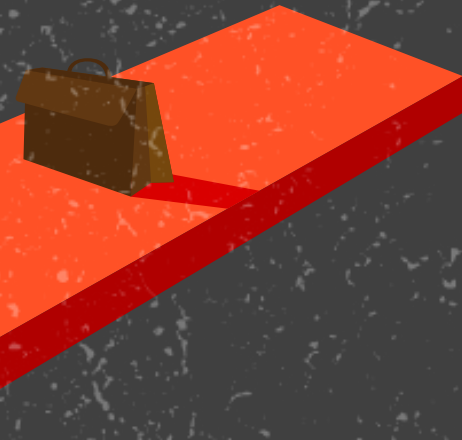


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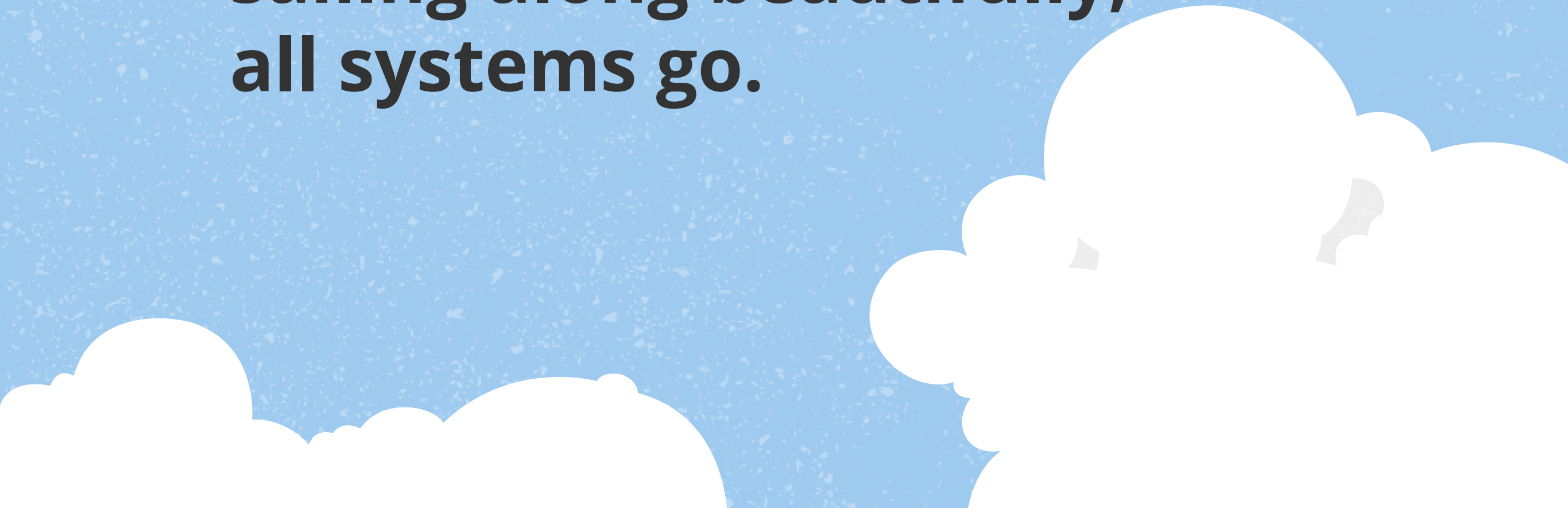
Crisis Communications:

Lessons from the Biggest
Blunders and Best Rebounds



**So often they come
out of nowhere.**

**One minute, you're
sailing along beautifully,
all systems go.**



And the next...



The background is a vibrant, abstract pattern of stylized flames in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The flames are depicted with smooth, flowing lines and a grainy texture, creating a sense of intense heat and movement. The colors transition from bright yellow at the edges to deep red in the center of the flame shapes.

