DEFCON: A Basic Guide to Crisis Management

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CCP

Howdy!

I am not Chuck Norris, but I am a third generation native Texan.

- Over a decade of online community involvement
- Player volunteer, game portal journalist
- Industry career began in 2002
- Primary focus has been community and public relations

About CCP

- Founded in 1997

- HQ in Reykjavik, Iceland with offices in Atlanta, Newcastle and Shanghai

- 600 employees

- Makers of EVE Online, DUST 514 and World of Darkness

www.ccpgames.com/jobs

co·in·ci·dence [koh-in-si-duhns]

noun

1. a striking occurrence of two or more events at one time apparently by mere chance: Our meeting in Venice was pure coincidence.
2. the condition or fact of coinciding.
3. an instance of this.

The day after I received word that I would be doing this presentation at GDCO, all Hell broke loose for us at CCP. For the next two months, we faced one PR crisis of varying degree after another. It was bad news for me but good news for you as I am now even more qualified and experienced to speak on this subject than I was when I first submitted my speaker proposal.

- I will be using examples from outside our industry because I don't want to call out our peers.
- I could do a full-day seminar on the topic, but with only an hour I will be focusing on the big beats.
- My goal is to give you the basic tools you can use immediately. Time and experience will do the rest.

A **defense readiness condition** (**DEFCON**) is an alert posture used by the United States Armed Forces. The DEFCON system was developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and unified and specified combatant commands. It prescribes five graduated levels of readiness (or states of alert) for the U.S. military, and increase in severity from DEFCON 5 (least severe) to DEFCON 1 (most severe) to match varying military situations.
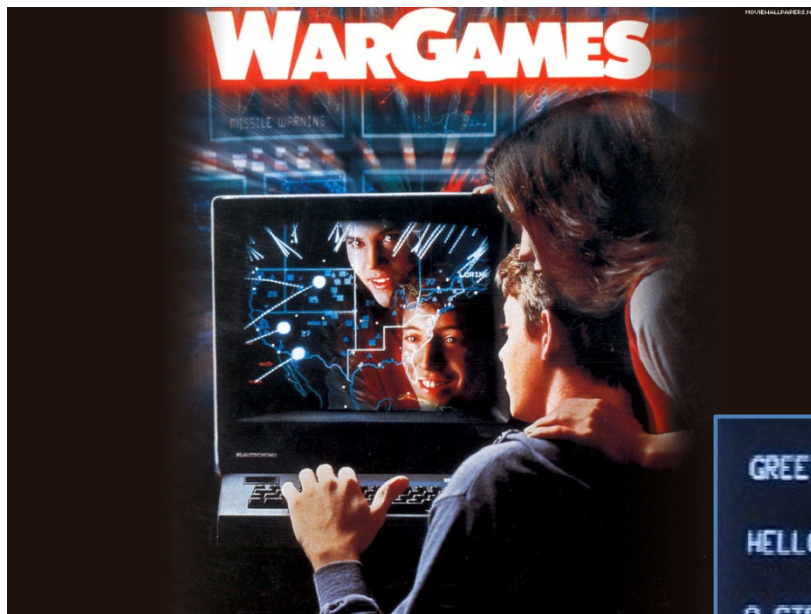
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DEFCON

Defense condition	Exercise term	Description	Readiness	Color
DEFCON 5	FADE OUT	Lowest state of readiness	Normal readiness	Blue
DEFCON 4	DOUBLE TAKE	Increased intelligence watch and strengthened security measures	Above normal readiness	Green
DEFCON 3	ROUND HOUSE	Increase in force readiness above that required for normal readiness	Medium readiness	Yellow
DEFCON 2	FAST PACE	Further increase in force readiness, but less than maximum readiness	War readiness	Red
DEFCON 1	COCKED PISTOL	War is imminent.	Maximum readiness	White

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DEFCON

The official DEFCON chart and states of readiness along with two incorrect examples. It's common for the conditions to be inverted with DEFCON 1 being incorrectly shown as the highest level of alert.

