

Turning Crisis into Opportunity: TAT Recognizr

How to change the buzz and turn a communications crisis into a public relations bonanza.



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CASE STUDY

Turning Crisis Into Opportunity: TAT Recognizr

Situation:

- The Astonishing Tribe (TAT), a Swedish software technology and design company, had introduced a prototype augmented reality tool called Recognizr that allows two individuals to identify each other using facial recognition technology on their mobile devices. Both individuals have to personally subscribe to a service allowing that recognition before it can take place.
- After the product was displayed at Mobile World Congress, a well-read news tabloid in the United Kingdom began running false information about the software, labeling it “a stalker’s dream.”
- As soon as this story ran, large and credible media outlets got wind of it and began contacting TAT for interviews.



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Objectives:

- **Calysto set out to change the conversation and turn the negative media story into a positive one for TAT.** When the crisis hit, the Calysto team kicked into high gear and developed a strategy for TAT designed to change the crisis into an opportunity for the company.

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Strategies/Tactics:

- **First and foremost, attempt to avert the crisis.**
- **When crisis strikes, get the truth out as fast as possible.**
- **Immediately conduct crisis media training.**
- **Take advantage of the opportunity to talk with credible news media.**
- **Make sure you change the focus of the stories published by credible media outlets.**
- **Build the buzz by touting the positive coverage.**

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Strategies/Tactics:

- **First and foremost, attempt to avert the crisis.** Calysto became aware that a story was planned by a well-read U.K.-based news tabloid publication that tended to put a negative, sensationalized slant on articles. To try to avert the crisis, Calysto immediately contacted the CEO of TAT by phone to craft messaging to deliver to the reporter.
 - Calysto crafted language to send to the publication, including a quote from TAT on the company's concern about protecting privacy issues. The language was then emailed to the reporter before his deadline.
 - Unfortunately, when the article was published, it told a sensationalized story of partial truths and lies about the software being a stalker's dream and did not include any of the information provided by Calysto.



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Strategies/Tactics:

- **When crisis strikes, get the truth out as fast as possible.** After the misleading article was published, Calysto then quickly set the story straight.
 - Calysto posted a response on the tabloid's Web site within two hours after the story ran that pointed out the inaccuracies and provided the real facts – and included a TAT quote reflecting the company's concern about protecting privacy issues.
 - Calysto posted a news statement on TAT's Web site describing the software in detail, including its privacy safeguards (this statement did not address the negative coverage but simply outlined more information about the software).

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Strategies/Tactics:

- **Immediately conduct crisis media training.** Knowing that credible media sources would ask TAT's CEO for interviews, Calysto began media training the CEO specifically on how to answer questions on the privacy issue.
 - Calysto created a checklist of messaging points and a response to the media for TAT to help them address any further direct contacts from the media.
 - Media training covered techniques like bridging back to the positive messages about the company and its software.
 - Calysto created a Q&A that gave the CEO practice questions and answers.
 - Calysto also monitored and provided coaching for the first few interviews until the CEO got the messages down pat.



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Strategies/Tactics:

- **Take advantage of the opportunity to talk with credible news media.** TAT's CEO agreed to be interviewed by several media outlets that were covering the story, including BBC and Fox News.
 - To further prepare the CEO for those interviews, Calysto created briefing memos for TAT that outlined the focus of the shows that were covering the story and guidance on how to answer questions posed during the interview.

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Strategies/Tactics:

- **Make sure you change the focus of the stories published by credible media outlets.** Calysto worked closely with the producer of Fox News before the CEO was interviewed to change a potentially confrontational interview into a friendly one that focused on augmented reality technology rather than the evils of stalking.
 - Initially, Fox was planning on taking a stalker software angle with the story. However, after discussions with the Calysto team, Fox News chose not to take a negative slant. The story ended up being a short and factual discussion of the product that negated concerns about Recognizr being stalker software.
 - Calysto also provided recommended talking points to Fox News, and Calysto coached the TAT CEO on these.

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Strategies/Tactics:

- **Build the buzz by touting the positive coverage.** Once TAT received positive coverage in both BBC and Fox News, Calysto posted a news release on the TAT Web site touting it.
 - The headline read: “**Recognizr covered by FOX News and SC Magazine**” and the lead of the release began with this paragraph: “Buzz about the new social networking tool, Recognizr, has swept the internet since it was displayed as a prototype at Mobile World Congress two weeks ago. Fox News, BBC, SC Magazine and other well respected news sources are now covering the application, filling in some of the details people all over the world are asking.”
 - Both Calysto and TAT did follow-up media outreach activities to interested media outlets, using the messaging points that stressed TAT’s concerns with privacy safeguards and pointed out the positive coverage on the software. Negative press was ignored – and basically defused and forgotten as the true information was disseminated.



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Results:

- **TAT received positive coverage in respected news outlets such as BBC and Fox News (which combined reach a potential audience of more than 250 million people) within 48 hours after the negative story ran in the U.K. tabloid.**
- **Thanks to Calysto's quick response, the inaccuracies in the tabloid story were not repeated in other publications.** As an example, the tabloid's coverage of the TAT software was covered in a well-respected security magazine, SC Magazine, and SC Magazine quoted the response that TAT had posted on the tabloid's Web site word-for-word.



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Results:

- **TAT is still receiving positive coverage** based on Calysto's success in changing the buzz surrounding this story. Several months after the tabloid story ran, TAT Recognizr continues to be featured in stories running in large, well-respected publications such as The Huffington Post, CNN Online and the Financial Times.

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Turning Crisis Into Opportunity: Examples of Positive TAT Recognizr Coverage

THE
HUFFINGTON
POST

B | B | C

CNN Tech

SC
MAGAZINE
FOR IT SECURITY PROFESSIONALS

HomeBiss
Crunching Technology While Making A
Living From Internet Marketing

FOX
NEWS
.com
Fair & Balanced

FT .com
FINANCIAL TIMES

Q8LIFE'S WEBLOG

guardian.co.uk

TheObserver

Gary In The Clouds

All You Need Is A Browser

BLACKWEB 2.0

TelcoJobsBLOGGERS.com

S
The Perfect Family Vehicle.
SunSentinel.com

tat
THE ASTONISHING TRIBE

CellPhones

Cellular phone showcase. A review of the latest mobile phone models.

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