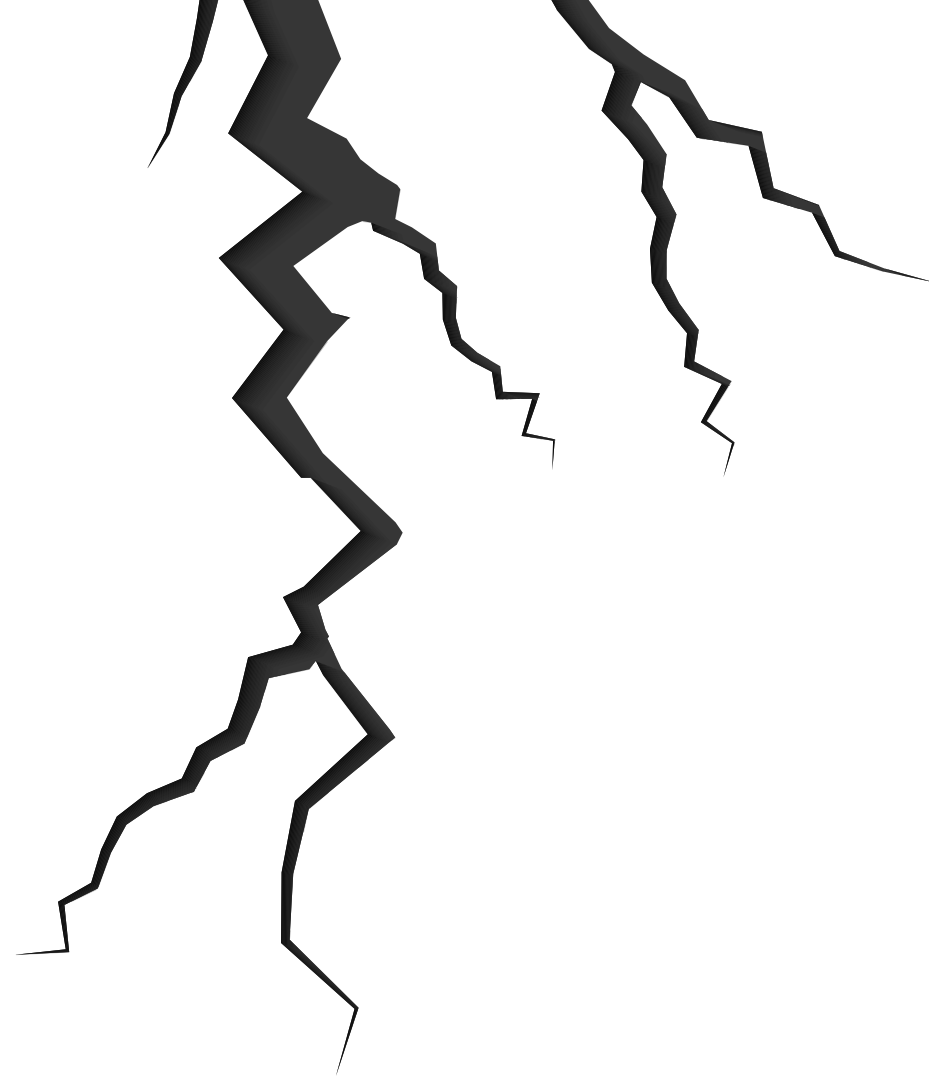
**...it's like the whole
world's on fire.**



**Journalists are banging
down your door, the social
convo is getting well out
of hand, and negative
coverage is pouring in.**

**Congratulations,
you officially
have a **crisis**.**





**Now what are you
going to do about it?**

**The Arthur W. Page Society —
a bastion of PR education and
enrichment — lists 7 principles
of crisis management.**

The **Arthur W. Page Society —
a bastion of PR education and
enrichment — lists 7 principles
of crisis management.**

Principles that apply as much in today's digital world of fake news and information overload as they did during Page's lifetime.



Tell the truth:



Tell the truth:

Be open and honest about exactly what's happening, and refrain at all costs from doing anything that might muddy the waters.

2 Prove it with action:

2 *Prove it with action:*

Public perception of an enterprise is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says. Act accordingly.

3 Listen to all stakeholders:

3 *Listen to all stakeholders:*

You need to understand what the public wants and needs — and why people are upset.

4. Manage for tomorrow:

4. *Manage for tomorrow:*

The sun will rise again — best you prepare for it. Anticipate public reaction and work to generate goodwill.

5 Conduct PR as if the whole enterprise depends on it:

5 *Conduct PR as if the whole enterprise depends on it:*

Because it does.

6 Realize an enterprise's true character is expressed by its people

6 *Realize an enterprise's true character is expressed by its people*

Every employee — active or retired — is a representative. Support each employee's capability and desire to be an honest and knowledgeable ambassador.