DEFCON: Chuck Norris Style
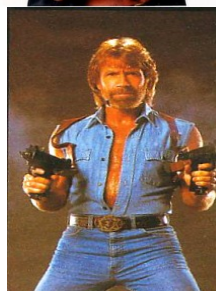
LEVEL 5
Chillaxin' Chuck
Everything's rosy

LEVEL 4
Hi-Ya! Chuck
Standard mild grumblings

LEVEL 3
Warmed Up Chuck
Unified outcry across sectors, numbers dipping

LEVEL 2
Pullin' on the Whoopass Gloves Chuck
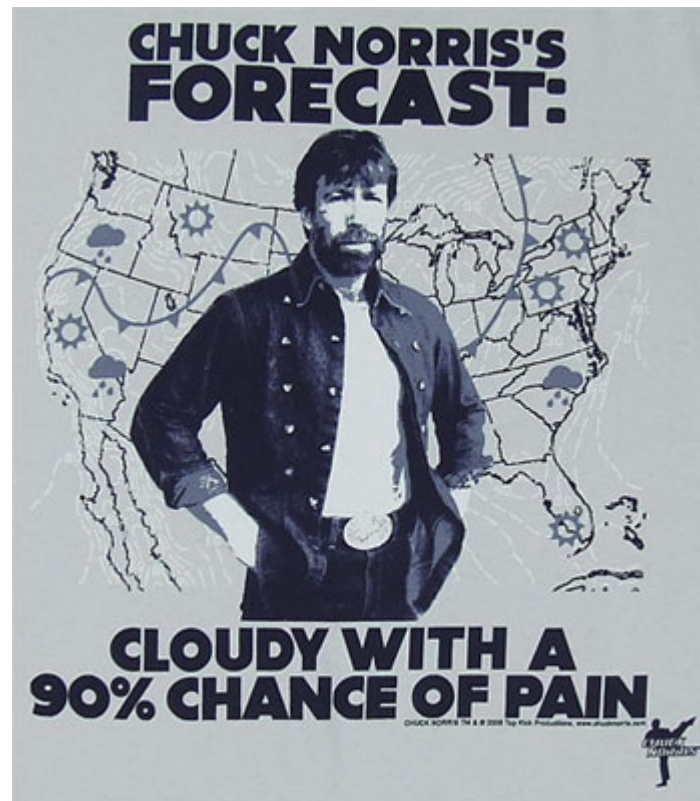*Game media coverage, significant user loss*

LEVEL 1
Double-Packin' Chuck
Mainstream news, hemorrhaging users

Though Chuck is more of a "Delta Force" guy, he serves our purpose well. I hope my version will make it easier to remember and give you a better barometer to work from.

It is inevitable: You will face a crisis.


How you react can set the course for years to come.

- Poorly handled incidents can haunt you for a long time.
- Your mileage may vary based on the type and severity of the incident, core audience and whatever else is going on. A slow news week may put you in the hot seat for something relatively minor.

1982 TYLENOL POISONINGS

"We believe our first responsibility is to doctors, nurses and patients, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services."

- Johnson & Johnson's Credo

1. Jesus
2. Tylenol

What they did right

- Reacted immediately
- Accepted responsibility
- Recalled product
- Halted advertisement
- New tamper-resistant package design
- Discounted prices
- Presentations to restore confidence

What they did wrong

- Waited two days before making a statement
- Lied about the extent of the damage
- Failed to issue a sincere apology
- Did not formulate and execute a clear, timely clean-up plan

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The Key to Success is Advance Preparation

➢ Cultivate relationships with media reps

➢ Have generic "first response" messaging ready

➢ Prepare an emergency contact list

➢ Make sure others are aware of the plan and can access crucial documents and tools

➢ Train staff to notify you immediately at the first sign of trouble

- The time to prepare is before the crisis hits. Make the most of quiet downtimes to do research and sketch out "what if?" scenarios.
- A generic response can be something as simple as, "We are aware of...", "It has come to our attention that..." or "We are looking into..."
- Your emergency contact list should include internal and external contacts (including strongest media contacts)
- Train your staff not to accept cold calls from reporters. In speaking to the press they should not "guesstimate"; it's okay to say "I don't know," "I'm not in a position to speculate," or "We are waiting for more information."

➢STAY CALM

➢REACT QUICKLY

➢BE TRUTHFUL

tiger tales

VS.

