

# **Crises Management: Chris Savage (1976G)**

## **INTERNAL**

### ***1. Prepare for more bad news***

- The first rule of crisis management: expect more bad news.
- This is NOT business-as-usual. It is NOT going to pass quickly.
- We are entering a massive shift in business sentiment and consumer behaviour.
- Lots will change. It will get much tougher. It will last a long time.
- But there will be an opportunity.
- Do not bury your heads.
- This is going to be a tough road.
- Phase One is the next 100 days.
- Face reality.

### ***2. Take action - fast - to keep the kitchen humming***

- Get your 'work-from-home' process nailed now.
- If you have not already started work-from-home, start it now.
- Protect staff above all else (see the Publicis CEO video from today).
- Do a zoom call first thing each morning for all staff.
- Give them a 'schedule' to follow each day.
- (eg: Dress smartly. Get started at your laptop at 9am. Have a break and go outside at 10.45am) etc.
- Have virtual lunches together. Have some fun with each other online.
- Share them a link to the Pomodoro time management system to drive momentum.
- There are lots online on how to make this working-from-home hum.

Prepare your business and mindset, that work-from-home will be for four weeks.

### ***3. Have contingencies re your leadership team***

- Scenario plan if your leader/s or other key people get ill.

- Who replaces them?
- And then who replaces them!
- Get them briefed up on how to run the place.
- Do a checklist.

#### **4. Cash and Costs**

- Be relentless on cash.
- Develop Phase One, Two and Three cost reduction plans.
- Each phase gets more difficult.
- Low hanging fruit in Phase One.
- Cutting contractors. Negotiating down rates. Freeze pay rise. Stop hires. Pause optional expenditure.

#### ***Phase Two gets harder.***

Four-day weeks or nine-day fortnights. (I never liked this idea, but it helped, I think). Encourage leave. Leaders take a pay cut. And work full-time.

You might need to reduce staff. I hope not. We need to try to protect all during this tough time. Have heart. Please. But I understand commercial realities. Do the right thing by all. Whatever your business realities allow. This is the time for heart and compassion, as well as commercial nous.

#### ***Phase three is the hardest.***

CUT more staff. For agencies, it's the largest cost, by far. Plan for Phase Three. But fingers crossed it won't need to be done. Do everything you can to avoid it. But be ready. If you needed to cut 30% of your compensation line, how would you do it, and what would the cost be to do it? How could you give all impacted a 'soft landing.'?

Can you make roles part-time until there's a recovery? Make sure everything you do is legal, and most importantly, empathetic. You can't 'cut to greatness'.

We must have the capacity to do the work. There's a point you can't go below and still be competitive.

# EXTERNAL

## **1. Focus, focus, focus on existing clients**

Sounds obvious. Just do it! More than ever before. We need to be terriers on steroids.

Think about your clients and their futures as having three phases:

### *a. Crisis Management*

That's where we are now. The next 30-60 days (maybe longer- don't know, yet). What do we do to evolve fast? How do we

slow the decline? How do we maintain as much as possible? These are the questions clients are asking themselves. We need to be adding value to that. NOW.

### *b. Recovery*

As things start to normalise, clients will start ramping marketing again... sharper, strategically.

### *c. The New Reality*

Things will NOT be the same. Our clients will emerge from this with different business models, changing environments, different go-to-market strategies.

Here's the point. In all interactions with clients, think the Three Phases. 'Train' all staff immediately around this mindset, tone and focus.

*\* How do I add value TODAY to their crisis?*

*\* What are our ideas and what can we learn about how we can add new and powerful value to their 'recovery' phase? What ideas have we been working on these past few weeks that need to 'pause' and be part of that Phase Two?*

*\* What is their 'New Reality' likely to look like? Keep track of ideas we can develop for that phase.*

## **Specifically...**

### *a) Be their therapist (listen with empathy and care)*

Listen to their fears, their stories, their anxieties. Be a strong trusted advisor and friend.

### *b) Communicate more regularly*

- We need to know what they're being told by their bosses.

- When their bosses say, “focus on Blue, nothing else”, we need to know that asap.
- So, we can focus on Blue too.
- Our bosses must be talking to their bosses: often.