7 *Remain calm, patient,
and good-humored:*

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and good-humored:*

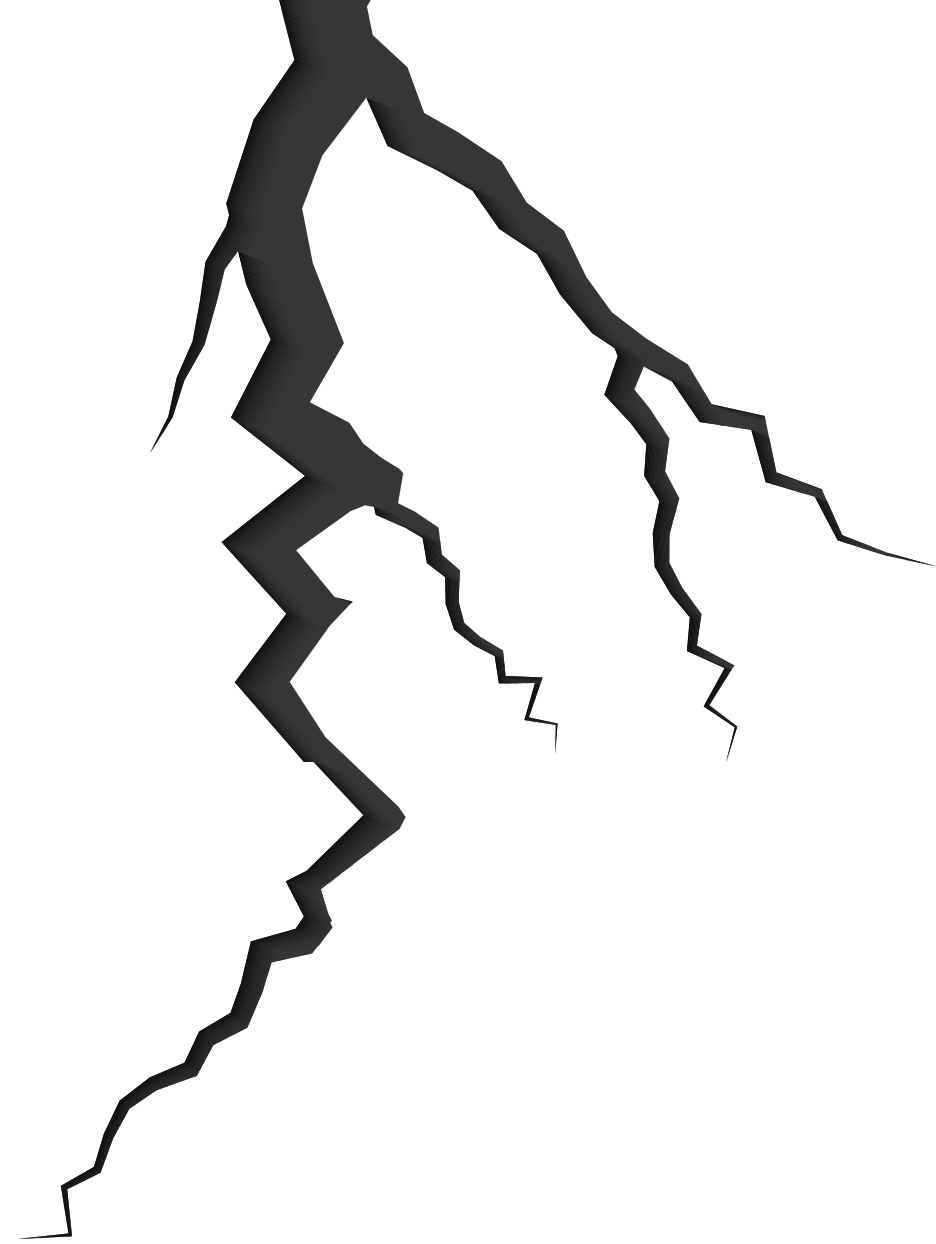
**They say cool heads
communicate best.**

A crisis is “a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.”

