

Jordan-Meier, J. (2011). *The four stages of highly effective crisis management: how to manage the media in the digital age*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Reviewed by: [Margie Comrie](#)

Writing on crisis management proliferates, perhaps because of its appeal beyond practitioners, academics and students. However, a practical book on crisis communication encompassing Internet and social media is needed and it's a brave author who tackles this constantly expanding area. Whether Jordan-Meier's book fulfils its promise is another matter. It contains much useful material but manages to be both crowded and yet lack sufficient depth and explanation. Although the author knows her material, her editor, or perhaps the standardised sizing of modern book publishing, did her no favours.

Jordan-Meier divides her book into five sections backed by ten appendices. The text is also laced with case studies, boxes and bulleted lists. The opening section - six chapters in 45 pages - covers what is a crisis, mainstream and social media, media ethics and Twitter. Jordan-Meier reiterates how social media have raised the stakes for crisis communication, adding pressure for much faster, more open, humane and engaged responses. Unfortunately, this is where ruthless editing would provide a stronger foundation for the rest of the book. She supplies a blizzard of examples but often repeats the same points. Chapter One does not clearly define a crisis or help the practitioner/student identify the many types of crises. Further, the importance of planning, central to the chapter, is not addressed (although Appendix D offers a one-page model). Chapter Five, media ethics, is similarly inadequate. However, the Victoria Bushfires case study's (p. 12) points on hyperlocal news, the media's use of crowdsourcing, and the section on Twitter, are all helpful.

In section two, Jordan-Meier discusses patterns of media reporting during a crisis, identifying four stages: fact finding, unfolding drama, blame, and resolution and fallout. For each stage, she outlines what might be happening, what the media are likely to do, and what media managers should do. Section three covers spokespeople, discussing pros and cons of using the CEO, whether CEOs should use social media, what qualities make for a good spokesperson, how to use operational and other experts, and the role of frontline employees and of media training.

Section four, media interviews, is perhaps the strongest. While techniques such as bridging and how to deal with awkward questions - are not new, they are well presented. The author adds sensible comments on email and Twitter interviews, and how to treat bloggers.

Section five - communication rules and tools - would be better interwoven into earlier parts of the book. Jordan-Meier begins with 'Why Communicate', a chapter covering the main questions that need to be answered to inform and engage key audiences during a crisis, and providing tips on using social media. This is followed by a chapter on 'What to Communicate', giving the timing and content of the first and further media statements (with examples). Jordan-Meier then considers the role and elements of apologies, before a chapter which picks up on points made earlier on the importance of positive language.

Chapter 29 certainly should be earlier in the book as it explains and describes social media tools, then discusses the language to be used and basic rules of engagement for web messages, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, blogs, LinkedIn, Digg, Flickr and Wikipedia. This chapter also discusses social media releases with their embedded links, and the potential of social media newsrooms, and concludes with a section on what tool to use when. The final chapter discusses monitoring with helpful comments on where to start.

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