

REALITIES BEYOND US Being creative while communicating during a crisis is as critical as understanding the many stakeholders affected by the crisis. Continuous relationship building with government and regulatory bodies, issue management and environmental scanning, and dedicated tracking and study of laws and regulations are needed. Crisis communication needs to be grounded and realistic, especially when the variables affecting the situation are beyond our control, such as regulations and court decisions. The judgment (much like the clinical eye for physicians) on whether to respond to negative stories—whether it would clear the issue and put the company in a position of strength or whether it would start an unproductive word war—is a discernment that comes over time. The balance has to be achieved, the company stance must be communicated, and the stakeholder support must be maintained. Strong ties and constant dialogue with regulatory bodies are activities to be nurtured. A history of compliance with regulations is the best way to nurture this relationship and prove the company's professionalism and responsibility as a business and good corporate citizen.