

**Identifying and Implementing Best Practices for
Multi-Stakeholder Crisis Management and Communication**

Case Development: Navy Pier Fourth of July Crisis

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MSC Capstone

August 1, 2020

Abstract

Crisis management and communication already present organizations with the painful challenges and realities of diffusing complex situations, controlling the external narrative, navigating public perceptions and limiting the damage to the brand and bottom line. With multi-stakeholder organizations, those complexities are only heightened and could lead to intensified crises if communicators and crisis managers fail to effectively address and engage its multitude of stakeholders.

Using Navy Pier's Fourth of July crisis as a case study, this paper explores how a multi-stakeholder organization like the Pier can improve its crisis management and communication strategies by activating key stakeholders and encouraging their participation in the crisis planning process. Findings and key insights ultimately reveal that the stakeholder salience model may prove to be helpful in identifying and prioritizing critical, high-impact stakeholders and the two-way symmetrical model of strategic communication could present opportunities of shared responsibility and collaboration. By leveraging these theories and practices, Navy Pier should be able to formulate an effective crisis communication strategy for its various stakeholders and ultimately, help the organization mitigate risks associated with future operational crises.

Introduction

Navy Pier, Chicago's top-attended leisure destination, welcomes nearly 9 million guests each year, placing it among the world's leading tourism attractions based on annual attendance—right between the Louvre Museum in Paris and Disneyland in Anaheim, CA. Given its high-profile status as a major tourism site within the third largest market in the United States and the significant volume of foot traffic it attracts on a regular basis, the destination has a high probability of being targeted for violent threats and can often be vulnerable to security and operational crises as a result. While Navy Pier takes its responsibility of public safety very seriously and implements strong security measures year round, unpredictable threats and incidents are bound to occur, especially given the current state of our world. Those threats and incidents could potentially lead to irreparable harm to the organization's brand reputation and bottom line if a crisis is not managed effectively, internally and externally.

Navy Pier was on the brink of such harm on July 4, 2019 when a violent incident threatened not only the Pier's reputation, but that of its many internal and external stakeholders. It was through the first-hand experience of this crisis as Navy Pier's communications director that I learned just how incredibly challenging and complex navigating a crisis can be at a place like Navy Pier, which consists of many different stakeholder groups.

Navy Pier's stakeholders include full-time administrative staff, part-time guest experience staff, seasonal staff, more than 75 on-site partner establishments—ranging from dining and retail, to museums and theaters—and their respective employees, union labor workers, third party event management companies, vendors, sponsors/donors, community partners (i.e. residential buildings in the area, neighborhood associations, etc.), local

government officials and more. Each stakeholder requires a different kind of communication before, during and after crises. However, Navy Pier's crisis plan failed to address that in advance, which led to many upset and disgruntled stakeholders following the incident on Independence Day. Furthermore, the lack of effective communication and transparency among the stakeholders led to misinformation in the media and on public forums, creating an even greater disaster for the Pier.

Given the high potential and vulnerability to future crises at a major destination like Navy Pier, I believe my team and I need to revise our current plan and determine the best approach to managing the complexity of crisis communications across the organization and provide adequate tools and resources to stakeholders in advance as way to limit potential damage in the event of another crisis.

This prompted questions, exploration and ideas related to identifying preemptive measures that Navy Pier could take to ensure that the organization and its stakeholders are operating as a cohesive unit rather than separate entities moving forward. Could we be more effective in diffusing a crisis if we had input and buy-in across the entire organization? In addition to managing complexities of our multi-stakeholder organization, I believe research around this topic and applications of that research will also ultimately reveal elegant communication techniques and collaborative leadership opportunities with all stakeholders.

Ultimately, using the 2019 Fourth of July incident at Navy Pier as a case study, we should be able to address the following research question: What adjustments can Navy Pier make to augment communication efficiencies with its multitude of stakeholders amidst a crisis to ensure a more cohesive and effective crisis response in the future?

