Client Case Analysis & Crisis Ready Program of The Governor's Office of New York

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Executive Summary

This report is an analysis of the crisis readiness of the Governor's Office of New York. The report covers the culture of the organization, the potential risks and impacts of a crisis, understanding stakeholder's expectations during a crisis, action plans to take during a crisis, and training material to practice being in a crisis ready mindset. This report is created by three seniors in Dr. Jeremy Fykes, Crisis Communication course at Belmont University in Fall of 2022: Peyton Kelley, Jessica Parente, and Kailee Bass.

This report is broken down into five phases that will go through the readiness that a crisis team will experience while preparing for a crisis, as outlined in Melissa Agnes's Crisis Ready. This report is focused on the crisis of Andrew Cuomo releasing false information during the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. The report will detail the crisis, examine how the crisis occurred and unraveled, and create an action plan for future crises that may occur:

Audit of the Organization's Culture (Phase 1):

Andrew Cuomo built his culture off of looking like he had a well-functioning diverse staff that worked together well with strong trust deposits internally and externally with the State of New York. Cuomo also used his power to benefit the democratic party to pass bills and convince the republic party to pass certain laws, such as the legalizing same-sex marriage. Unfortunately, the culture was based on benefiting his own selfish desires and his personal reputation were prioritized over the greater good of the New York Community. He would lead decisions based off of temporary fixes and blatant lies to cover up the mistakes the office made. This caused internal conflict and tension through the New York government. The negative changing culture influenced the outcome of the falsified data, which turned into a crisis quickly.

Understand External Factors (Phase 2):

For the Governor's office and Cuomo there are different internal and external factors that become a factor in the crisis. The external factors are the CDC, News Media, the Nature of the Government to the Citizen Relationship, and Political Party Candidates. There are four key stakeholders that were influenced throughout the crisis.

This lack of communication created intense backlash from citizens of New York and took to social media platforms quickly. Lying about statistics and presenting them skewed not only made the citizens of New York not trust Cuomo and team, but the nation lost trust in government officials as a whole. Unfortunately, key stakeholders could not help communicate in this situation because they discovered the crisis at the same time everyone else did.

Identification of Stakeholder Expectations (Phase 3):

There are multiple key stakeholders that are involved with this crisis and become affected directly by the actions made. These Stakeholders include: Governor of New York, Governor of New York's Senior Staff, New York State Government employees that report to the office, New York citizens, Federal Government, and News Media. These key stakeholders hold positions that are either responsible for enforcing the law, coordinating and implementing different laws and regulations, and the people that the crisis is directly harming. These key stakeholders want to know about the exact details of the situation, and what the steps are to handle the crisis at hand.

While stakeholders expect a timely and prompt response, they also expect this response to include accurate facts. This concept traces back to the Governor's willingness to be transparent about the crisis. Stakeholders expect to know specific details that have been confirmed, and that the organization's words align with their actions.

Action Plans and Communication Strategy Playbook (Phase 4):

In this section, it is divided into two crises that have an action plan ready for each scenario. These include: Organized Activism Against the Organization and the Release of Falsified Data/Misinformation. Each of these scenarios will cover five different sections that will provide a playbook activation, action plan, contact information, communication strategy, and post-crisis management.

Each playbook serves to inform the Office of the Governor of the communication plan and the action plan that needs to be taken in the case of organized activism against the state government. The playbooks outline a practical plan for the Office of the Governor in case of the emergency crisis.

Implement the Crisis Ready Program (Phase 5):

In this phase of the report, there is a simulation for each of the above crises to show a real-life scenario and the questions that will need to be answered. The questions are related to the time frame during the crisis is forming and what information is needed at the proper time. While providing a review for the questions to ask after the crisis and the actions that need to follow to rebuild.

Organizational Overview

The Office of the Governor holds many roles and responsibilities relating to power and authority over the state's policy and agenda. While the United States Constitution and state level statutes give the Governor specific powers, the Governor's personal style has great influence over the state's economic and political climate. Each Governor has a support system staffed with advisors that help the Governor navigate through decisions regarding policy development, legislative relations, communications, and emergency management.

