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An Analysis of Leadership During COVID-19

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the reasons why leadership and clear messaging are vital in communicating with people during a crisis. In times of crisis, effective leadership and communication are crucial for ensuring that people receive timely and accurate information. From a Christian perspective, leadership during a crisis also reflects a responsibility to serve others with compassion, honesty, and care. These values are rooted in biblical principles and exemplified by Jesus throughout His ministry. This paper will examine how effective leadership helps manage public perception, reduce uncertainty, and support a coordinated response.

Introduction

This paper will discuss the reasons why leadership and clear messaging are vital in communicating with people during a crisis. In times of crisis, effective leadership and communication are essential for ensuring that people receive timely information that is also accurate. From a Christian perspective, leadership during a crisis also reflects a responsibility to serve others with compassion, honesty, and care. These are values rooted in biblical principles and modeled by Jesus throughout His ministry. This paper will examine how effective leadership helps manage public perception, reduce uncertainty, and support a coordinated response. Additionally, it will explore the communication theories that inform effective crisis communication strategies and how they contribute to building trust, providing clarity, and guiding decision-making in high pressure situations. The role of empathy and adaptability in leadership will also be looked at, showing how these qualities enhance the effectiveness of crisis communication. Lastly, it will tie into Christian leadership traits and show that there are similarities between our faith and good effective leadership and communication.

Introduction

Leadership and clear messaging are essential during a crisis because they not only ensure public safety but also build trust in those leading the response. In those times of uncertainty, people depend on leaders for guidance, reassurance and timely and accurate updates. A well-prepared strategy and plan could lessen any panic and prevent any misinformation from being communicated. Strategic communication focuses on this type of messaging. It ensures that the information is delivered efficiently, consistently, and transparently across all platforms. The ability to respond quickly to urgent situations is essential for government leaders. Hart (2009)

One example of this kind of leadership can be seen in the story of Jesus Calming the Storm in Mark 4 of the New Testament. When the disciples were afraid, Jesus responded with peace and authority, saying, "Peace! be still." (ESV Study Bible, 2016, Mark 4:39). His words calmed the wind and waves, but they also calmed the fear in the people with Him. That moment shows how strong leadership and steady communication can bring comfort and stability during a crisis.

Keeping information current and concise across different type of media is important. According to the article by Williams (2022), he states the importance of keeping the public up to date on a situation. He highlighted how organizations used social media to keep the public informed during a crisis. For example, they created a special hashtag related so they could reassure

people that they were safe via their real time updates. In addition, they kept an updated YouTube Channel, and had virtual sessions on Facebook live to engage directly with the public. These strategies made sure that accurate information was widely accessible and consistently reinforced. These strategies made sure that accurate information was easily found, reducing any questioning, and reinforcing trust.

According to Gamble (2012), an effective leader should demonstrate strong communication skills. He emphasizes that communication competence is an important trait of successful leaders. One of the most important qualities in crisis leadership is empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the emotions of others. By having empathy, the leaders can understand and share other persons' feelings and see their perspective. When they do this, they gain and keep trust and cooperation from the people that they are leading. These qualities reflect Christlike leadership. Throughout Scripture, Jesus showed compassion and connection to others, especially during moments of fear, confusion, or pain. Leaders should also be ethical in their choices and actions, since they set the tone for their organizations (Gamble, 2012, p. 25). A leader who is honest, compassionate, and consistent not only strengthens communication but also reflects a biblical approach to guiding and serving others during difficult times.

Article Summary

The article shows the critical role of leadership roles and the importance of clear messaging in large-scale crisis, such as the COVID 19 pandemic. When a crisis happens, misinformation can make people anxious and upset, so it is vital that the information that is being presented is relevant, accurate and timely. The article shows that effective crisis leadership goes beyond strong decision-making. It is when those leaders make connections with people and maintain their messaging consistently across all platforms. The article highlights the COVID-19 pandemic and how important it was to get the correct information out in a timely manner. Barbara Reynolds, who is Senior Crisis and Risk Communication Advisor, noted that "The right message at the right time from the right person can save lives." Eldridge (2020, p.50). This shows the powerful role that communication plays in crisis management and the need for leadership that is able to solve problems, and be compassionate and transparent to their followers.