Gretchen Dow Ma

Chuck Norris
can taste lies

Tiger Woods built up a reputation as a dedicated family man and faithful husband. When news broke to the contrary, his career crashed.

Charlie Sheen "The Machine" embraced his bad boy image. When his name turned up in Hollywood Madam Heidi Fleiss' little black book, no one was surprised and it had no negative impact on his career.

Online

Three Primary Phases of Crisis Management

Identify and diagnose
What's wrong? How bad is it? Who is affected?

Create a turnaround strategy
Who can fix it and how? What will we say and who will say it?

Implement plans, monitor results
Pull the trigger, watch what happens, follow up as needed

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Identify and diagnose
What's wrong? How bad is it? Who is affected?

➢ At the first hint of smoke, find out what the core issue is
- Player/public commentary may be misleading or lack information
- Consult with relevant internal experts
- Talk with your Community and Customer Support teams

➢ Determine the worst-case extent of the damage
- Could this cause a significant loss of customers?
- Has any personal or proprietary information been leaked?
- Does it have the potential to prompt litigation?

➢ Identify your target audience(s)
- Is this an issue that will only matter to your engaged community?
- How likely is it that gaming and/or mainstream media will pick up the story?
- Could this affect relationships with investors and/or partners?

TIP:
Be good to your Community and Customer
Support staff and they will be good to you.

TIP:
Start a Timeline Immediately

*It's far easier to build as you go
than to piece together later*

Timelines can be useful in identifying:
o Processes that should be implemented or revised
    o Areas where you can improve
    o Staff that may need coaching

- You should always do a postmortem even if it is only for your own benefit.
- Sometimes they can feel like the Inquisition but it is the best way to avoid repeating mistakes.

Create a turnaround strategy
Who can fix it and how? What will we say and who will say it?

➢ Staff your War Room with relevant experts
- Smaller groups can work faster and more efficiently
- Be diligent in coordinating who will do what and when
- Keep tempers and finger pointing in check, they are counterproductive

➢ Make sure you're addressing the issue(s) thoroughly
- Dropped balls can derail your chance for success
- Break it down into easy-to-understand terms
- Protect sensitive information and be forthright when doing so

➢ Have the right people with the right "voices"
- Community and Support to speak to the players
- Marketing and PR to address general public and media
- Involve top brass only if absolutely necessary

- War Room: Keep the group small but make sure information is flowing in and out to other groups/ departments.
- Addressing issues: Players will hone in on any that you miss and make those the focus; you must acknowledge *everything*. If you can't be forthright because of may compromise security or policies, say so.
- Voices: They are distinctly different based on audience. Players hate spin and Marketing-/PR-speak. Draft a core message and repurpose for the intended audience.

Control the Message
If you say nothing, misinformation goes unchecked and gains traction

- Correct gross misquotes, inaccuracies, etc.
- Remember that most reporters want to get the facts straight and will work with you to do so.
- Be polite and patient with your media contacts. Don't make enemies when you need allies.
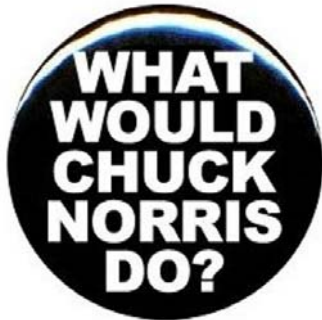
What they want

- Acknowledgement of the issue
- A sincere apology
- Reassurance
- An explanation
- Action

What you should say

- ✓ Acknowledge the problem in non-specific terms, assuring that an investigation is underway and promising more information as available
- ✓ You're sorry (even if you're not directly at fault)
- ✓ Reassure that account and billing info is safe *only if it is*
- ✓ Explain steps that were/will be taken so it won't happen again