As the leader of the state, the Governor is able to pursue, advance, and implement policies and programs that they foresee as beneficial to the state. While the Office of the Governor holds power in legislative and appointment decisions, perhaps the Office's most influential powers are held in executive orders and emergency powers. Governor's use executive orders to trigger emergency powers in situations that require immediate action, to create advisory or investigative committees, and to address administrative issues. In addition to these roles, the Governor is also responsible for the state's preparation for emergencies and disasters. Governors are responsible for the preparation, prevention, response, and recovery in times of an emergency. Communication from the Governor to the public in times of crisis would theoretically provide advice, instruction, and a sense of order.

In March of 2020, the world experienced a global pandemic from the Covid-19 virus, and the Governor & his team dealt with creating new rules and regulations to keep their citizens safe. Cuomo and the Office of the Governor's responsibilities have become much more complex. In addition to their numerous other responsibilities, Covid-19 has forced Governors to devote the majority of their time and energy to effectively protecting public health, as well as work to stimulate economic recovery. Throughout the pandemic, Governor Offices have had the responsibility of effectively communicating not only with other governors offices, but also to the public in a timely and accurate manner. This will be our focused crisis analyzed in Phases 1-3.

Phase I: Audit

When an organization can be prepared at any moment to handle a crisis, they have implemented a "crisis-ready" culture. There are many key factors to ensure this implementation, including overall crisis preparation and the people mindset. Crises can be seen as a negative and alarming event, but in a "crisis-ready" culture, it is seen as an opportunity. The crisis is handled with respect and with clear, efficient communication and ultimately, all issues will be resolved before entering the crisis stage.

The Governor's Office of New York, specifically under the power of Governor Andrew Cuomo, has proven forms of crisis readiness through their organization's culture, including strength between employees and gaining trust of the public. However, they have also proven there are flaws in their crisis-ready foundation by prioritizing reputation over their citizens, and not properly handling conflict within the government system. These points, and more, are broken down below with the ways Cuomo and staff had "crisis-ready" culture, and ways they did not.

Cuomo & The Governor's Office of New York...

was crisis ready:

- The Office had what seemed to be a well functioning staff
  - Cuomo had a group of advisory aides alongside him during his time in office, making all office decisions unified. This took away Cuomo's single-handed authority and dispersed decisions of power among his staff.
  - Advisory staff wasn't composed of only white men; the executive chamber was composed of 5 women and 4 men

- Trust deposits
  - Cuomo's office was respected (got re-elected twice after initial election)
  - Cuomo was transparent about the financial decisions and his desired future outlook that were to better the state of New York
  - Cuomo promised strong actions and executed them
  - Cuomo's father, Mario, served as the NY Governor for 3 terms; Cuomo had first hand experience
  - Cuomo presented empathy to his citizens when giving official statements
    - During the height of Covid, Cuomo would express sadness and an overall shaken mood when presenting the Covid-19 death toll. When rates would decrease, he would express joy. This led people to have the feeling that we are all in this together and trusted his guidance because of it

- Cuomo used his power to benefit the Democratic party
  - In his first year in office, Cuomo passed a property-tax cap that is still in effect today, benefitting many New York citizens
  - One of Cuomo's biggest accomplishments was convincing four Republican senators and some hesitant Democrats to vote to legalize same-sex marriage in 2011
  - After the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2013, Cuomo passed the SAFE Act, which was a series of gun-control laws including a more intense registration process and banning many semi-automatic firearms
  - When the Democratic party gained control in 2019, Cuomo went right to work fulfilling the laws that were previously opposed. Those laws included turnout improvement, a Reproductive Health Act, and a measure to make it easier for employees to sue their employers for sexual harassment

was not crisis ready:

- Personal reputation and loyalty were prioritized over the greater good of the New York community
  - Staff was willing to protect Cuomo at all costs, no matter the accusation
  - Staff protection was guided by loyalty, but mostly by fear
  - Used coverups and information delays to the public in order to make himself look professional and in control

- Internal conflict and tension throughout the New York government
  - The representatives below him were ready to turn on him as soon as weakness was shown
  - "For him to win someone else must lose"
  - His father did not act on his promises during 3 terms as New York Governor
  - No follow through support of other democratic New York officials
  - No trust between health experts and Cuomo