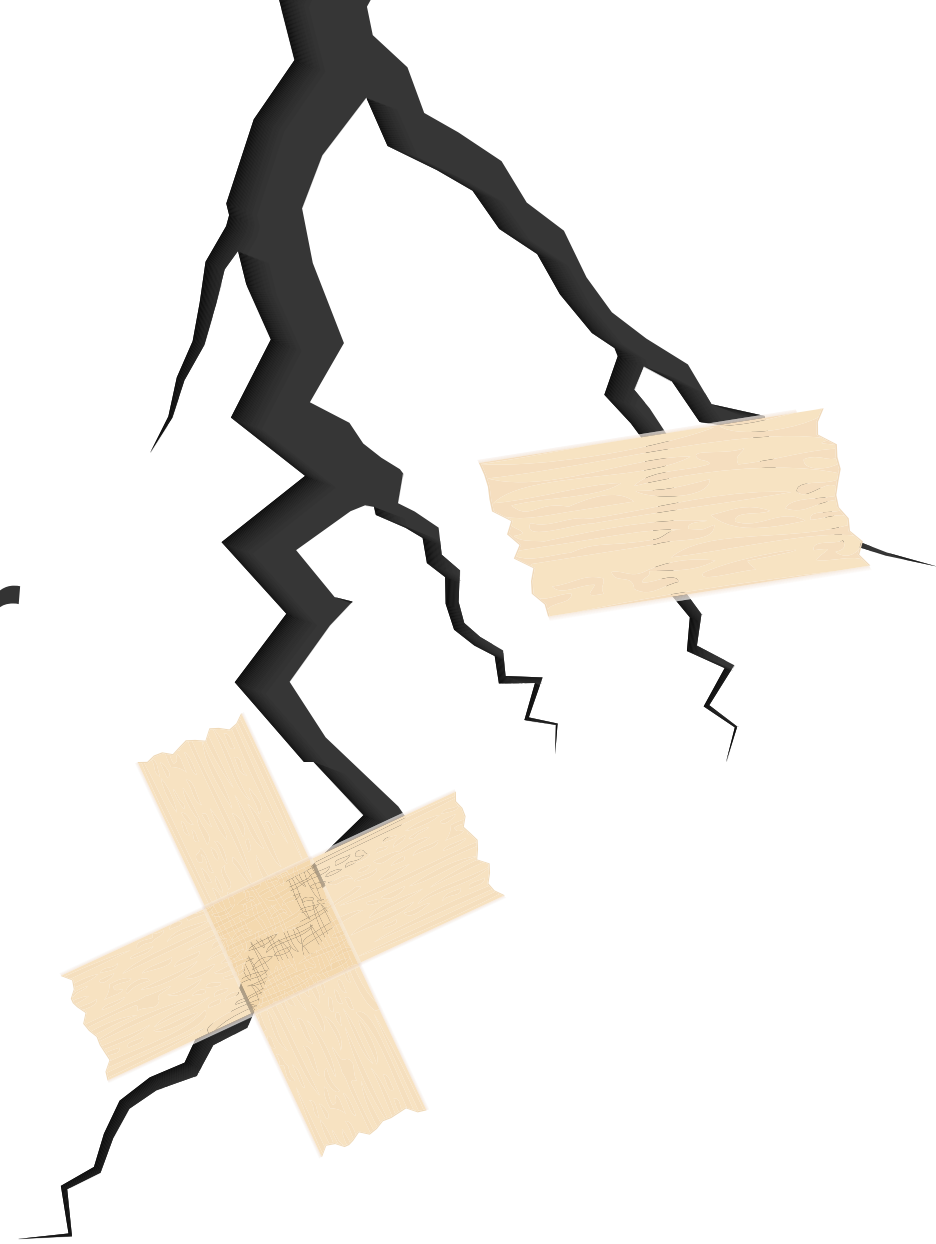
A crisis is “a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.”

**By definition,
they’re undesirable.**

**But every brand
experiences them.**



**It's how you respond
that determines their
lasting impact.**



**When it comes to crisis
management, there are
right things to do...**

...and then there are

...and then there are

TERRIBLE HORRIBLE NO
GOOD VERY BAD

things to do.

We asked **Ron Culp,
Gold Anvil winner and PR
professional in residence
at DePaul University,**



We asked **Ron Culp,
Gold Anvil winner and PR
professional in residence
at DePaul University, to assess
**four examples of real-life crisis
management**, and rank them from
VERY BAD to VERY GOOD.**



**Here's what he
came back with.**

**UNITED
AIRLINES**

THE EVENT

In April 2017, Dr. David Dao was forcibly removed from his seat aboard United Flight 3411 — bashed and bloodied — after the airline decided four of its employees were more deserving of seats than their paying customers.



**Video of the
“removal”
went viral.**



THE RESPONSE:

The next day, United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz issued a wishy-washy statement:

“This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.”



RON'S VERDICT:



VERY BAD

The 'apology' was viewed as less than heartfelt, and, as a result, what might have been a one- or two-day news story has turned into the poster child for how not to treat a self-inflicted crisis.

RON'S VERDICT:



VERY BAD

Munoz gravitated toward maintaining internal goodwill rather than realizing the external optics of the heinous 're-accommodation.'

THE LESSON:

Manage for tomorrow: By placing the imperatives of the company ahead of the interests of its customers, United took a shortsighted approach.

Bad move.



FACEBOOK



THE EVENT:

Cambridge Analytica accessed and retained information on **87 million** Facebook users without their permission.

Some say the data was used
to help Donald Trump win
the 2016 presidency.



THE RESPONSE:

Facebook wrote a couple blog posts talking about suspending and then deleting CA's account.

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Facebook wrote a couple blog posts talking about suspending and then deleting CA's account.

Facebook brass — including Mark Zuckerberg — remained deafeningly silent for 4 days.

RON'S VERDICT:



Facebook's delayed response was in total conflict with what it gives its two billion users — opportunities for immediate feedback. As a result, privacy concerns grew and the #DeleteFacebook proponents gained momentum. Of all organizations that should know better, the most significant pioneer in social media should have been better prepared for this inevitable situation.

THE LESSON:

Listen to stakeholders: Engage with the people that matter. Have an inclusive dialogue and learn what they want.

But do it quickly – a delayed response lets others control the story.

KFC



THE EVENT:

A switch to a new delivery partner led to a disruption in shipments, a shortfall of chicken, and the resulting closure of hundreds of its U.K. restaurants for days on end.