TIP:
Anticipate what the most common questions will be and then proactively prepare and issue a FAQ
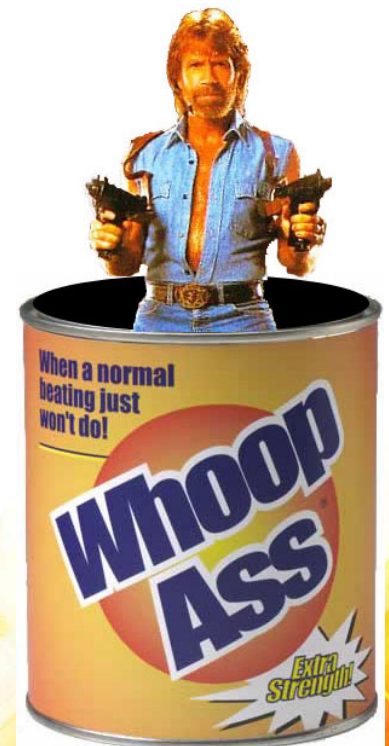
Chuck Norris's cowboy boots are made from real cowboys

Whoa there, cowboy!

➢ Avoid absolutes

➢ Be timely and consistent

➢ Don't overcommunicate or overpromise

➢ Don't feel pressured to issue a full explanation until you are comfortable with the information you have to offer

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Implement plans, monitor results
Pull the trigger, watch what happens, follow up as needed

➢ Where to convey your message
- DEFCON 3 - Concerns engaged community only: Use the forums
- DEFCON 2 - Has spread to game media: Publish on your RSS-accessible news page(s) and social media, send a targeted news alert
- DEFCON 1 - Goes mainstream: Send a news alert, hold a press conference

FreakingNews.com

+

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what is that i don't even...

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Remember this line from an earlier slide?

➢ **Cultivate relationships with media reps**

Now is when the importance of that comes into play.

- **RSS-accessible feed**: "Really Simple Syndication"; a feature that allows Web masters to automagically collect and publish news on their own sites.

- **News alert**: Whereas a press release creates a story that journalists can use alone or as a background when writing a story, a news alert is a mass mail sent to your media contacts that conveys concise, important information: Who, What, When, Where and Why.

- **Targeted news alert**: The same as a news alert but sent to a specialized list of media contacts, e.g. journalists that squarely focus on technology.

- **Press conference**: An event where you invite reporters to hear your statement or story, most often followed by a question and answer session.

TIP:
Use Skype to host press conferences.

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Implement plans, monitor results
Pull the trigger, watch what happens, follow up as needed

➤ Where to convey your message
- Concerns engaged community only: use the forums
- Has spread to game media: publish on your RSS-accessible news page(s) and social media, targeted news alert
- Goes mainstream: send a news alert, hold a press conference

➤ Use several methods to monitor the results
- Community and Support to assess player sentiment
- Google Alerts or other clipping/reporting services for the greater Web
- "Water cooler conversations" to gauge co-worker sentiments

➤ Following up is imperative
- If you made promises for changes, keep them
- If you made promises for more information, provide it
- If you made promises for compensation, do it

## If at First You Don't Succeed, You're Not Chuck Norris

... but you do have options

- Contact affected customers to ensure their situations have been resolved satisfactorily; immediately address any lingering issues

- Conduct a thorough postmortem and share the findings through a blog

- Conduct an exclusive interview with a trusted, sympathetic journalist

About "trusted journalists" - These relationships have to be built-up like any other business partnership or friendship. Do not ask them to spin for you. A responsible journalist won't and it could backfire. Ask to tell your side of the story and trust that they will do so fairly. You may still face tough questions. Be willing to answer them or explain why you can't.

Chuck Norris's Toilet paper
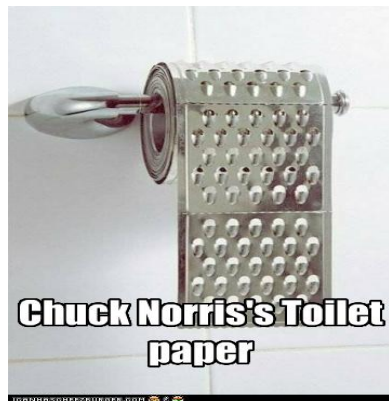
Sometimes, there is no quick fix and you simply have to wait until the smoke clears

PAIN IS WEAKNESS LEAVING THE BODY
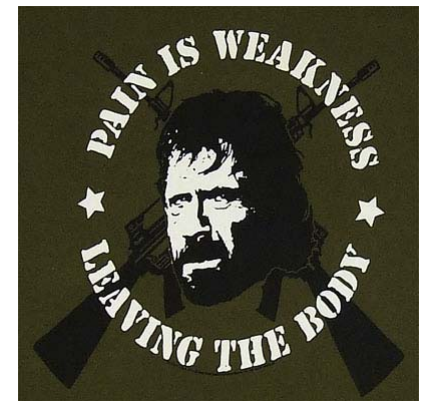
- When you have done all you can, STOP. You will only dig the hole deeper and perpetuate anger/resentment/debate.
- Let your statement(s) and action(s) speak for themselves. Keep referring reporters and others to those.