- Presented success by covering his mistakes with temporary fixes and blatant lies
  - In 2014, Cuomo created the "Women's Equality Party" to attempt to appeal to female voters. While it was disguised as a women in government support system, Cuomo used the "WEP" to endorse male candidates over women candidates with a real shot at winning
  - Released to the public the nursing home death toll to be 6,000 when in reality it was 9,700
  - Released nursing home death toll was only 21% of NY deaths, when it was actually 35% of NY deaths (higher than the national average)

- Cuomo's actions during / after crisis
  - Lack of communication to his stakeholders
  - Decisions had no morals taken into consideration
  - Cuomo disregarded experts and officials that specialize in the health field
  - Disrespect of the State of Department of Health's guidelines
  - Nine New York senior state health officials have left the department

Cuomo and his government staff had all resources and opportunities to be ready. The government office had access to important data and statistics that could have prevented many instances of conflict. In the case of the Covid-19 outbreak and death toll, Cuomo and staff knew of this data, and intentionally altered it or refused to share the entirety of it to the public.

On top of not sharing information, Cuomo's aides solely make the decision to alter the statistics shared to present less deaths than what was originally documented. No stakeholders were aware or informed of this decision, leading to the loss of trust not only of the stakeholders, but of the state of New York as a whole. While in office, Cuomo did present empathy and legitimate experience to his citizens, gaining a large amount of trust deposits from the state. He also passed laws that still affect New York in a positive way today. However, his poorly handled crisis could not help him gain that said trust back.

Overall, Cuomo and staff were not prepared and did not handle their crises in the most logistical way, leading their procedures to present a "fail" of crisis readiness.

Phase II: External Factors

There are internal and external factors that contributed to the Covid-19 Crisis. As discussed in Phase I, Cuomo and his close team of aides were in communication about how to present the death toll numbers to the public, and did so without consulting their key stakeholders. In a StatNews article discussing the lack of communication, it explains that "Cuomo and his team didn't talk to some relevant nursing home stakeholders before they made the policy, and were perhaps overly reliant on the politically powerful hospital industry." LeadingAge New York President and CEO Jim Clyne, who represents nonprofit nursing homes in New York, said he "didn't hear about the policy until after it was released."

This lack of communication created intense backlash from citizens of New York and took to social media platforms quickly. Lying about statistics and presenting them skewed not only made the citizens of New York not trust Cuomo and team, but the nation lost trust in government officials as a whole. Unfortunately, key stakeholders could not help communicate in this situation because they discovered the crisis at the same time everyone else did. The difficulty with seeking assistance from key stakeholders will be discussed more in depth in Phase III.

Lastly, the news media was so quick to recognize the issue coming from Cuomo's office and share it with the state of New York because of the intensity of Covid-19 during that time. Updates were already coming out consistently and frequently, so when the death toll statistics were not presented correctly (and confirmed), the media's duty was to let all citizens know.

Now knowing the importance of the Governor's Office of New York's stakeholders and their ability to help prevent and eliminate crises at a faster rate, it is essential for the office to have a crisis ready program to guide them to a more successful crisis aversion if an event like this were to happen in the future.

News Media:

- Covid-19 is on the news daily with multiple stories, updates, and statistics
- A flaw in Covid protocol would be media gold and gain thousands of views for the news channel / outlet
- Cuomo's office failed to release accurate statistics and facts about the elderly home situation
- Cuomo & Office of NY Must:
  - Present accurate statistics regardless of them being positive or negative
  - Release these as soon as they arrive to the office of the Gov. and implement clear empathy to the situation
    - Be one step ahead to control the narrative
  - Become the central hub to immediate updates to other news outlets...gain trust with those said outlets

CDC:

- Releases all Covid updates in both the statistic side and the laws / regulation side
- Gives the office of NY the statistics

