

Communicating Effectively about Gay and Lesbian Issues

When the unexpected happens or a misstep is taken, however minor, a crisis may emerge that can threaten a company or organization's reputation and harm its business. At that point, swift and intelligent action is needed.

Witeck-Combs Communications offers our clients the seasoned confidence that we can become an essential part of the solutions team, serving as coaches for next steps.

Witeck-Combs Communications is frequently called on to bring our unflappable experience to clients in litigation or companies troubled by consumer backlash that can escalate. In many instances, crisis events provide a company with the opportunity to truly shine and recover from setbacks, even self-inflicted wounds. We have learned again and again how a company or an organization manages a controversial issue is critical to the media and public's initial judgment and long-term response.

Are you Prepared?

Far more valuable than merely responding to a crisis, is the imperative to anticipate and plan for one, and that is exactly what we can do best for corporate managers.

No matter what initiatives you undertake within the GLBT market, your company is likely to find enthusiastic supporters, friends and advocates. The company may also have vociferous critics. Most households, however, are likely to be found "in the middle," or will take a "wait and see" approach.

Witeck-Combs Communications aims to arm you with the tools necessary to address supporters and advocates with accurate knowledge about the company, and to pre-empt critics by respectfully opening doors and lines of communication. The goal is not to engage, respond to or confront the most extreme voices on the attack, but to lower the volume of criticisms and allow your company to do what it does best: serving all of its loyal customers.

From our experience, there is no gain in approaching the politically savvy and highly motivated extreme opponents. Any such well-intentioned effort could signal an opportunity to exploit perceived vulnerabilities in a high-risk publicity campaign and pre-empt us with more disinformation about your company.

We know this is achievable, and very much wish to share this expertise with you as your specialized communications team.

Goal

Develop a comprehensive crisis communications plan with specific objectives, messages, audiences, tools and an implementation plan should the company be confronted with unpredictable or unfavorable reaction to its targeted outreach to the GLBT market.



As of 2006, 142 Fortune 500 companies are nationally recognized for their outstanding reputation with respect to treating GLBT employees equally in the workplace by receiving a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign's 2005 Corporate Equality Index.

More companies are paying attention to the buying power of the GLBT consumer market – estimated to be \$690 billion in 2007. Yet, extremist groups unfairly target companies whose policies are inclusive. Americans are divided on how they would respond:

- A majority of Americans oppose boycotting a company because it markets or advertises to gays and lesbians.
- Yet, 18% still favor a boycott.
- 25% are not sure what they would do.

How prepared is your company?



Witeck-Combs Communications

is the nation's premier strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with unmatched expertise in the GLBT community.

For the past 13 years, Witeck-Combs Communications has pioneered strategic communications and marketing consulting in the GLBT market for many brand leaders, helping company executives develop a productive balance between addressing the needs of their business and recognizing opportunities in the marketplace. It is no longer possible or prudent for a leading corporation to ignore GLBT issues and opportunities in today's marketplace.

To assist executives on the frontlines in a tested and very trusting way, Witeck-Combs Communications has developed a number of tools to help you not only prepare for today's challenges, but also make smart business decisions that positively impact your bottom line.

These include:

- **Communicating Effectively About Gay and Lesbian Issues**
- **Your Business and Gay Public Policy**
- **How to Tap the \$690 Billion Gay Market**

We welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can help guide you through this sometimes delicate process using experience, knowledge and trust. For more information, contact:

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Elements of the Plan

Witeck-Combs Communications will:

- Identify and interview key players inside your organization who will most likely be involved in owning and implementing the plan should it be necessary.
- Conduct initial meeting with your organization to set project objectives (via phone or in person).
- Conduct onsite assessments with key participants from Corporate Communications, Legal, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing and the GLBT Employee Resource Group.
- Development of Crisis Communications plan, which includes:
 - Relevant messaging that will emphasize your company's business case above all – which best serves the audience and market by providing unique and valuable services to the GLBT segment.
 - Coordination strategy for internal communications with management, business units and other corporate stakeholders.
 - Crisis Communications media kits that are likely to include:
 - Agreed messages on your company and GLBT community.
 - Recommended press statements.
 - Suggested Q & A's.
 - Third-party statements of support.
 - Spokesperson training as requested.
 - Press support and counsel available through your HQ staff for field staff.
 - A tactical media plan that will reach out and/or respond to media in core audiences, including:
 - Trades and business media.
 - GLBT media community (national and local).
 - Local media where your headquarters and/or large offices are located.
 - Community Outreach Plan that may be engaged in times of crisis. This includes:
 - Tapping GLBT organizations that you sponsor to engage their memberships as needed to show support to your company's management and staff.
 - If necessary, arrange for briefings/informal receptions or one-on-one visits including leave-behind materials to inform them of the situation.

Deliverables

Witeck-Combs Communications will provide for you a written plan, as well as present a summary of the plan via a PowerPoint presentation to be delivered in person.