Effective leadership goes beyond just delivering the facts; it requires engagement, showing empathy, reassuring, and informing the public. In times of crisis, people look at their leaders for guidance and also stability and confidence that the situation will be handled correctly and safely. Leaders need to be adaptable and able to utilize different methods like social media, press, and virtual meetings to ensure that the messages reach diverse audiences with varying needs and concerns. The article shows that strong leadership and well-thought-out communication strategies are essential in managing crises effectively and preventing panic among the people.

Overall, the article shows that effective leadership and communication are essential in crisis situations. Strong leadership and well-thought-out communication strategies play a crucial role in managing an emergency situation effectively. Those strategies will manage the crisis while minimizing any confusion and preventing the public from panicking. Then they can reinforce trust, encourage cooperation, and help these people get through difficult situations with clarity and faith. People depend upon their leaders to give them correct, credible information that is timely and up to date. By being reliable and empathetic sources of information, these leaders can inspire confidence and guide their people through challenging situations. In turn, their followers will have built trust and confidence in them and will look up to them as leaders for the future.

Theoretical Contributions

This article makes a connection to the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Theory (CERC). There are six key principles to this theory. They are: 1: to be first, 2: be right, 3: be credible, 4: express empathy, 5: promote action, and 6: show respect. It explains how people process information under stress, showing that initial messaging is crucial as people tend to believe and hold onto the first information they receive. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) developed this theory to guide effective communication during public health emergencies. In addition to having empathy and respect, it is important to "...establish an open and honest flow of information." CDC (2014)

This study explores leadership communication strategies, focusing on consistent, transparent messaging in reducing panic and misinformation. According to Gamble, a leader's behavior is "...transparent, fair, and caring." (2014, p.36). This includes sharing information, decision-making processes, and accountability.

These values also reflect the core of servant leadership, where the leader's focus is on meeting the needs of others through honesty, care, and humility. This supports the CERC model by prioritizing empathy and trust during high-stress situations.

Joseph's leadership during the famine in Egypt is an example of this type of crisis communication (ESV Study Bible, 2016, Genesis 41). He recognized the urgency of the situation, clearly communicated the need for preparation, and helped organize a plan that saved lives. His actions reflect the core ideas behind the CERC model. He showed how early, credible, and compassionate communication can prevent panic and promote trust, which are essential qualities for any leader guiding people through a crisis.

The article that discussed the crisis leadership of the Bush presidency directly relates to the main article studied, *Communication During Crisis* Eldridge (2020). It references that effective communication is central to crisis leadership. There are 3 primary tasks of crisis leadership, which include: 1: sense-making, 2: decision-making, and 3: meaning-making. The sense-making is when gathering the correct information, decision-making is coordinating the correct responses, and meaning-making, which is communicating a clear message to the public. Hart (2009).

Analysis

This study shows the importance of clear leadership and communication during a crisis. It used an example of COVID-19 to make it relevant and relatable. The study shows that empathy, consistency and credibility are important and essential to getting the correct message across without causing panic in people. This study is effective in showing the importance of clear, timely, and communication during crisis. It provides clear information on how to communicate effectively in high stress situations. It shows how people process information under stress and that early messaging is critical. It clearly outlines the role of leadership and trust during crisis situations. It also notes some of the common barriers to effective communication, such as wrong information being given, late information, and organizational failures.

This study could have been more useful if it gave some new research instead of using existing data. It could have expanded on the digital media role, which is crucial in a modern crisis response. People rely on social media for current updates and current stories, which is helpful since they are in real time. Another thing that would have been a good contribution to this study would have been to use some quantitative methods to test the effectiveness of messaging strategies. A survey would have been helpful in this case, actual data could have been shown to see what types of messaging worked best.

People tend to believe and hold on to the first information they receive, so it's vital that they receive the correct information right away. They also need to consider the source they receive the information from and make sure that it is creditable. Empathy plays an important role in leadership and enhances credibility. Messages from leaders that acknowledge fear and uncertainty build a stronger trust as opposed to those leaders that just give out the information or don't display any feelings or empathy towards others. This makes a difference in a leader and can even affect his credibility. A Christian leader is called to lead with truth and compassion, showing care for others while guiding them through uncertainty with wisdom and strength.