NEW YORK STATE

COVID-19 CRISIS
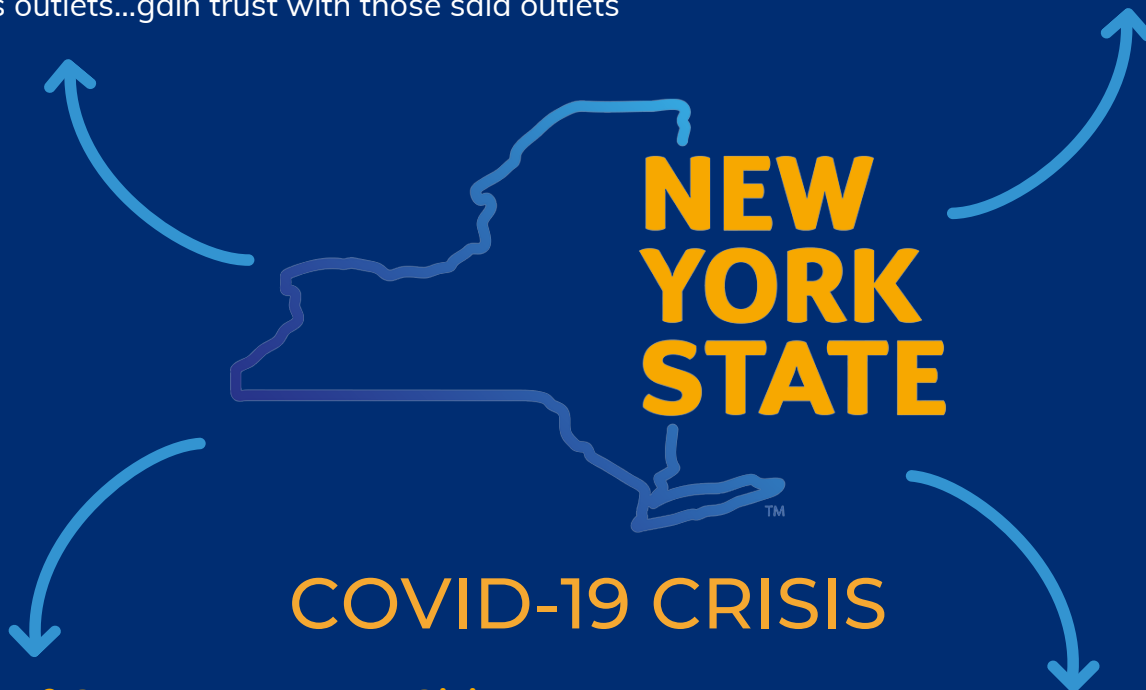
Nature of Government to Citizen Relationship:

- This relationship is typically a difficult one to build trust deposits with simply because the choices made in government will either be liked or disliked depending on the political party of the citizen
- Cuomo & Office of NY Must:
  - Establish relationship with ALL citizens
    - Emphasize the decisions made are for the greater good of the state and not to gain political power on one side vs the other

Political Party Candidates:

- The reputation of the political party is determined by how Cuomo acts and reacts
- Decisions of plans and regulations (bills and laws) are determined from Cuomo's Office and communicated to party candidates
  - They then have the opportunity to use that passed regulation to endorse Cuomo, or as leverage against him
- How citizens view candidates based off of decisions made personally, professionally, and politically

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Phase III: Stakeholders

There are six main stakeholders involved with the Office of the Governor. As discussed in Phase II, there are several external factors that influence and affect the operations of the Office of the Governor, these being news media, the CDC, nature of government to citizen relationship, and political party candidates. These external factors play a major part in stakeholder relationships and how the Office of the Governor interacts with each of these stakeholders.

The following six stakeholders have expectations and demands in times of crisis. To name a few, they expect prompt notification of the circumstances, accurate facts regarding the crisis, and answers to all pertinent questions. Cuomo's Office failed to deliver in regards to each of these stakeholder expectations. It's important to note that if Cuomo's Office had delivered on even one of these expectations, it would have been difficult to fail on the other two expectations.

Who are our key stakeholders?

Andrew Cuomo	Responsible for the enforcement of laws, the collection of taxes, and the general well-being of citizens
Governor of New York's Senior Staff	Ranges from four to fifteen members - must include Chief of Staff, Legal Counsel, Communications Director, and a Policy Director
New York State Government employees that report to the office	In a more indirect way, this can include city workers (police, firefighters), public higher education, public healthcare providers, and public transportation companies
New York citizens	All those living in New York and invested in the community
Federal Government	Able to offer support in times of crisis through fiscal support, technical assistance, information about materials, and personnel resources
News Media	Delivers reliable, updated information to large numbers of people

What are stakeholders' demands in a crisis?
How Cuomo's Office *didn't* meet these demands:

Prompt Notification

In a crisis, people want to be in the know about exact details of the situation, and what the steps are to handle the crisis at hand. More specifically, stakeholders deserve and expect to be updated as soon as information is discovered.