Description

Since 1995, Navy Pier has served as the top destination for Chicago's annual Fourth of July celebration, drawing hundreds of thousands of people to the city's iconic lakefront landmark to catch the longest fireworks display in town. For 25 years, the Pier has offered guests from near and far a prime fireworks viewing location, along with festive patriotic celebrations across the entire Pier—from on-site restaurants and attractions, to cruises and private parties.

On July 4, 2019, a violent incident occurred at the Pier that threatened this time-honored tradition. The incident resulted in multiple injuries and trauma to guests and employees, which ultimately called Navy Pier's security measures into question.

For context, Navy Pier had significantly increased its security measures for this event—as the organization does every year on this date—given the high volume of guests anticipated for the celebration. Nearly 200,000 guests visit the Pier on the Fourth of July each year. To help ensure their safety, multiple layers of visible security measures are implemented across the entire Pier, including bag checking, metal detection and oversight from the Chicago Police Department, federal agents, K9 units and contracted private security personnel. However, even with the best-laid plans and measures in place, crises cannot fully be avoided.

At approximately 10:30 p.m., following the conclusion of Navy Pier's Fourth of July fireworks show, a gang-related stabbing occurred outside of the Pier's secured and gated perimeter as guests exited the property. On-site police officers were able to contain the situation quickly and arrest the individuals involved. However, off to a distance, a loud noise resembling gunfire—eventually confirmed to be a firecracker—followed near the ramp leading

to Lake Shore Drive. The combination of the two simultaneous incidents prompted guests to flee back onto the Pier in fear and panic. While running, people began shouting, “active shooter,” assuming they heard gunshots fired, which led to more panic and ultimately, a stampede that ended up critically injuring 14 individuals, traumatizing hundreds of guests and employees, and causing property damage to Navy Pier, its partner establishments and people’s personal items. Real-time surveillance footage did eventually reveal that there was an armed individual on the premises, but he had not fired his gun; he was seen carrying his weapon and moving suspiciously through the Pier’s parking garage. He was also immediately detained by police officers and safely removed from the premises. However, the sight of him was enough to create more panic and chaos.

As defined within Navy Pier’s crisis communication plan, my team, which consists of a total of four communications professionals, waited until we were able to gather more information before we began implementing our crisis response and stakeholder communications. Upon careful review of the security camera footage the next morning, our operations team was able to provide us with a detailed and accurate account of the incident, enabling us to prepare appropriate statements and communicate the full story to key stakeholders in the days that followed. However, due to our team’s oversight and failure to address Navy Pier’s full scope of stakeholders, a lot of misinformation festered among the media, public, employees, government officials and more, allowing false narratives to continue being formed and shared, which subsequently caused further harm to Navy Pier’s brand reputation.

This issue was first brought to my attention when the CEO of a restaurant partner on the Pier contacted my team in the following days to ask why he and the rest of the on-site tenants had not received an update regarding what happened and how Navy Pier management planned to address the situation moving forward. It was then when I realized that my team and I had only communicated to the stakeholders we identified in our pre-determined and pre-approved crisis communication plan, which listed Navy Pier's administrative staff, board of directors, traditional media, social media and website as the stakeholders and platforms to which we would share our communications. While we certainly do believe that our partners should receive a tailored communication, my team and I made the wrongful assumption that it would be taken care of by Navy Pier's tenant relations manager.

Clearly, we have substantial holes in our crisis communication plan, specifically in the areas of internal crisis communication. While we had prepared external crisis responses, we had not thoroughly thought through and identified all of our stakeholders, determined which individuals on our team would be responsible for communicating to each one, what information would be shared with them, and when and how it would be relayed to them—all of which are critical steps to successfully managing a crisis (Strandberg & Vigsø, 2016).

This significant oversight led to angry and disgruntled partners who felt neglected in the time of a major crisis, employees of those partners sharing inaccurate accounts of the incident with media members, the press misreporting the story, and subsequently, the public believing that Navy Pier is an unsafe place to visit. In addition, because we failed to communicate with the offices of local government officials in a timely manner, the City of Chicago also reported a false account of the story through a press conference led by Chicago Police Department's

superintendent, who suggested that the stampede was a result of a Navy Pier security personnel member shouting, “active shooter.” This prompted the media to further attribute the crisis to Navy Pier and question our training practices and procedures for our security teams. However, as our security camera footage confirmed, both incidents occurred outside of Navy Pier’s gated perimeter and should have been attributed to the City of Chicago. By the time Navy Pier leadership informed Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot of the true account of the incidents, it was too late and the damage from public perception had already been done, as evident by the reactions on social media and complaints from other stakeholders.

