Dominos see the reaction that it should give with the positive response they received after the apology video and e-mail.

4.2. Case Study 2 - Bird Flu Crisis- Avian Flu (2005)

Bird flu is a virus origin deadly animal disease. The H5N1 variant virus can kill the people. Fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches are the symptoms of the illness. Symptoms show itself in 3 -4 days, 2 -3 hours after contact with the disease. In Turkey, the first avian flu case was in an open farm in 2005. The causative agent, the H5N1 virus had been identified by Bornova laboratory and was confirmed in England-EU Reference Laboratory in Weybridge. A total of 54 provinces are affected by the disease by 2006. As compensation for culling poultry in the epidemic of 2006, about 28.15 million YTL and to purchase materials and other necessities, including 3,600,000 YTL, total public cost was approximately 31.75 million YTL.

The first step in the crises communication process is to take crisis signal. If these
signal are not received or not cared it would be impossible to cope with the crisis that comes out. The most successful example of managed crisis in Turkey is avian flu crisis. Actually white meat producers long before taking different signals for their industry, come together to be prepared for potential crises. Because before the bird flu crisis in order to protect chickens from disease there is another crisis, statements about overuse of antibiotics, in November 2004. The effects of this crisis lasted until April, 2005. The industry that survived this crisis with various communication activities, but still it was not enough because it was producing 2 million chickens until October 8, after this date, it has reduced its daily production by 1.5 million. These figures together with experienced second bird flu crisis declined to 1.2 million. White meat producers living such a significant financial loss taking professional support in crisis management, in the pre-crisis established “Healthy Chicken Information Platform”. They have endeavored to adopt the single point of contact in the central administration policy. Healthy Chicken Information Platform (STBP) has been established to raise awareness about healthy chicken meat production and consumption, to emphasize the importance of chicken meat for a healthy and balanced diet, to promote the international systems of food safety and standards in all stages of production (www.sagliklitavuk.org). Healthy Chicken Information Platform is an important step in terms of crisis preparation and prevention step. The events came up for the first time in television news, 08 October 2005. The news was published in print media and on average 80-90 days in the following week.

The first step to get the crisis under control is the determination of the spokesperson. The spokesperson should be well informed about all the details, be prepared in front of the media, safe position and clear approach positively affecting reputation contributes to the formation of trust (Peltekoğlu, 2004). The importance of that communication in the bird flu crisis came forward once more with the crisis. The communication strategies in line with the central government chose Zuhal Dastan STBP Chief Executive as spokesman to enable communication with the environment. The messages can be transferred in the event of crisis, should be capable of affecting the audience to the intended direction. Bird flu epidemic has emerged especially in unbranded products. Therefore, the chicken products produced in integrated facilities was emphasized that there is no risk. As the reasons of the illness, the source and how it transmits are wondered, the messages are organized in a way to answer these questions. The most important brand communication strategy implemented against the crisis is Healthy Chicken Information Platform’s “100% Safe” campaign. The iconic journalist Ugur Dundar with his television program about “food hygiene”, support the campaign voluntarily. During the crisis, informing the press fast and accurate can be considered as the platform’s the most careful step. Informative letters were sent to columnist who writes about the flu. Intensive visit programs were prepared to media (Suher, 2013).

As in many other crisis management situations in bird flu case companies act using media and communication channels perfectly. They explained everything that they may face. They prepared scenarios for several other problems related to the crisis. And the most important one was the foundation of a platform which offers trust to the consumers. With written and verbal explanations the PR departments provide the consumers the chance of being informed.

4.3. Case Study 3- Johnson & Johnson’s cyanide-laced Tylenol capsules (1982)

Tylenol, the leading pain-killer medicine in the United States at the time, faced a tremendous crisis. Seven people died after taking extra-strength Tylenol capsules. The news of this incident traveled quickly and was the cause of a massive, nationwide pan-
ic. It was reported that an unknown suspect/sput 65 milligrams of deadly cyanide into Tylenol capsules, 10,000 more than what is necessary to kill a human. Once the connection was made between the Tylenol capsules and the reported deaths, public announcements were made warning people about the consumption of the product. Johnson & Johnson faced with the dilemma of the best way to deal with the problem without destroying the reputation of the company and its most profitable product. The public relations department’s decisions were very important and critical. Public relations campaigns started as soon as the deaths came out. It was important because in times of crisis especially related to health issues, the faster is the better. According to the plan, consumers’ safety came first before sales or other financial concerns. The company alerted consumers not to consume any type of Tylenol product. PR department also announced the news with media channels. Johnson & Johnson, stopped both the production and the advertising of the products. After that the company recalled all Tylenol capsules from the market. The recall included approximately 31 million bottles of Tylenol, with a retail value of more than 100 million dollars. (Broom, Center, Cutlip, 381).

When compared with previous cases, it was unusual because many other companies when faced such a crisis never accept their failure and try to find some reasonable excuses. Instead Johnson & Johnson, accept their fault and tried to find solutions despite the risk of harming their reputation in front of consumers and publics.