Basic Survival Tips

➢ This ain't rocket science. Use your smarts and you'll be okay.

➢ Accept that it is impossible to make everyone happy. You will always have naysayers, tinfoil hatters and haters.

➢ Study best and worst cases of how crisis situations were handled. Politicians and celebrities are a good place to start.

➢ Speaking of celebrities: Remember that no matter how bad it gets, wherever she is, Lindsey Lohan is probably having a tougher week than you are.
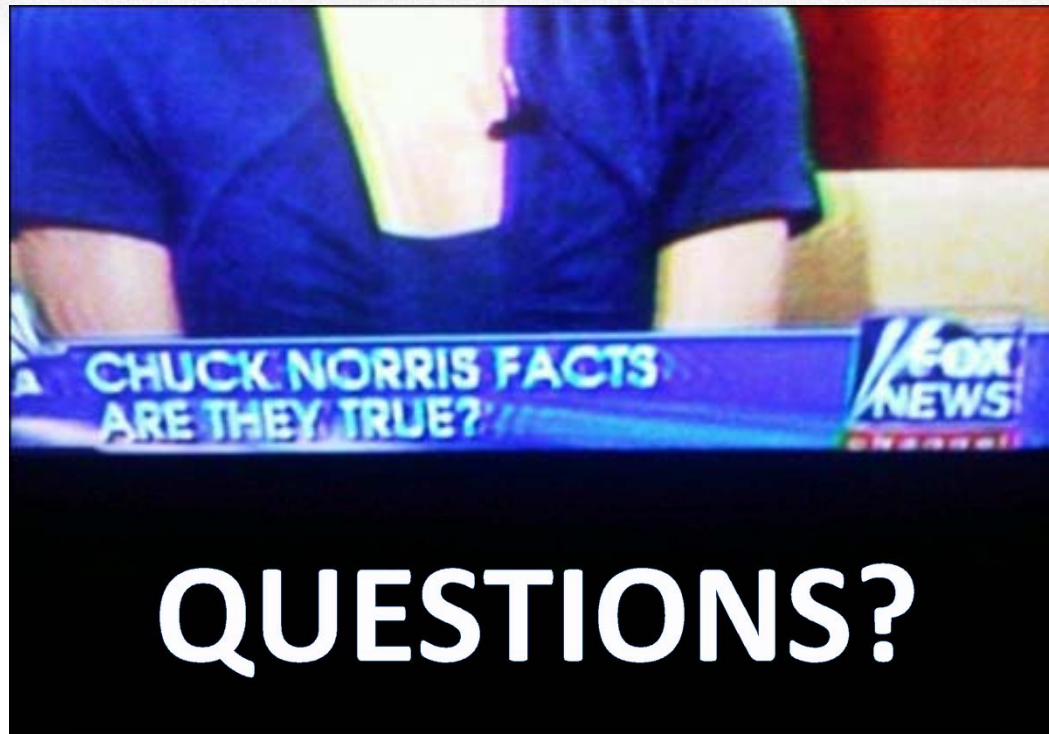
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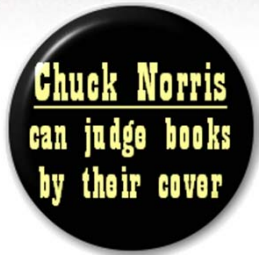
RESOURCES

- EVE Online boot.ini postmortem blog
- ADL Crisis Management
- Colorado Nonprofit Association Crisis Communication Plan
- NTA Guide to Developing Crisis Management Plans
- Air Force Blog Assessment Chart

Chuck Norris doesn't read books.
He stares them down until he
gets the information he wants.

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