As we now look onward, Navy Pier has an opportunity to rectify the problem by challenging previous assumptions and identifying best practices for multi-stakeholder crisis communication at the Pier. In order to accomplish this, I used a qualitative research method to evaluate the organization’s current state and uncover areas for improvement.

Research Method

I conducted a series of personal interviews orally with select stakeholders from various groups to gather qualitative data and gain a better understanding of the crisis from their unique lens in order to help Navy Pier determine how its communications and interactions can be improved with specific group(s) in the event of a future crisis. Interview participants included: Grant DePorter (CEO, Harry Caray’s Restaurant Group), Steven Hartenstein (COO, Phil Stefani Signature Restaurants), Kathleen Jenkins (Director of Marketing, Offshore), Brooke Flanagan (Managing Director, Chicago Shakespeare Theater) and Brian Murphy (COO, Navy Pier). Participants were chosen based on the level of impact that the incident had on their respective business, the level of interest they proactively expressed in providing feedback around Navy

Pier's crisis communication practices, and/or the level of investment they have in Navy Pier's operational success due to their specific role. I used a research journal to record notes and code the qualitative data I collected from each interview. Below are the results in narrative form.

Grant DePorter – CEO, Harry Caray's Restaurant Group. Grant is the CEO of Harry Caray's Restaurant Group, a chain of local sports-themed restaurants in the Chicagoland area. The group has a location at Navy Pier, called Harry Caray's Tavern, which is located near the southwest entrance to Navy Pier. It is one of the restaurants that was the closest to the stabbing incident and one of the first establishments that people ran to for shelter from the perceived threats.

Immediately after the Fourth of July, Grant was perhaps the most vocal stakeholder and the first to express his disappointment in how Navy Pier managed its crisis communications. He reached out to me on July 5, 2019 at 11:30 a.m. to make me aware of inaccurate reporting in the news, stating via e-mail that "there is a lot of incorrect news going around" and urging me to "give them a different narrative that does not include Harry Caray's." The news of the incidents at Navy Pier had hit regional media at that point. The ABC television affiliate in the Quad Cities was reporting that three people were stabbed at Harry Caray's Tavern at Navy Pier, which was false since the stabbing occurred outside of Navy Pier's gates.

During his interview, Grant mentioned that he felt as though the misinformation in the media could have been prevented if the Navy Pier team had relayed accurate details of the incident to all Pier-wide stakeholders, including on-site partner establishments. When asked why he thought that might have made a difference, he said that he felt as though a lot of the reporters got the wrong information from people—including some frontline employees of on-

site restaurants—who were not even within close proximity to the actual incident, and the media ran with it because they did not have any other sources to dispute those incorrect statements until later. However, if the partners were equipped with correct information, they could have helped provide accurate information earlier on.

Furthermore, the lack of communication with local government officials led to many of them reporting inaccurate information, according to Grant. He shared that the Cook County State Attorney's Office received false details from unknown sources and shared it with members of the press, including a reporter at the Chicago Sun-Times, who incorrectly reported that a firecracker went off inside of Harry Caray's Tavern. This led to additional reports citing the same information.

Grant also shared that many of the frontline employees who were working as servers, bartenders, managers, etc. that night were rattled by the experience and had a difficult time processing what they witnessed firsthand. He felt that they could have benefitted from speaking with someone—perhaps a grief counselor or mental healthcare professional—who could have potentially helped them manage the trauma and emotions they were feeling as a result of the crisis.

Steven Hartenstein – COO, Phil Stefani Signature Restaurants. Steven is the COO of Phil Stefani Signature Restaurants, a string of popular dining establishments throughout Chicago. The restaurant company services three locations at Navy Pier: Chango Loco, Riva Crabhouse and the Miller Lite Beer Garden.

