

### **It takes a strong communication plan**

A pandemic flu, as it spreads, will have a significant economic impact on business. When the SARS epidemic hit Toronto a few years ago, employees and customers stayed home sick or scared. As business there learned, communicating appropriately in a crisis can help your brand stay healthy.

Research has shown that organizations with a crisis plan fare better in a crisis than those who do not. It's not the plan as much as the institutional knowledge that comes from developing the plan and the commitment to perform at a high level throughout the crisis.

Organizations without plans do not need to scramble at the threat of this flu pandemic. All the necessary resources exist through government agencies, management associations and medical organizations to help firms small and large smartly manage the challenges of a flu pandemic. Communications firms are expert at leveraging these resources so that employees and other stakeholders can be informed and empowered to make the very best of what will be a difficult time.

If you have crisis plan, you've already noticed that it needs fine-tuning because every crisis has its own set of unique challenges that necessitate recreating the plan on the fly. But you do have a go-forward outline and that's a great start.

If you don't have a crisis plan don't panic. You're not that far behind. Form a team to report to the CEO. Follow closely what the government agencies are doing. Check in with management associations on crisis management issues unique to your industry. Then develop your action plan of "must do's" and "nice to do's." Commit to communicating regularly to your stakeholders about what your company is doing, and provide them clear information on what they can and should do to sustain the enterprise.

If you need help, let us know. Kineo has led companies through similar crises. To learn more, contact us at 312.588.3380.