**Lesson Plan**

**Module 9**

**Lesson 2**

**Overview**

A crisis is an unexpected event/situation that can potentially cause severe damage to an organization or the public. Crisis management is designed to protect an organization and its stakeholders from threats and/or reduce the impact of the threats. This lesson addresses the important ethical issue of access to information during a crisis. The concepts of significant choice for stakeholders is discussed, as well as the challenges of information uncertainty and ambiguity. Then the lesson discusses the ethical question of withholding communication or temporarily delaying information release during a crisis.

**Module Format**

* A) A short video, B) a written lesson, C) a case study on US Airways Flight 1549, D) a set of powerpoint slides, and E) assessment questions

**Learning objectives**

* Students will understand access to information as an ethical obligation
* Students will comprehend the importance of being open and honest for organization reputation even though uncertainty and ambiguity exist
* Students will discuss the ethical considerations of the possibility for withholding information or postponing information release
* Students will apply the above concepts to crisis cases and evaluate the crisis management decisions with ethical standards

**Key concepts**

Significant choice ethical framework; information uncertainty; communication ambiguity; ethics of withholding information

* **Activities**
  + - Video viewing (in and outside class) of the US Airways Flight 1549 case or other corporate crisis cases selected by the instructor;
    - Reading of selected press releases from Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov), public statements, announcements, and news articles on public health crisis cases;
    - Class discussions on news stories and reader comments to online newspapers/social media related to crisis events
    - Short reflection essays on crisis management successes or failures based on ethical concepts discussed in this lesson

Students will discuss the communication materials coming from the organization in crisis, and the media reports of the crisis, which might contain criticisms against the organization’s performance in crisis management.

* The instructor will introduce the key concepts, illustrated with examples from crisis cases. The instructor will guide student discussions on how these concepts on ethical consideration of crisis management are exemplified in selected cases. Specifically, through reviewing communication materials (public statements, announcements, and press releases) produced by the organizations encountering crisis situations, students will apply the key concepts to understand how the organizations could make ethical decisions to accept responsibility, uphold accountability, enable access to information, and provide/facilitate humanitarian care when there are victims involved. Students will also examine materials showing how organizations could deny or evade responsibilities. The students will also analyze how these steps will impact the process of image restoration and post-crisis organizational revival.