Steven's primary concern related to the incidents on the Fourth of July was the property damage caused to Riva Crabhouse, their marquee seafood restaurant, as a result of people

running, crashing and diving into the restaurant out of panic. According to Steven, there was major damage done to the restaurant's structure, landscaping, bars, tables, chairs and more, resulting in significant costs. He felt that Navy Pier didn't do a sufficient job of relaying how the property damage and related expenses would be managed in the aftermath. When asked specifically what he thought the Pier could have done better, he pointed out that there wasn't an opportunity presented to partners to ask questions, express concerns and engage in dialogue with the Navy Pier management team following the crisis. This insight revealed that there was a need for a two-way communication system at the Pier, especially in the event of a crisis when there is a heightened sensitivity and demand for answers and resolutions to problems that may have stemmed from the crisis.

Kathleen Jenkins – Marketing Director, Offshore. Kathleen is the Marketing Director at Offshore, the largest rooftop bar in the world, located at the east end of Navy Pier. Offshore had opened just one month prior to the Fourth of July, so it was a pretty new establishment and partner to Navy Pier at the time. For its inaugural Independence Day celebration, Offshore held a private ticketed event, offering guests an opportunity to view the fireworks show from a prime, elevated location. Given that Offshore was the newest addition to the Pier, many media members expressed interest in conducting their live coverage from there. As a result, I also spent majority of my time at Offshore that day working with members of the press, and was there around the time when the crisis occurred.

Kathleen and I both first learned about the possibility of a stabbing and active shooter at the Pier from ABC 7 Chicago Reporter Liz Nagy, whose producer insisted that these incidents were reported on the police scanner. However, ABC 7 was already off the air at the time and

wasn't able to do much with that information in that moment. It did, however, prompt me to call our security and operations team shortly after to inquire whether or not it was true.

Kathleen was by my side as I gathered this information and was one of the first employees of Navy Pier's tenant partners to receive details as they came in. I also used her office at Offshore as my crisis response center and leaned on her for support as needed.

Because Kathleen was with me throughout the night and was subsequently fully aware of the situation in real time, her reaction to Navy Pier's crisis response was a bit different from the others. However, she did note during her interview that she probably would have been very lost and confused if I had not been there to fill her in on the spot, especially given the fact that there was a significant delay in follow-up communications to partners that offered a detailed explanation of what happened.

As the crisis transpired, the Navy Pier security team did contact Offshore's management team to issue a lockdown of the venue; no guests were permitted in or out of the space until security personnel were able to conduct a full sweep of the premises and confirm that there was no immediate threat or danger to the public. Guests at Offshore, who were oblivious to what had been happening at the other end of the Pier, were also intentionally not made aware of the situation to prevent further panic from ensuing. This led to some angry and frustrated patrons, who did not understand why they were not allowed to leave the event, putting a strain on Offshore's management team.

Kathleen stated that she would have preferred to receive crisis training and information related to lockdown protocols and procedures in advance, so that she and her team could have been better prepared for this type of scenario. Especially being so new to Navy Pier, many of

her team members were unaware of how to implement a proper lockdown of the space and direct guests to a safe area in the event that the venue became compromised.

Brooke Flanagan – Managing Director, Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Brooke is the Managing Director of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, located at the heart of Navy Pier. The world-famous theater company welcomes thousands of guests for various Shakespeare plays and other creative productions throughout the year. While the Theater was closed by the time the fireworks show started and was not physically harmed or impacted by the incidents, Brooke and her team were bombarded with calls and e-mails in the following days and weeks from regular patrons of their shows. The common theme seemed to be concerns related to their safety and security at future Chicago Shakespeare Theater shows.

Brooke and her team were among the first partners to reach out to Navy Pier on July 5 and request a statement that they could share with their members and ticketholders. As part of her interview, Brooke emphasized that they, too, have an obligation to respond to their loyal customers and theater community members. However, they cannot engage in a successful dialogue with their patrons if the Navy Pier management team does not provide transparency and offer detailed information after such a significant crisis.