Contribution to the Profession

This study is useful and a valuable source for leadership and communication strategies and they can learn from those strategies and lessons. It can be useful for those in various fields, such as public relations, strategic communication, crisis communication, and news media. It gives some valuable insights on messaging strategies and insights that can help professionals manage public perception, reduce misinformation, and build trust during these emergency situations. More specifically, it outlines the CERT theory, which is a guideline for developing crisis communication plans. Since stress affects the information processing, it also highlights the need for clear, concise, and repeated messaging. It also shows that professionals can use the insight given to coordinate timely, and accurate messaging across all platforms. These platforms can consist of traditional media, social media, official websites and television.

Overall, this study provides a good solid foundation and makes it useful for crisis training, public relations training, and leadership coaching. The example used, which was the COVID-19 pandemic, was effective and familiar because it was a current event. It was an event that many can relate to and understand. Those insights and ideas are relevant and valuable to the reader.

Scholarly Thoughts

The article explains how effective messaging helps manage public response in emergencies. It displays that stress impacts information processing, so it makes simple and repetitive communication essential. This study was helpful because it outlined key parts of communication and leadership that should be followed to be accurate and reliable. It provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of effective messaging in critical situations. The use of the CERC Theory displayed the importance of an effective delivery process. Clear and concise messaging is imperative when communicating during a crisis. This article also supports the importance of clear, simple, and repetitive messaging. This is important in crisis communication and messaging. When leaders prioritize these elements, they can prevent the spread of misinformation, build public confidence, and keep a sense of order. By communicating effectively during these emergency situations, it helps establish long-term trust between leaders and the public. This shows the importance and necessity of strong leadership and well thought out strategies in guiding the people and the communities through those difficult times.

Faith Integration

The article ties into Christianity because it puts emphasis on empathy and honesty, which go hand in hand with servant leadership. Christian leadership includes compassion and integrity and the serving of others. Christian leadership shows compassion, integrity, and service to others. These values can extend from leaders to anyone that is of influence. It could include workplace or personal and family life. Jesus demonstrated servant leadership through his actions, which

includes washing the feet of his disciples to sacrificing his life for humanity. By integrating these qualities into their own leadership, people can align their actions into God's teachings. They can model themselves after his empathy, honesty, and service.

Effective communication is about giving truth and earning trust, which ties into the Christian way of sharing God's word. Christian leaders should prioritize honesty and transparency, as those are essential in building strong relationships, just like in the workplace and personal life. Strong leadership requires honesty, empathy, and integrity, which are core Christian values. Jesus modeled servant leadership by putting others first, leading with compassion, and speaking truth. These qualities are essential in crisis communication to build trust and provide reassurance. Just as leaders must be clear and transparent, Christians are called to communicate truthfully and with care. By following these principles, leaders can guide people through uncertainty while strengthening faith and confidence, reflecting Christ's example of leadership. As Proverbs reminds us, "The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and healing to the body" (ESV Study Bible, 2016, Proverbs 16:23–24).

This article can help people reflect on their current faith and see how they can integrate the qualities into their own lives. Leaders can draw examples from faith and Christian qualities to incorporate into their communication style. They could show their audience how they can be closer to God by following his ways.

Conclusion

Strong leadership and clear communication are crucial during a crisis to lessen any misinformation, build trust and keep people informed. Without proper messaging, confusion and panic can spread, making it more difficult to manage the crisis or emergency effectively. The study shows how important it is to be consistent, timely, and accurate by getting messages out across different type of media. The articles reference to integrity and transparency directly aligns with Christian leadership principles, where leaders are called to lead with honesty, empathy, and service to others. Jesus demonstrated his servant leadership, by putting the needs of others first, and effective leaders should also prioritize the well-being of those who they lead. By showing compassion and empathy, listening to the people, and being honest, leaders can build credibility and keep trust even in the most stressful situations.

Besides handling crisis, this study shows the importance of ethical leadership and effective communication in our everyday life. This could be applied to our personal or work lives. No matter what the setting is, practicing clear, honest and compassionate communication is essential for building and maintaining those connections and giving the guidance that can promote our faith. Overall, the study shows valuable insights for leaders on the importance of crisis communication in keeping stability and trust. It serves as a reminder that effective communication, especially during challenging times, can not only guide people through a crisis but also strengthen their faith, helping them draw closer to God by following the example of God's leadership. With these values in mind, it shows that strong leadership and clear communication are not only effective strategies during a crisis, but also a reflection of faith in action.

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