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an ALTEN company

**THE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS**  
**PLAN**  
**FOR E-COMMERCE WEBSITE CRASHES**

**Objective:** To outline a structured, proactive communication plan to manage customer relations, protect the brand, and minimize damage when an e-commerce website experiences a crash.

# DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE— SAFEGUARD YOUR WEBSITE FROM DISASTER!

## DISCOVER

the actions you must take right now to improve website performance before Black Friday sales kick off on Nov. 1

## IDENTIFY

the need for and components of a Major Incident Response Playbook to respond quickly and efficiently when issues arise

## DEVELOP

an automated communication plan to ensure your team and customers are informed at every stage of an incident

## DETERMINE

the analytics tools to alert you when your website is facing issues  
– before it crashes

## 1. Preparation and Key Contact Roles

Before a crash occurs, it's essential to have a predefined communication team and strategy in place. Key team members include:

- **Communications Lead:**  
Oversees the crisis plan execution.
- **Technical Lead:**  
Provides updates on the technical status and recovery.
- **Customer Service Lead:**  
Manages customer inquiries and complaints.
- **Legal Counsel:**  
Ensures all communication adheres to regulations.

## 2. Immediate Steps When a Crash Occurs

### Acknowledge the Issue Internally

- The technical team identifies the problem and begins immediate action to restore services.
- Internal communication is triggered to inform all key stakeholders, including leadership, legal, PR, and customer support teams.

### Activate Crisis Communication Channels

- Prepare a brief and factual statement acknowledging the issue without over-explaining the technical details.



### 3. External Communications Strategy

#### Website Announcement

- If possible, post a message on the website that acknowledges the outage: *“We’re currently experiencing technical issues and are working to resolve them as quickly as possible. Thank you for your patience.”*

#### Email to Customers

- Send an email to your customer database, acknowledging the issue and providing reassurance that the team is working on it: *“Dear Valued Customers, We are currently experiencing technical issues with our website. Our team is working hard to restore service. We appreciate your patience and will provide updates shortly. Thank you for your understanding.”*

#### Social Media Updates

- Use social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) to immediately alert customers about the outage.
- Provide regular updates every 30 minutes or as more information becomes available: *“We are aware of the issues affecting our website and are working to resolve them. Please stay tuned for updates. Thank you for your patience.”*



### 4. Ongoing Updates

#### Regular Status Updates

- Keep communication open with customers by providing regular updates on the issue’s status. If the timeline for a fix changes, inform your audience immediately to maintain transparency: *“We’re still working on resolving the issue. We apologize for the inconvenience and will keep you updated on our progress.”*

#### Avoid Over-promising

- Do not promise a specific resolution time unless you are confident. Unfulfilled promises can exacerbate customer frustration.

### 5. Customer Support Coordination

#### Strengthen Customer Service Resources

- Equip customer service agents with pre-written scripts for responding to inquiries via chat, email, and phone: *“We’re experiencing a technical issue that’s causing the site to be down, but we’re working to fix it as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience.”*

#### Provide Alternative Shopping Options

- Encourage customers to use alternative shopping methods if available, such as placing orders over the phone or through social media channels.

## 6. Post-Incident Communication and Follow-Up

### Apology and Explanation

- Once the website is back up, release an official statement or blog post explaining what happened, the steps taken to resolve the issue, and any future actions to prevent similar incidents: *“We apologize for the inconvenience caused by the outage on [DATE]. Our team identified the issue and has taken measures to prevent it from happening again. We value your support and thank you for your patience.”*

### Customer Compensation (Optional)

- Consider offering affected customers a discount code, free shipping, or store credit as a goodwill gesture: *“As a thank you for your patience, please enjoy a 15% discount on your next order with code [DISCOUNT CODE].”*

## 7. Internal Review and Lessons Learned

### Internal Debrief

- After the crisis, hold a meeting with all key stakeholders to evaluate the response and identify areas for improvement.

### Update Crisis Plan

- Based on the debriefing, update the Crisis Communication Plan to address any shortcomings and improve preparedness for future incidents.

## 8. Monitoring and Reporting

### Social Media Monitoring

- Use social listening tools to monitor customer sentiment and quickly address any ongoing concerns.

### Reporting on Performance

- Provide a final report to the executive team detailing the incident’s timeline, actions taken, customer feedback, and areas for future improvement.

This structured communication plan will help e-commerce companies maintain transparency, protect customer relationships, and limit reputational damage during a website crash.

## Ready to get started?

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