Similar to Steven and Kathleen, Brooke felt passionate about Navy Pier extending an opportunity to engage in two-way communication with its partners and offering crisis training around lockdown protocols in the event of an active shooter, act of terrorism, cyberattack or other threats of that nature. She felt strongly that these adjustments would allow the Theater and other partners to be better prepared to manage and respond to their own stakeholders in the future.

Brian Murphy – COO, Navy Pier. Brian is the COO of Navy Pier. A former high-ranking leader within the Chicago Police Department, Brian currently oversees all operational functions on behalf of the largest destination in the Midwest, including the Pier's safety and security measures. He works closely with federal and local security agencies, including the FBI, U.S. military, Chicago Police Department, Chicago Fire Department and others, to ensure the Pier has sufficient resources for public protection, especially during high-profile events. Brian is also the first person the communications team turns to for information in the event of an operational crisis, given that he is likely one of the first people to be fully made aware of any given situation.

Shortly after the Fourth of July, Brian and I met for a one-on-one debrief of the crisis and to discuss how we might be able to improve Navy Pier's response in the future based on our personal experiences and feedback. Brian's primary concern was the lack of any crisis attribution to the City of Chicago in the press and subsequently in the public eye. He insisted that because both of the incidents that instigated the crisis occurred outside of Navy Pier's controlled area, the City should take some responsibility in managing it instead of shifting the blame on Navy Pier as the Chicago Police Department superintendent did during their publicized press conference. This led the public and other stakeholders to be misinformed and to believe that Navy Pier did not do a thorough job in providing a safe and secure environment for guests to visit. Brian was very flustered by this given that he felt that the on-site measures he and his team put in place did prove to be successful in preventing any threats on Navy Pier property; the stampede that led to multiple on-site injuries was a result of incidents that occurred off property.

When asked how he thought that issue could potentially be prevented in the future, he floated the idea of engaging the communication teams of local government agencies in the pre-crisis and post-crisis stages. He believes that this could potentially help all parties get on the same page in terms of what information will be shared publicly and encourage shared responsibility.

Research Limitations

While the personal interviews provided many key insights, the data was collected from a very small and limited sample of Navy Pier's stakeholder population. However, as previously noted, the Pier has many other stakeholder groups that also need to be taken into consideration. For the purpose of this case study and to offer a starting point for revising Navy Pier's crisis communication plan, I focused on the most impacted, highly vocal and/or disgruntled stakeholders since they pose the greatest threat to Navy Pier. According to Coombs (2015), angry stakeholders are more likely to worsen crises, and "legitimate criticism that spreads among stakeholders poses a direct threat to the organization's reputation," which is why I felt they should be prioritized.

Also, while I drafted and referenced a set of predetermined questions for each interview (Appendix A), I often deviated from the list based on the participant's responses and situational context. For example, because Brian and Kathleen already had access to full information in real time, their questions were not as focused on information discovery. Therefore, not every participant was asked the same or full set of questions. Furthermore, because most of the questions prompted open-ended answers, the interview subjects were able to provide various responses, discouraging an apples-to-apples results comparison during the qualitative analysis.

Literature Review

Stakeholder Salience Model

In order to determine the best approach to managing multi-stakeholder crisis communication, it is important for organizations to first understand who all of their stakeholders are and assess their level of involvement or impact during a crisis. Roloff (2008) perhaps offers the best definition of a stakeholder for this particular case study: "In the context of multi-stakeholder networks a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the approach to the issue addressed by the network." In this case, we are focusing on the groups and individuals who can influence or are impacted by Navy Pier's crisis response, internally and externally.

To help Navy Pier identify, classify and prioritize prominent and influential stakeholders, I utilized the stakeholder salience model (Appendix B), which is a mapping device that helps managers and communications practitioners determine stakeholder value based on the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. "The central idea behind the model is that the more salient or prominent stakeholders have priority and therefore need to be actively communicated with" (Cornelissen, 2017). The model also helped identify other groups that may share in crisis responsibility, such as the City of Chicago, which was equally invested in the safety and security measures of Navy Pier's Fourth of July celebration. Yet, there was a disconnect to that stakeholder group since all of the communications solely stemmed from Navy Pier. In the future, the entities could collaborate on communications related to safety and security to reflect a united front and perhaps even offer the public an extra layer of relief knowing that there is an established partnership between the city and the organization.