THE RESPONSE:

After a handful of witty, charming, self-effacing, and disarming tweets, KFC took out a full-page ad in the London Evening Standard.



And it was perfect.





WE'RE SORRY

A chicken restaurant without any chicken. It's not ideal. Huge apologies to our customers, especially those who travelled out of their way to find we were closed. And endless thanks to our KFC team members and our franchise partners for working tirelessly to improve the situation. It's been a hell of a week, but we're making progress, and every day more and more fresh chicken is being delivered to our restaurants. Thank you for bearing with us.

Visit kfc.co.uk/crossed-the-road for details about your local restaurant.

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RON'S VERDICT:



GOOD

It couldn't have been an easy decision, but KFC's PR and marketing teams did the right thing by laughing at themselves. The FCK ad was both brave and bold, and it played very well.

THE LESSON:

Remain calm, patient, and good-humored: Humility and self-awareness go a long way in earning forgiveness.

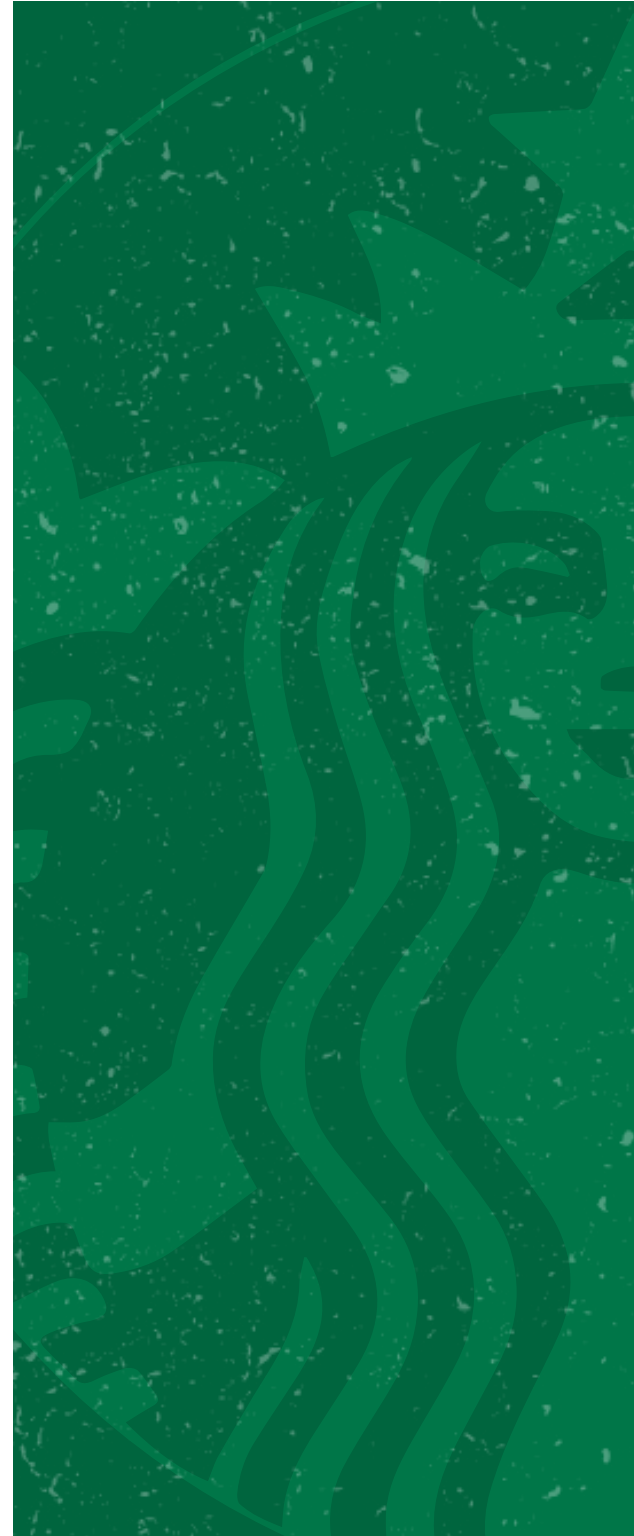


STARBUCKS



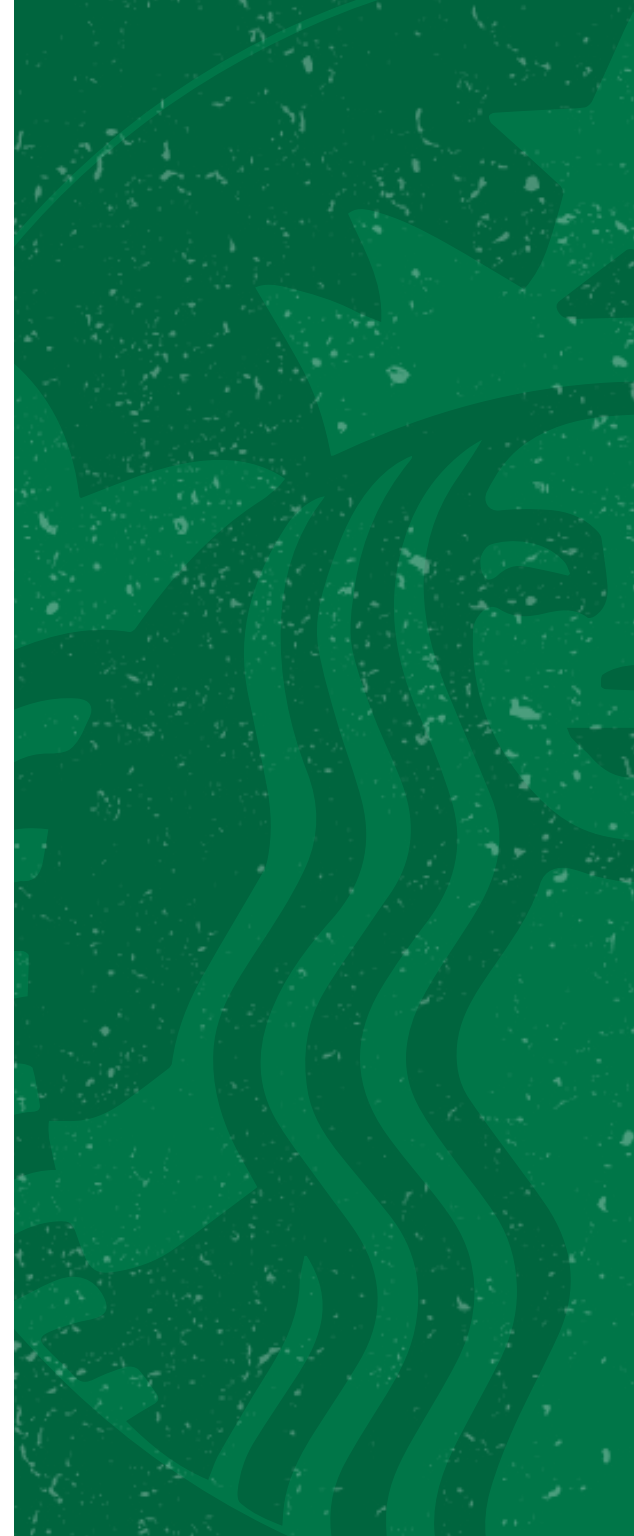
THE EVENT:

In April 2018, two black men went into a Starbucks in Philadelphia.



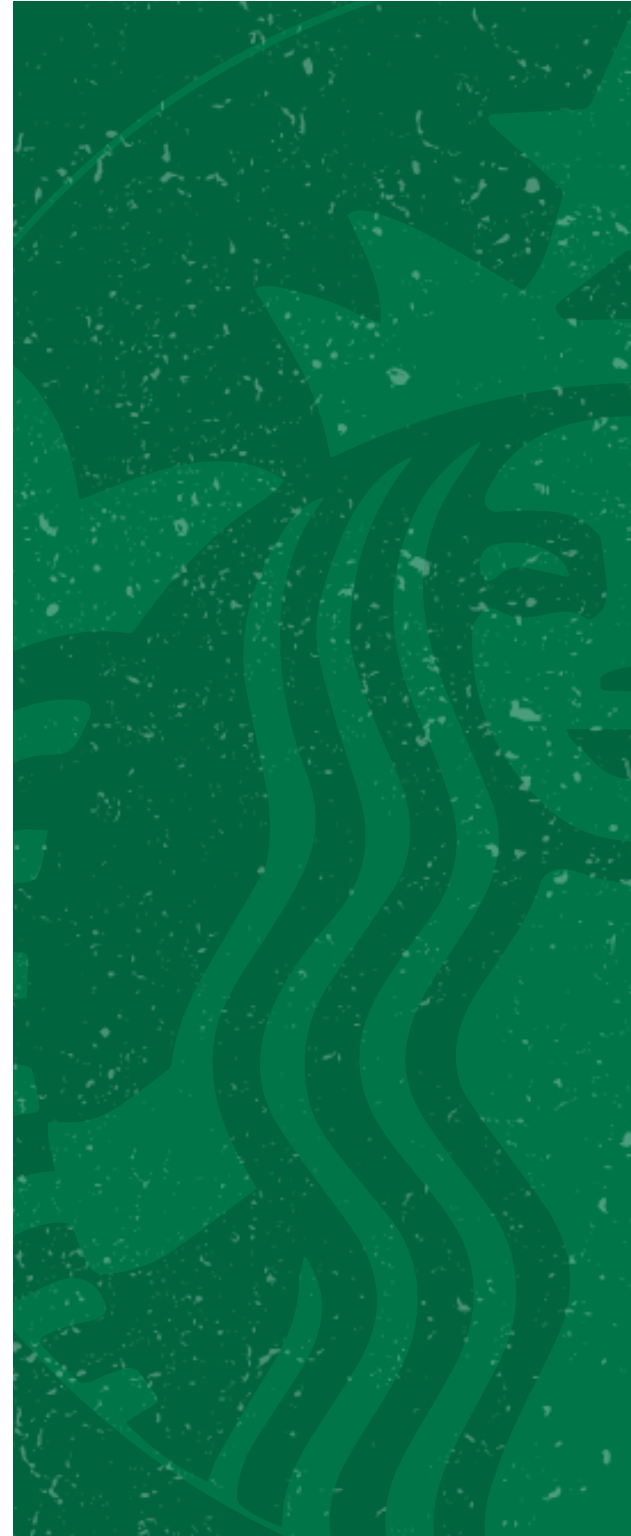
They chose not to order anything as they waited for the third member of what was to be a business meeting.

