

▶ crisis situations

▶ damage control

6.1 About business Crisis management

Discussion

1 Work in small groups. Do the quiz. Then turn to page 118 to check your answers.

What would you do in these crisis situations?

1 A psychopath puts cyanide in your company's paracetamol capsules; several customers die, and you have to recall 31 million bottles of the product worth over \$100 million.

- relaunch the product under a new name
- scrap the product and the brand
- relaunch the brand with tamper-proof packaging

2 A customer complains they found a human finger in your company's chilli con carne.

- recall the product immediately
- pay the customer compensation
- deny any responsibility

3 A host on your company's provocative radio show makes racist remarks.

- have him make a public apology, but let him continue to host the show
- fire him and cancel the show
- fire him, but continue the show with a new, less provocative host

4 A company which is obviously guilty of wrongdoing asks your PR company to help.

- take the contract
- refuse the contract
- take the contract, but charge double your normal fee

Reading

2 Read the extracts from Dezenhall's book, *Damage Control*. Answer the questions.

- What did the crises cost?
 - a leading cell phone manufacturer
 - Merck
 - Perrier
 - Audi
 Why does Dezenhall refer to them?
- How does Dezenhall argue these concepts are relevant for crisis survivors?

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|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 <i>strong leaders</i> | 4 <i>self knowledge</i> | 7 <i>guarantees</i> |
| 2 <i>climate shifts</i> | 5 <i>luck</i> | 8 <i>baby steps</i> |
| 3 <i>pain thresholds</i> | 6 <i>feel-good gurus</i> | 9 <i>the little guy</i> |
- According to Dezenhall, how has the way we judge a crisis changed?
- What is the political model of crisis management?
- How does Dezenhall see the media in general and TV in particular?

Glossary PAGE 156

canard
feel-good guru
pit bull
whistle-blower

Listening for gist

3  2:11 Listen to an interview with Jack French, journalist at *The Spin Monitor*. According to French, is Eric Dezenhall's reputation in the PR industry justified?

Listening for detail

4  2:11 Listen again and answer the questions.

- Explain the meanings and connotations of the following descriptions: *a colourful character*, *the pit bull of public relations*, *brass-knuckled*, *Machiavellian*.
- As well as PR, what else is Dezenhall known for?
- Did Dezenhall attack or defend the following? The chemicals industry, the precautionary principle, Greenpeace, the Open Access movement, Exxon Mobile, the Publishers' Association.
- What does French tell us about Qorvis Communications and Sitrick & Co.?
- How successful is Dezenhall's damage control strategy, according to French?
- What two reasons does French give to explain Dezenhall's discretion about his work on behalf of his firm's clients?

Discussion

5 In small groups, discuss the questions.

- In our culture, whoever attacks, wins, whoever defends, loses.* Is this a sad indictment of American culture, a more global phenomenon, or a misleading exaggeration?
- Do you think there are circumstances in which PR firms should defend companies that pollute the environment, exploit workers or market defective products?

Internet research

Search for the keywords *bad crisis management*. Share your stories and vote for the best example of how not to handle a crisis.