Attribution Theory

In devising an effective crisis communications strategy for multi-stakeholder organizations, it is also important to understand what drives people's emotional and behavioral response to a crisis. The attribution theory, developed by Bernard Weiner, expands on this understanding by suggesting that people naturally need to assign blame for events. Furthermore, crisis responsibility is typically determined by assessing whether the issue was a result of situational factors or due to something the organization did or failed to do (Coombs, 2007). If the organization is held responsible for the crisis, its reputation will likely plummet, subsequently leading to a wide range of negative outcomes, including loss of trust, credibility and active participation among stakeholders, and ultimately, a significant hit to the company's bottom line. Coombs' analysis of the attribution theory offers insights around what strategies organizations like Navy Pier can incorporate into their crisis communications plans to potentially mitigate these risks.

To take it a step further, an organization could benefit from analyzing the stakeholder's cognitive model—a concept based on attribution theory—for information processing during and after organizational crises. The model chronologically consists of the trigger event, evaluation process, affective responses and outcomes. Assessment from this model may be used to help inform an organization's decisions related to post-crisis messaging and help frame responses “to repair and/or prevent the negative effects to organizations that result from crises” (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010).

This has especially proven to be an effective strategy within the tourism industry. Evidence suggests that “immediate, reactive yet strategic communication was critical to the

recovery of the tourism industry to provide a steady flow of correct and consistent information to the public and associated stakeholders” (Pennington-Gray, Thapa, Kaplanidou, Cahyanto & Mclaughlin). It is also highly advised that communicators customize messaging for each stakeholder group in advance to ensure rapid dissemination of information post crisis.

Two-way Symmetrical Model

At the point of execution and deployment of post-crisis communications, the two-way symmetrical model of strategic communication can prove to be beneficial to organizations similar to Navy Pier, especially in identifying opportunities for collaboration and shared responsibility. The two-way symmetrical model suggests that practitioners make an effort “to understand and to cooperate with their relevant external publics” (Grunig, 1992). In high-stakes cases such as these with strong activism potential, it is especially critical to get stakeholder support and buy-in ahead of events and engage them to play an active role in the solution. Additionally, by engaging and leveraging stakeholders effectively and proactively, organizations may be able to reduce the weight of crisis attribution against them.

Referencing the attribution theory and the stakeholder’s cognitive model, let us examine the emotional and behavioral response of impacted stakeholders as a result of the incident that occurred on July 4. Initially, all stakeholders were caught off guard at the moment of the triggered event. Given the highly visible security measures in place, staff, partners and guests likely weren’t anticipating any sort of issues.

However, at the point of the evaluation process, fear and outrage may have developed due to external influences paired with the personal experience. There are undoubtedly growing concerns related to the escalation of mass violence occurring at public venues across the

nation, which have likely contributed to negative perceptions of crowded events and provoked heightened apprehension around safety and security accountability, especially for high-profile attractions, such as Navy Pier. This is likely what led to the stakeholders' attribution of this crisis to Navy Pier. As the organizers of the event where the incident occurred, the public's reflex is to assign blame to the organizers (Coombs, 2007).

At the stage of affective responses, people want to know what organizations are doing to ensure their safety when attending or being present at an event. In this case, following the incident at Navy Pier, stakeholders became interested in understanding what the organization had done to manage the crisis upon incident, how the management team planned on addressing the crisis with those impacted, and what they will do differently in the future to prevent such an issue from potentially occurring again.