An employee called the cops and the two men were arrested for trespassing.



THE RESPONSE:

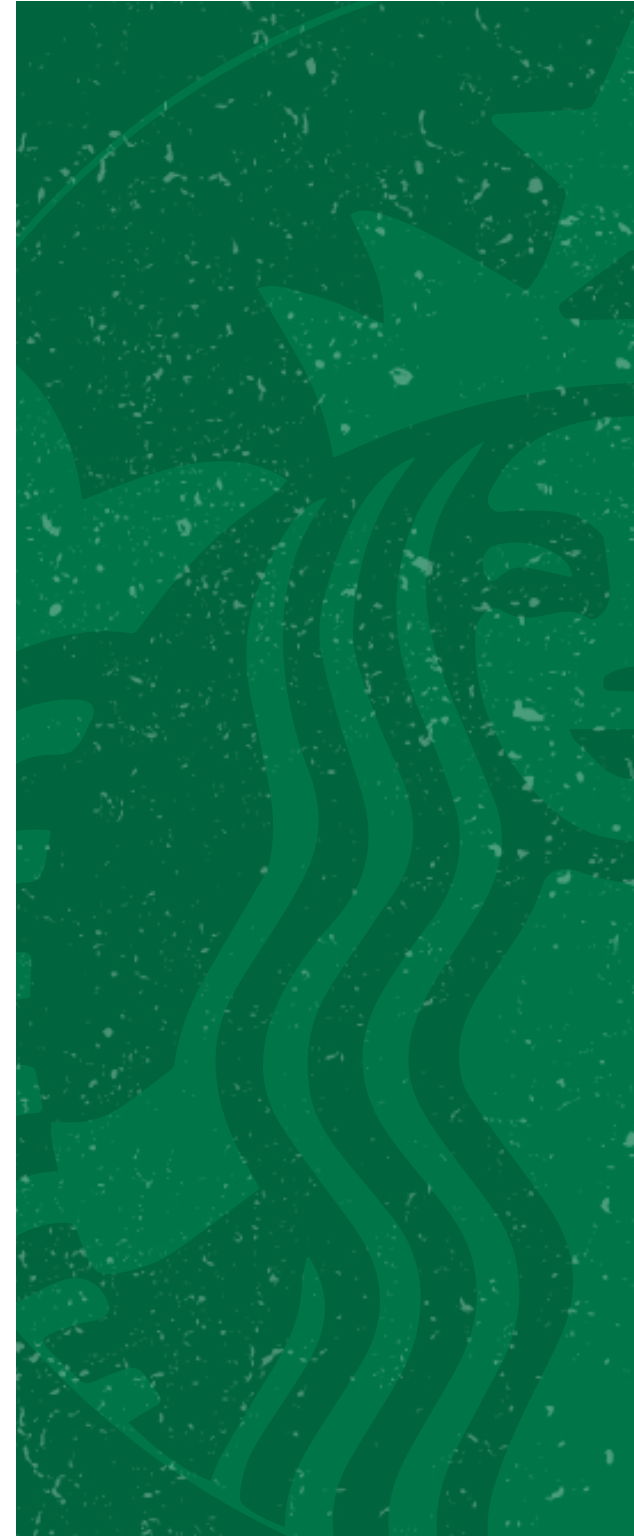
Starbucks issued a genuine and sincere apology not only to the two men, but to all its customers. It then announced that it was planning to close its more than 8,000 U.S. stores on May 29 to conduct racial bias and diversity training for employees.



