



# Strategic Communication in Crisis Management: Lessons from the Airline Industry

By Sally Ray

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## Strategic Communication in Crisis Management: Lessons from the Airline Industry By Sally Ray

Communicating successfully is crucial if an organization is to survive and recover from a crisis. Focusing on the airline industry and some of the most recent headline-making disasters, Dr. Ray looks at organizational crises, the communications strategies employed by organizations when responding to crises, and the factors that influence the effectiveness of this strategic communication. She maintains that our understanding of crisis and the implications for strategic crisis communications in all industries can be based on two valid assumptions. First, crises may be viewed in terms of phases. Second, they are best understood from a system perspective. This is particularly important when we realize that how stakeholders see crises and how professional communicators see them may be entirely different, and that their viewpoints will vary at various crisis stages.

Dr. Ray begins with an introduction that reviews the U.S. airline industry's safety system, followed by a chapter on organizational crises and crisis communications. The remaining chapters are divided into sections reflecting Dr. Ray's simplified model of crisis stages: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. Here she explores conditions which lead to major aviation disasters and other crises, contingency planning, crisis management, crisis communication, and post-crisis investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board. Seven chapters provide case studies of major airline disasters, analyzed according to her three-stage model, and an illuminating of the major issues associated with airline disasters. The cases also examine, analyze, and evaluate communication strategies used by airlines when responding to these issues and give readers important lessons to ponder, which she synthesizes in a conclusion. Corporate communications specialists at all levels, in the public and private sectors both, as well as executives with other management responsibilities will find Dr. Ray's book informative, useful, and fascinating reading.

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#### **Review**

"[s]ucceeds in providing some new insights by taking readers through the crisis management process of the airline industry and how that process is used to learn lessons and to improve crisis management. The detailed case studies alone are enough to peak the interest of any student of crisis management."-Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management

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"A must read for anyone who deals with crisis on a corporate scale. Dr. Ray has created the definitive pre-crisis reference on the knowledge and skills needed to survive a crisis, and continue as a viable business. I strongly recommend her work as required reading for Corporate Communications and Safety personnel."- Gene Pellecchia Staff Vice President, Aviation Safety Aloha Airlines

#### **About the Author**

**SALLY J. RAY** is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Broadcasting, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green. She is the author of various journal articles, a contributor to several books, and has spoken before public and private organizations on topics related to the airline industry and strategic communication in general.

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