As part of the outcome stage, Navy Pier would need to address revised security measures and offer some sort of assurance to ease all stakeholders' distress related to potentially experiencing an event of that magnitude again (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010). While some of this had already been done, the Pier needs to think about how it will address this issue again in the future as a repeat incident will significantly increase attribution (Coombs, 2007). One of the ways I believe attribution can be reduced is if crisis responsibility is shared across multiple stakeholders. That responsibility can only be shared if Navy Pier involves its most critical stakeholders in the crisis planning and training process and engages in a two-way dialogue to better understand the various perspectives. As Roloff (2008) suggests, "through understanding the others' opinions and interpretations of the problem the participants grasp the complexity of the issue and learn about interdependencies that were not apparent before."

Conclusion

Recommendations

Strategic Communication Assessment. While Navy Pier certainly has much work to do in order to identify and implement best practices for multi-stakeholder crisis communications, the findings from this research have provided a good starting point for the organization. However, to ensure Navy Pier is able to build and deliver a successful and effective crisis plan moving forward, I recommend the organization commits to a strategic communication assessment that entails facilitating a two-way interaction between both organizational members and stakeholders. The process would include strategic planning, assessing perceptions, benchmarking progress and sensitizing organizational members via development opportunities. One of the focal points for the strategic communication assessment would be stakeholder interaction, which would consist of a deeper investigation of stakeholder sentiments. The organization could reference the stakeholder salience model to determine which stakeholders to engage in this process and to what extent. The other focus area of the assessment would be related to efficiency, which would entail studying the adequacy of information exchange and directionality of communication flow. The recommended technique to evaluate these elements is issuing questionnaires and surveys that may help the organization gain a better understanding of where it currently stands among its stakeholders.

Navy Pier may also want to consider a town hall with its stakeholders as a means to engage in a two-way dialogue regarding crisis management. This would serve as an opportunity to share and address concerns, while encouraging collaboration to drive possible solutions for future incidents and protocols. "A prerequisite for the success of the process is honest and

open communication between the participants in order to develop an essential minimum of trust as the ground for cooperation. It is important that not only similar opinions are shared, but that differences are also addressed in order to understand the extent of conflicting interests and needs present” (Roloff, 2008).

Custom Plan Development. Based on the results from the strategic communication assessment, Navy Pier can begin to develop a customized plan for each of its critical stakeholders, especially the most impacted and disgruntled stakeholder group, which consists of the Pier’s on-site business partners and tenants.

In Navy Pier’s stakeholder salience model, this group can be found in the Demanding Stakeholders category due to their strong sense of urgency for the Pier to protect their employees, patrons, and ultimately, their business’ reputation as a safe place to dine or visit. However, these establishments lack the authoritative power or legitimacy to enforce meaningful change on their own. Therefore, discussions need to be had to properly train their frontline staff in active shooter drills, potential attacks and crowd management during crises. Navy Pier should give serious consideration to allocating and extending these resources to its partners to ensure their collaboration in its overall security plan. This would also serve as an excellent message to communicate publicly, especially given that “resource allocation in the event of a crisis indicates an organization’s commitment to crisis management” (Pennington-Gray, Thapa, Kaplanidou, Cahyanto & Mclaughlin) and could positively impact attitudes towards an organization as it takes proactive steps towards future crisis prevention.

Another change to implement for future incidents is to craft customized messaging tailored to specific stakeholder groups. Distributing a one-size-fits-all type of message to all

stakeholders, including the media, public, board of directors, employees and business partners, will not be effective. My team and I quickly learned this lesson after the Fourth of July given the overwhelming response we received from stakeholders. Furthermore, Navy Pier's on-site stakeholders could use more actionable support from the organization, such as accessibility to a trauma hotline that their employees could utilize as they process traumatic experiences that could potentially arise from intense operational crises. That certainly would have conveyed the Pier's empathy for the events that occurred and demonstrated care to people's mental and physical states.

This translates to why the two-way symmetrical model would be so effective in this case. Previously, Navy Pier relied on the public information model, which can be described as a one-way stream of communication of facts and information from the organization to the public (Grunig, 1992). However, this experience has led me to believe that a two-way symmetrical model would serve the organization better as it would encourage stakeholder collaboration and shared attribution. Perhaps communicating the importance of staying vigilant and reporting suspicious activity could be a way to engage internal and external stakeholders. Offering radical transparency through proactive communication on Navy Pier's owned and shared platforms could also help ease tensions ahead of future events.

