

20 WAYS TO BUILD, PROTECT & STRENGTHEN YOUR REPUTATION

Proven Strategies & Tactics to Support Your Brand & Company During the COVID-19 Crisis



**YOUR ROADMAP
TO WEATHER THE
STORM & THRIVE!**



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To the Health of Your Brand & Organization!



As we face the localized impact of COVID-19's global public health crisis, it is vital that leaders recognize that these are times that can either build up or tear down your and your brand's reputation. It's your choice and will be dictated by whether a proactive or reactive strategy is implemented.

For some leaders, this may be the first major crisis you have faced in your executive post. For others, this may be another *notch* on your crisis management belt. Regardless of what camp you are in, I can assure you from my more than two decades of crisis management

work, that every crisis is its own beast – and must be planned for and addressed in that manner.

I have helped many organizations and leaders find reputational opportunity in the face of adversity – and to be clear, that does not mean being opportunistic and taking advantage of people!

What I mean is that these are times when leaders have the opportunity to draw closer to their customers and employees.

There are opportunities to become more than a service provider, an association organization, or an entertainment destination.

These are times when you can become more than the product or service you deliver or provide. You can become a resource of comfort, understanding, healing, inspiration, and solutions, that will deliver huge reputational dividends both during and after a crisis.

Many of you have already begun to implement customer and employee Social Distancing protocols. For those that do not have internal systems in place, it's easy for this to become a follow-the-leader scenario.

But remember, your organization is not a follow-the-leader brand, is it? Of course not.

To the Health of Your Brand & Organization!

Below is a **20-point crisis resource** for you and your team to review and use. I'd urge you to consider how you can implement this in your own way to build, protect, and strengthen your reputation and, ultimately, your business.

I broke this resource into two key buckets as the majority of crisis work falls within these two areas of work – *communication and customer service* - and encompass a large percentage of key audiences to address.

To be clear, this list should not take the place of your company's crisis management plan.

Rather, it should serve as a resource and reminder for the key elements that can impact your reputation and business in the face of adversity.

How you and your organization manage through a crisis – both internally and externally – will dictate how your business will emerge and the kind of relational equity you will have created to not only survive, but thrive once the crisis subsides.

Please let me know if I can be a resource to you or your team related to messaging or developing proactive, reputation-building strategies!

I'd be honored to help you weather this storm and emerge stronger and more connected to your customers, employees, and key stakeholders!

Keep digging, friends! We are in this together!



Communication

1. ***Never speculate during a crisis situation*** to your employees or customers; it is acceptable, when questioned, to say that you/your team are gathering information to ensure it is accurate. Then, you must deliver on this as soon as you can.

2. ***Media training for one, designated representative*** must be done to ensure that key messages are effectively delivered and best represent the brand and its values. Those messages could include your company's safety protocols, customer service channels, working with local health authorities, etc.

3. ***Regular internal employee communication*** is absolutely critical to snuff out rumors. Remember that speculation breeds in the absence of information. Senior leadership should set up and use internal communications channels and alert your employees that leadership will be providing updates, perhaps daily or weekly.

4. ***Social Media is a vital channel for communication*** and should be used to deliver updates for customers or other key stakeholders. Ensure that you have a senior executive reviewing all corporate Social Media posts and that customer messages, replies, or posts are answered in a timely manner (that means within 2-4 hours).

5. ***Demonstrate confidence in your organization*** (both internally and externally) by knowing how your team is positioned, trained, and ready to deal with the crisis and continue to deliver the best customer service they can. This doesn't mean that false claims are made about preparations. Rather, it's about illustrating how your team is constantly connected, incorporating new methods of business solutions, and communicating with customers.