On the other hand, the company got positive comments for its actions by the media especially for their socially responsible actions. The company also cooperated with police departments to find out the person who laced the Tylenol capsules and they could help prevent further tamperings. When companies like Johnson & Johnson, face a crisis that risk human life both the media channels and publics start to worry and it is not easy to calm them. But with a successful PR plan the company survived this crisis successfully. Many media channels praised Johnson & Johnson. "Johnson & Johnson has effectively demonstrated how a major business ought to handle a disaster" (Knight, 1982). The Washington Post cited many incidents where public relations programs at large companies failed in crisis situations. They applauded Johnson & Johnson for being honest with the public. The Kansas City Times published an article on November 12, 1982, by Rick Atkinson, that was comprised of interviews with top executives at Johnson & Johnson shortly after the Tylenol crisis. James E. Burke, chairman of the board of the corporation at the time of the tamperings, said that the poisonings put everyone at Johnson & Johnson into shock. He did say though, that some of the initial public relations decisions pertaining to this case were easy to make. All the efforts to restore the reputation was held carefully. For example after some time, as people lose their faith towards the product the company sought new ways of gaining it back. So company started $2.50-off coupons that were good towards the purchase of any Tylenol product. The coupons could be obtained by consumers calling a special toll-free number. This way of marketing tactic worked well.

The public relations decisions helped the company a lot but according to the Lawrence G. Foster. Foster, Corporate Vice President of Johnson & Johnson, the PR department never thought of such a tragic scenario. For that reason he chose the ‘credo’ that was written by Robert Wood Johnson, the company's leader for 50 years. His credo was full of PR strategies which Foster use for that crisis. According to the credo it is the consumers that matters, and if the company stays true to its responsibilities the business would flourish. Johnson & Johnson’s public relations pro-
gram worked well with the complete support from the management. The decision was to cooperate all media channels which help the company to restore its image. This PR program both protected the company and got full support by the media. Johnson & Johnson was able to recover quickly and painlessly from possibly the greatest crisis ever to hit the pharmaceutical industry (Kaplan, 1998).

4.4. Case study 4- PepsiCo’s can tampering rumors (1993)

A couple from Tacoma, Washington claimed that while looking for a prize winning word in their Diet Pepsi, they found a syringe in 1993. The couple reported their findings and turned over the product to their lawyer. Consumers’ complaints that they were finding syringes, hypodermic needles and other objects in cans of Pepsi-Cola continued to mount across the country, but the nation’s chief food and drug regulator expressed doubt that many of the reports would prove valid (Tochlin, 1993). There were many fears aroused like AIDS, after the needles found in cans. Even in some states individual market owners have pulled Pepsi products from their shelves.

The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) alerted the consumers to check their Diet Pepsi and “empty the contents of the can into a glass or cup before drinking.” The official, Dr. David A. Kessler, the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, said Federal investigators had been unable to confirm even one case of tampering among dozens of such reports that the Food and Drug Administration had received. As soon as the news aroused public relations team was on work. They knew the best way of fighting with such kind of crisis is to use media in their advantage. As opposed to Johnson & Johnson’s cyanide-laced Tylenol the managers thought it would be useless to recall the products. With the CEO the public relations department focused on how to deal with the problem. For example, video news releases were created to be distributed through satellite across the country—it was aired on over 400 stations. There were some obstacles, false claims, while the company was trying to solve the problem. The public relations department firstly need to analyze the claims. For that reason, the company managers appeared on tv, speaking about the consequences of making these sorts of claims, which could be five years in prison and/or a $250,000 fine. Christopher J. Burnette, 25, of Williamsport, PA, became the first person arrested and charged with making false claims of hypodermic hysteria. In total, The FDA arrested 53 people in some twenty states for lying about consumer product tampering. None of the people arrested was able to show that Pepsi was at fault. However, not everyone who filed a claim was arrested for filing false claims.

Moreover public relations team released a video in which FDA Commissioner David Kessler saying that the FDA had not been able to identify any cases of actual tampering with the product. Also, the CEO Weatherup narrated the piece saying, “PepsiCo Inc. declared that its needle-in-the-can scare was over… As America now knows, those stories about Diet Pepsi were a hoax. Plain and simple, not true.”

As in PepsiCo case, for a company there is always that risk of facing a tremendous crisis. Even if the company has no fault in this crisis, rival companies or some people who likes to get attention might cause serious rumors that can affect the company’s image. So the public relations departments should always be prepared against any attack whether their fault in it or not.

5. Conclusion

Strategic planning has been an important issue that public relations practitioners dealing with. Especially in times of crisis public relations department’s plans are substantial. Any company or organization can experience a crisis in their business. The thing that is important is not preventing but being ready to encounter the problems. Public relations department’s have great responsibility
towards both the company and its consumers, even publics. Every plan should consist some precaution along with crisis scenarios. Every person should know his/her resposibility. Building a consensus should be aimed. An organization with a strong public relation department can survive against any kind of crisis.

While fighting against crisis there is one thing which rules every source and, mostly, public. It is the communication channels. With media any attention towards anything can be controlled. Publics with their reaction can be organized and managed. People tend to believe what they are told. Especially TV, radio, Internet and other written communication sources have an effect upon publics. From the examples above it can be inferred that in any crisis most of the companies survive with the help and support of the media. Nowadays it is easier to get a news from a different part of the world. Current social media sources make it a lot easier to reach knowledge. The danger of it is there are lots of anonymous sources that can release wrong news and create fake sources. A successful public relations department should be careful and also masterful to lead the social media. In todays world crises are not something new they were in the past and they will be in the future. The point is that with a successful strategic public relation plan any crisis can be overcomed. For that purpose public relation departments should be well informed about the audience it address and should be an expert on communication sources. The developments in the field will provide new visions related to crisis management and PR literature will enriched with these new sources.

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