



## Y2K CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS: ARE YOU PREPARED?



Bart Mindszenty and John Newton

No organization really expects to have a crisis, or to fail at managing that crisis well – even a Y2K crisis. Yet, the reality is that every organization will have at least one major crisis during its lifespan, and it will not be handled

very well. We also know with virtual certainty that a number of organizations will experience glitches due to date-related problems. If your organization is hit, are you prepared?

That is why it is important for

every senior manager to rate the following 10 statements honestly... and then act on closing any gaps now. And if you depend on other organizations, maybe you should find out their answers to these questions.

We have a concise, well understood Y2K crisis management/ crisis communications plan and process in place.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

Our senior management is committed to crisis management/ crisis communications for Y2K.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

All our sites/facilities have designated local crisis management teams, with members and alternates who know their roles and what to do in a Y2K outage.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

Every person on our Y2K crisis management team will be in the office – or easily accessible – at all date-sensitive times.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

Someone is responsible and accountable for keeping our Y2K crisis management/communications plan current by checking and updating all lists and contacts monthly until March 2000.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

We have conducted, or plan to do table-top simulations for our Y2K crisis management team, with a full debrief and modifications to the plan and/or skill upgrades as required.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

We are conducting special Y2K media encounter sessions with our designated spokespersons.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

In our Y2K preparations we have met with representatives of key emergency services, our communities, elected and regulatory officials, and other key stakeholder groups to learn about their readiness and to keep them updated about our Y2K crisis management plans and procedures.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

We have examined – and planned for – alternative communication channels if there is a power or telecommunications outage.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

I am able to reach my fellow senior executives promptly at any time.

Absolutely!  I'm pretty sure  I'm not sure  I doubt it  No way!

So how do you rate?

Give yourself 10 points for every 'Absolutely'; 8 points for every 'I'm pretty sure'; 6 points for 'I'm not sure'; 4 points for 'I doubt it'; and, 0 for 'No way'.

### 90-100 Points

Wow, your organization is among the exceptionally well prepared for Y2K! You're probably among the top 10% in terms of preparedness in North America. Congratulations!

### 75-89 Points

Not bad at all. You're in the 'average' range. That means you're on par with many organizations that realize the need to get Y2K crisis management/communications right. But from our perspective, that reality is that while you're not there, you could easily get to the top level and be especially good.

### 60-74 Points

You're on the right track, but something's not going right about your Y2K preparations. Obviously, your organization has the interest to do things right, but too many key steps are being missed. This is a real crunch zone—you need to help management commit to moving to the next level – quickly.

### Less than 60 Points

Pray you don't have a Y2K crisis, because if you do, chances are your organization will suffer more than immediate pain. Given our litigious environment of high expectations and low tolerance, your stakeholders will devour you. Can you afford that? No. So focus on doing what has to be done now, before it's too late!

**Want to learn more?** – Tune into the next issue of *LegalFocus* for more details and insight into what is really happening around Y2K and how you can help your organization address its crisis communication / management needs.

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