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Weathering the Storm

Protecting Your Brand in the Worst of Times

By Christopher Simpson

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Washington—Christopher Simpson faced one of the toughest challenges a school official can face when Indiana University fired its basketball coach—how to manage the explosive publicity and the impact on the university after it fired legendary Coach Bob Knight.

Simpson, serving as IU public relations chief at the time, moved the conversation quickly from “Why did you fire Knight?” to “Who will replace Knight?” to push the public’s attention to IU’s future and avoid dwelling on a negative story.

Simpson’s *Weathering the Storm: Protecting Your Brand in the Worst of Times*, published by CASE this month, details the Knight firing and other crises as illustrations for how to construct a solid crisis communications plan that can protect your institution when times are tough.

Included are first-hand accounts of the November 1999 Texas A&M bonfire tragedy, the rise and fall of former University of South Carolina President James B. Holderman, and the athletic scandal and aftermath at the University of Colorado system. And he walks you through the lessons learned from other crises, from the 9/11 tragedy to the Exxon Valdez to the Martha Stewart debacle, to show what works, and what doesn't.

Simpson, a former newspaper reporter in the national media, press secretary in the U.S. Senate and marketing/media/crisis chief at three major research universities, provides a step-by-step approach to creating a crisis communications plan that can ready your organization to withstand a media assault when times get tough.

“On any given day, you are ripe targets for a full-blown crisis,” writes Simpson, who now leads SimpsonScarborough, a marketing and crisis consulting firm that works with clients nationwide. “Too few institutional leaders plan effectively or fully comprehend the inherent risks. And when crises happen, you scramble, play catch up, and too often, don't get a seat at the senior staff table when lawyers blossom like kudzu and PR decisions are made well outside the court of public opinion.”

About the Author

Christopher Simpson, CEO and partner of SimpsonScarborough, is a nationally recognized leader in crisis communications, media relations, and integrated marketing for higher education and nonprofits. He spent 12 years as a newspaper reporter, much of it in Washington, D.C., as a political writer and senior editor for *The Washington Times*. He

later served as press secretary to U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond. Simpson then worked as the senior administrator for media and marketing at three major research universities--the University of South Carolina, the University of Oregon, and Indiana University.

About the Publisher

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education is one of the largest international associations of education institutions, serving more than 3,300 universities, colleges, and independent elementary and secondary schools in 54 countries. CASE is the leading resource for professional development, information and standards in the fields of educational fundraising, communications and marketing, and alumni relations.

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