Navy Pier could also explore the idea of establishing a communication tool or platform that would allow key stakeholders, such as employees, partners and local government agencies to communicate and share updates as information becomes available. Investing in tools, such as Slack or Microsoft Teams, could yield positive results in managing stakeholder communications during crises and prevent misinformation from spreading externally.

Crisis Training and Simulation. As part of the execution of the custom-developed plans for Navy Pier's stakeholders, I would like to propose designing and implementing a comprehensive crisis training and simulation to help stakeholders prepare for future crises. A recent research study explored the effects of a crisis simulation activity on individuals' crisis management competencies. "Pre- and post-test surveys indicated that participants significantly improved crisis management competencies after the crisis simulation activity" (Wang, 2017).

As a couple of the interview subjects suggested, proper training and an understanding of Navy Pier's crisis protocols could alleviate confusion and lend extra support to the Pier in containing the crisis. This would also be another way to rally stakeholder support, get their buy-in, and distribute crisis attribution and accountability. Furthermore, the training and simulation activity could reveal additional gaps or holes in Navy Pier's crisis communication plan.

The strategic communication assessment and two-way symmetrical model would help us determine the best form of training and support to provide to stakeholders and inform the design process for the simulation. The training and simulation would be developed and led by the Navy Pier communications team under my strategic guidance and oversight.

Implementation Schedule. Due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and implications of the pandemic, I propose the following implementation schedule, barring further unforeseen circumstances that may prevent Navy Pier from bringing the timeline to fruition.

- **Fall 2021:** Strategic communication assessment
- **Winter 2021:** Custom plan development
- **Spring 2022:** Crisis training and simulation
- **Summer 2022:** Revised plan execution (in time for the Fourth of July celebration)

While the incidents that transpired on July 4, 2019 were unfortunate, Navy Pier was at minimum able to limit the damage to the organization's reputation by reducing the weight of attribution and citing it as an isolated incident in the 25-year history of the Pier's Fourth of July celebrations. It also served the organization well to outline a commitment to change in security measures for future events within Navy Pier's post-crisis communications.

The good news is that "the strongest predictive external factor for a crisis plan is crisis experience, simply because an organization that has experienced a crisis is more likely to invest in the development of a plan" (Pennington-Gray, Thapa, Kaplanidou, Cahyanto & Mclaughlin, 2011). I am confident that the findings, insights and recommendations outlined within this case development will help Navy Pier establish a suitable plan to prevent or minimize the potential escalation of future crises as a result of poor stakeholder management.

The core best practices that I believe will help Navy Pier mitigate risks associated with another potential threat or incident is conducting a thorough stakeholder analysis that identifies opportunities for collaboration and shared crisis responsibility among stakeholders; crafting messaging and strategies that address their situational and organizational concerns; and the strategic implementation of a two-way symmetrical model that encourages stakeholder collaboration and participation ahead of and after a crisis. Through thoughtful integration of these theories and practices and elegant delivery in communication, Navy Pier should be able to craft an effective strategy for multi-stakeholder crisis communications for future incidents.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Were you on site on July 4, 2019 when the crisis occurred at Navy Pier?
2. Tell me about your personal experience or account of the incidents that transpired following the fireworks show.
3. When did you learn what happened?
4. How did you hear about it?
5. What was your initial reaction to Navy Pier's crisis response?
6. In what ways do you think Navy Pier could have better managed the actual crisis?
7. In what ways do you think Navy Pier could have better managed its post-crisis communications—specifically with you/your business?
8. What communication tools, resources or support could Navy Pier potentially provide you or your business with in order for your team(s) to feel better prepared to manage similar crises in the future?
9. Do you believe that crisis training (i.e. crisis protocol review, simulation activities, tabletop exercises, etc.) would be helpful to you and/or your team(s)?
10. Would you be interested in participating in Navy Pier's crisis planning process to help inform the organization's future response?

Appendix B

Navy Pier Stakeholder Salience Model for Operational Crises