Customer Service

- 1. Proactively create a list of questions** that you believe your customers will ask and develop your answers so that your messaging is consistent. There are few things as frustrating than asking two different customer service reps the same question and getting two different answers!
- 2. Daily message training for your customer-facing teams** will be important to keeping your customers and key stakeholders informed and confident in how you are handling the crisis and supporting their needs. As well, to let them know that your team is focused on progress and forward movement and solutions.
- 3. Crisis-specific training will better position your company** and showcase how you are proactively dealing with any health screening or enhancing cleaning measures as well as business continuity plans. Those messages could include frequency of cleaning, new levels of cleaning methods, etc. These should be very specific and senior-executive approved messages.
- 4. Train/review active listening skills with your team.** Just as every crisis is different, so is each of your stakeholders' and customers' needs. It's important that your customer service team listens for cues in each customer conversation for ways to provide enhanced and personalized support or opportunities. Those cues could include the pace of their speech, pitch of their voice, special dates, family experiences, travel issues, customers having to work late, etc. Listen for the pain points!

Customer Service

5. Customer service fatigue is real during times of crisis! If you are experiencing high customer service calls, ensure that your service team is allowed regular ‘decompression’ breaks so that they can be present and fresh with their customers versus overwhelmed and frustrated – the customer will immediately know!

6. Surprise and delight your customers in times of crisis by brainstorming a list of value service additions, after-hours support, in-home service, flexible rescheduling of events, etc. that could be extended and demonstrate your true concern for your customers. This is where you can build significant customer loyalty, Social Media Word of Mouth support, and reputational distinction!



Nine Bonus Reputation-Building Points

1. **Follow through on what you say you will do.**
2. **Never overpromise, but always overdeliver!**
3. **Identify ways that your company will build customer and employee trust during the crisis.**
4. **Do not speculate (I mentioned this earlier, but it bears stating again!).**
5. **Continue key constituent communication during *and* after the crisis subsides.**
6. **Schedule a post-crisis meeting for leadership team to discuss lessons learned, what worked, what didn't, and how you can continue to serve your customers.**
7. **How will this crisis help your team identify new ways to leverage technology to improve or re-create customer experiences or delivery systems?**
8. **The customer doesn't care how long your team has worked (sorry!); it's always about the customer first; your customer service team must keep the person on the other side of the line or virtual chat front and center!**
9. **Leaders have all eyes on them. Your demeanor, attitude, language, and body language will set the tone for the rest of your team!**

About Mike Mooney

It would be easy to say that Mike's career has been going in circles for the last 25 years in the motorsports industry.

Mike has built a reputation for creating brand, athlete, and sports property distinction by launching and leading award-winning marketing and communications campaigns. Mike has represented many highly regarded brands, such as Mercedes-Benz, 3M, Tylenol, Walmart, Eli Lilly, and Fifth Third Bank.

He is also recognized for his work in crisis and reputation management, having led dozens of crisis recovery efforts over his career.

Mike now uses his extensive public relations, reputation management, and executive leadership experiences as a speaker to educate, train, and coach leaders, entrepreneurs, and business owners to proactively shift the way they value, manage, and build their brands and reputations.

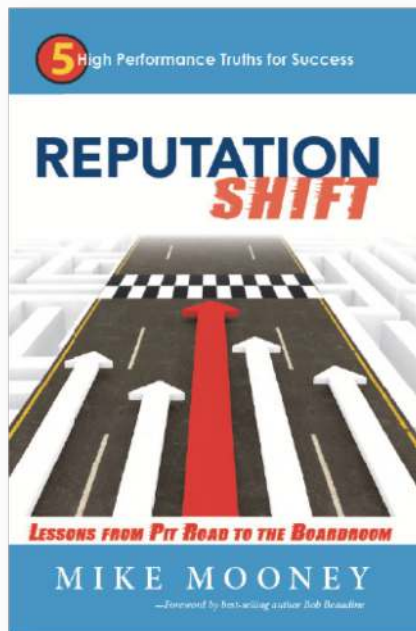
His breakthrough book, *Reputation Shift – Lessons from Pit Road to the Boardroom*, delivers practical and ready-to-use personal branding and reputation-building strategies for people who want to ensure personal and professional success.



“We all earn our reputations every single day. What did you earn today?”

– Mike Mooney

LET'S CONNECT



 @Mike_Mooney

 @Mike_Mooney

 www.MikeMooney.com

 Mike@MikeMooney.com

 704.361.9499

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