How an S&P 500 Company Navigated a CEO's Reputation Crisis with PublicRelay

PublicRelay

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The Client

Our client is an S&P 500 company that's been in business for more than 50 years.

The Challenge

CEO criticism in media coverage during a crisis

The company faced widespread negative coverage of an unforeseen disaster that hit their reputation hard.

The crisis generated significant press coverage and eventually, internal stakeholders expressed particular concerns over whether the high amount of perceived **criticism of the CEO in the media** was having enough effect on the company's reputation to warrant a leadership change.

In addition to insights into coverage of the incident itself, the communications team asked PublicRelay to help them determine whether or not these concerns were rooted in reality, and whether the resulting leanings toward replacing the CEO were similarly grounded.

Our Solution

Comprehensive coverage analysis

PublicRelay provided insights to the communications team around the coverage the CEO was receiving.

Data included total media mentions, tonality of those mentions, and the Media Significance Score (MSS) of the outlets. [MSS is a summary media metric that simplifies a comprehensive look at media coverage into an easily explained score, weighing the impacts of metrics such as quality of outlets providing coverage, social engagement for the article, and more.]

This data was analyzed for the coverage in the first 6 months after the crisis hit, and for the second 6 months after the crisis hit in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of evolving coverage.

Results

Flipped the script on positive v. negative CEO coverage

PublicRelay's analysis found that the first half year after the incident, there was significant negative coverage criticizing the CEO for being out-of-touch with the affected communities, and also accusing the executive of corporate greed.

On the other hand, the second half year after the crisis saw negative coverage moving away from the CEO, instead focusing on poor earnings and losses due to the disaster's costs.

Negative CEO coverage actually fell by 24 percentage points during this time.

And positive coverage of the CEO jumped from just 4% to 23%.

Meanwhile, the Media Significance Score of the outlets also increased, indicating that outlets with higher impact were covering these more positive stories.

Working with PublicRelay allowed the communications team to relay this critical information to internal stakeholders, using data to ground perception of the current CEO's performance and impact on the organization's reputation.

This subsequently reinvigorated their trust in the executive's leadership and avoided a complicated request for the CEO to step down.

Key Takeaways

- Despite the initial volume of negative press coverage of the CEO, **it subsided by the time concerns were formally raised.**
- Instead of focusing on the CEO as an individual, coverage shifted toward effects on the organization post-crisis.
- The communications team was able to **alleviate the concerns of company stakeholders** amid the crisis with observable data.

Want to learn more about how **PublicRelay** can help your organization navigate a communications crisis?

Get in touch with our team at solutions@publicrelay.com.

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