*c) Play what's in front of you*

- Do not try to sell work and ideas that are simply no longer relevant for 'today' or not a priority given the crisis.
- Even if you've been burning the midnight oil on them for weeks. Does not matter.
- Nothing turns a client off faster than us trying to sell what is now 'not relevant' to them.
- Get very focused on what their drivers and focus are TODAY (not yesterday).
- Add ideas and value to help them solve those issues - the issues of today!
- Be proactive in suggesting we evolve, adapt or delay work (to 'Recovery' phase perhaps) underway that is now just wrong given the market.

*d) Look for work, not budgets*

- Focus on finding things we can solve, opportunities we can leverage, for our clients.
- Look for the work. Don't look for budgets.
- That work might not be in services we are usually providing that client.
- Be red-hot aware of what they need, and how we can provide it.

*e) Get the senior/best talent involved*

- Make sure your very best people are client-engaged. All of them.
- Now's the time for the 'A' team being front and centre with clients.
- Even if it's just getting their brains ideating around ideas to help clients move forward.

*f) Be seen as 100% focused on THEM*

It is simply not about us. Make it all about them: our clients.

*g) Plan on every key client - and review weekly as a team and with your leader*

- Shape out a 60-day rolling plan - updated weekly. It's OUR plan for each key client.
- Who engages with whom? How often?
- Opportunities. Risks.
- The three phases. Crisis. Recovery. New Reality. What work fits where?
- Their burning issues?
- What do we need to ideate? What should we take next? When? How?
- Any warning signs?
- How do we push through slowness in their approval processes given their remote working?
- Invoices being paid.
- New services they need/we can offer.

## **2. Raise Profile**

- Now is the time to drive profile.
- Send valuable material to clients - 'five top tips' etc.
- Spread the insights, through social media.
- Have virtual 'events'.... Lunch and Learns for clients.... not BAU... but about how to adapt to this crisis.
- Drive the PR harder than ever before.
- NOT about us...but about ideas and insights of real value to our clients right now.

## **3. Drive the Pipe**

- Review your pipeline list. Prioritise what's going 'on hold'. What's still live and needs to be WON!!
- Include all prospects on your 'profile' plan hit list.
- Send them your materials. Invite them to your 'virtual' events. ADD VALUE. BE VISIBLE. BE ENERGISING.
- Ideate what they most need to navigate the 'Crisis' phase.
- Send them ideas. Pitch them via Zoom.

- Send your tips and get on your radar every single client you have worked on for the past three years, but no longer do.
- Even those who fired you. Raise profile.
- Sharpen your pitching - so your selling ideas to existing, former or new clients is sharper than ever.
- Perfect how you position the business. Be energising and give hope.

#### **4. Think Revenue, revenue, revenue (The Revenue Rocket)**

- Not today. But in a few weeks. Get every frontline staff member passionate and skilled to drive revenue.
- I call it the "Revenue Rocket".
- It's about super-pleasing existing clients. Revving up existing relationships (making them 'fresh' again).
- Driving client growth plans.
- Driving 'trusted advisor' status with clients.
- Client service excellence techniques, every day.
- (Remember- *work that works* is the very best thing you can do!!! It solves everything with clients).
- Then driving the Pipe. There's a proven methodology to get a pipeline pumping.
- Making sure we WIN the best pitches. Be brilliant at the pitch process and developing OUR strategy to WIN (beat competitors).
- Plus be brilliant at the pitch itself. The best ideas, and the best presentations. And add a touch of good old-fashioned mongrel. We MUST win.
- Drive differentiated profile. Becoming 'go to' people/agencies.
- The list goes on.
- Not today. Today it's the focus, focus on existing clients and adding value to managing their crisis.
- But in a few weeks.

## **LEADERSHIP**

- We're all frightened. We all have fear. These are very unsettling times.

- But we are also so fortunate.
- Really.
- To be in leadership positions at a time of real need.
- This is our moment
- To LEAD.
- To lead our teams... supporting, encouraging, calming, giving direction, giving optimism and hope.
- To lead our businesses.... with strength, speed, agility, humanity.
- To lead our clients... with energy, integrity, experience and positivity.
- To lead ourselves ... recognise our fear, embrace it, hug ourselves, and get out there and LEAD.
- Let's get this done!

Oh- and the occasional glass of red wine helps too.

Good luck all. TAKE CARE.

*Chris Savage (1976G)*