RON'S VERDICT:

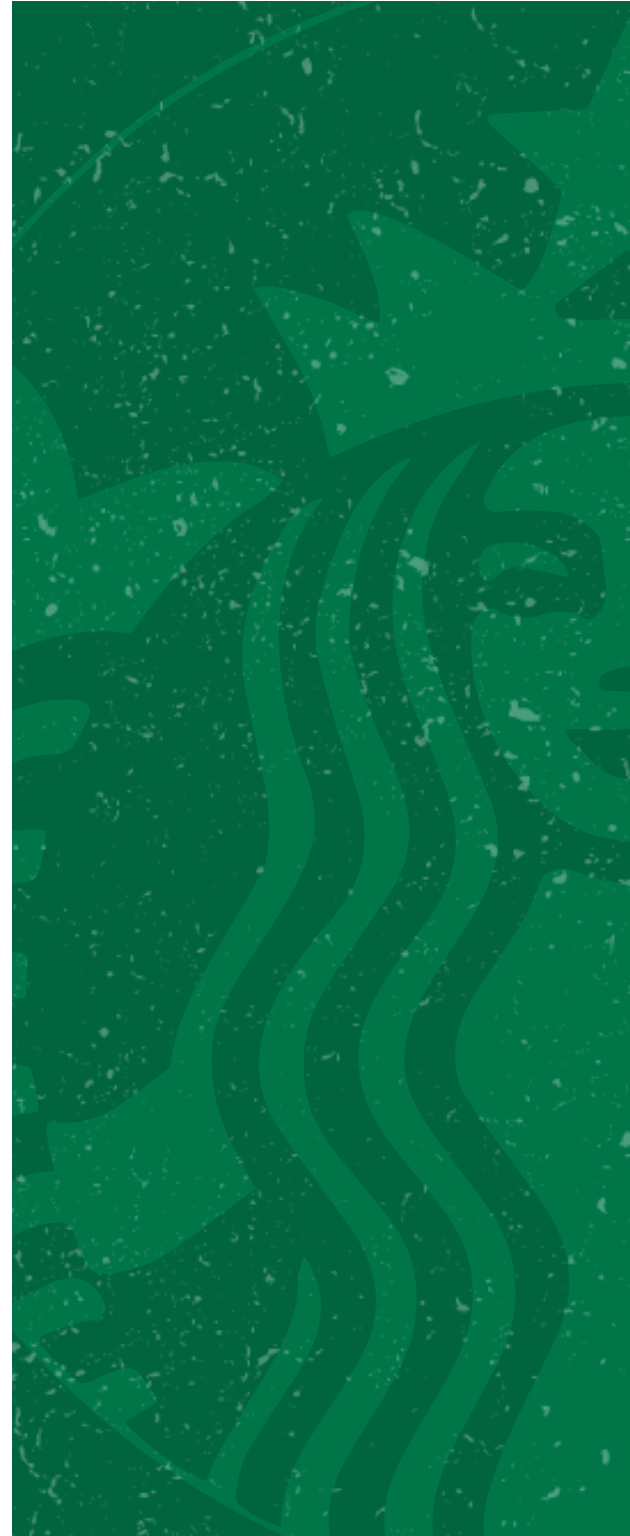


Starbucks took quick, bold steps, and used the incident to drive home, both internally and externally, its commitment to doing the right thing when it comes to social issues.



THE LESSON:

Prove it with action: Issues like this don't go away with simple promises to do better. Words are different from deeds, and less powerful when it comes to reassuring the public.



**Crises don't
define brands.**

**Crises don't
define brands.**

**It's how you face them
that determines what kind
of an organization you are.**



**And to deal with
them properly,
you need to listen.**



**And to deal with
them properly,
you need to listen.**

**This is where media
monitoring comes in.**

By knowing **who is
saying what where,
you can react to, and
eventually **control,**
the conversation.**



**And not only that, but by
monitoring, you learn how
the public feels about you**

**And not only that, but by
monitoring, you learn how
the public feels about you
before a crisis strikes.**



Not to mention, monitoring helps you identify friendly and not-so-friendly influencers to whom you can reach out with your version of the story.



All four of these crises underscore the critical need for organizations to monitor the media — traditional and social — and have processes in place for prompt responses.



**And in case you didn't know,
monitoring is one of the
things **Agility PR Solutions**
does very well.**

SEE HOW MONITORING CAN HELP



About Ron Culp

Prior to joining DePaul and becoming an independent public relations consultant, Ron Culp held senior public relations positions at four Fortune 500 corporations and two major agencies. In 2006, Culp received the Distinguished Service Award from the Arthur W. Page Society, and in 2012 he was honored by the Chicago chapter of PRSA as PR Professional of the Year. In 2015 Ron received PRSA's highest individual honor, the Gold Anvil for lifetime achievement.

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