Covid-19 first became a national crisis in March of 2020, and was released as a crisis in the nursing homes of New York in early April. One of Cuomo's aides "deliberately delayed the release of information showing the true extent of Covid-19 deaths in New York nursing homes" and chose to revert the order of accepting all patients in May of 2020. Proper steps were not taken and guidelines were blatantly ignored for about two months.

Cuomo's Office delayed the announcement of the nursing home death toll on multiple occasions.

"By the time the Health Department issued its July report, Mr. Cuomo had been under fire over nursing homes for months."

— The New York Times

An aide admitted that the administration deliberately delayed the release of information showing the true extent of Covid-19 deaths in New York nursing homes.

— **AP**

Cuomo reversed the order May 10, 2020, but numbers were clearly peaking in nursing homes as of April 8, 2020.

"Long after New York's death toll in care homes had climbed to among the highest in the nation. To date, nearly 6,500 deaths have been linked to the coronavirus in the state's nursing home and long-term care-facilities."

"The report noted that the number of residents dying at nursing homes peaked on April 8, around the same time as COVID-19 deaths statewide, but nearly a week before the peak of coronavirus patients being transferred from hospitals."

— **Modern Healthcare**

What are stakeholders' demands in a crisis?
How Cuomo's Office *didn't* meet these demands:

Accurate Facts

While stakeholders expect a timely and prompt response, they also expect this response to include accurate facts. This concept traces back to the Governor's willingness to be transparent about the crisis. Stakeholders expect to know specific details that have been confirmed, and that the organization's words align with their actions.

Not only was the information regarding the crisis delayed, it was also not accurate nor transparent.

Once an announcement about the number of nursing home deaths was made, the number of deaths that was told to the public was about 50% less than the actual number in hopes for Cuomo to remain in a trusted and positive light.

"His administration provided inaccurate data to public health officials in real time, at the beginning of the crisis, when government scientists were desperately trying to figure out how the virus was spreading, who was most vulnerable and how to stop it."

"On May 3, his administration suddenly changed the way it reported nursing home covid deaths — releasing only the number of deaths that took place inside nursing homes, and not counting those who died after being taken to hospitals."

Real number was more than 15,000. Administration reported only 8,500. 43% reduction

- The Washington Post

Answers to Questions

In a crisis, stakeholders want their questions and concerns answered in a timely and accurate manner. They want to make sure they are in the know of all that has happened, and the plan on how to resolve the crisis.

Cuomo and his staff failed to answer questions in a timely manner, giving the media the opportunity to spread theories and inaccurate facts about the crisis at hand.

The office avoided answering questions related to the number of covid nursing home deaths

"By failing to answer questions from state lawmakers, the public and the news media, Mr. Cuomo acknowledged, the state created a void that was 'filled with skepticism, and cynicism, and conspiracy theories which furthered the confusion.'"

- Forbes

Phase IV: Playbooks

1. Organized Activism Against the Organization
2. Release of Falsified Data/Misinformation

Crisis Readiness Playbook:
Organized Activism Against the Organization

INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

Playbook Contents

Section 1: Playbook Activation
Section 2: Action Plans
Section 3: Contact Information
Section 4: Communication Strategy
Section 5: Post-Crisis Management

Purpose of the Playbook

This playbook serves to inform the Office of the Governor of the communication plan and the action plan that needs to be taken in the case of organized activism against the state government. This playbook outlines a practical plan for the Office of the Governor in case of this emergency crisis.

Objectives:

- Transparency
- Strengthen stakeholder trust
- Integrity
- Safety

PLAN ACTIVATION - WHEN / HOW TO DECLARE A CRISIS

Section 1 outlines specific guidelines that help determine when a situation becomes an intentional organized act against the Government and when the playbook needs to be activated. The table can be used by any member of the Crisis Response Team (CRT).

Stage	Characteristics
Business as Usual	• One-time rally that causes little disruption • Law enforcement is in control
Activate Standby	• Civil disruption progresses • Law enforcement still has control, but is on higher alert, and is more active/involved
Playbook Activation	• Violence/destruction is involved • Long-term & prolonged • Disrupts citizens' daily lives • Law enforcement loses control of situation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Crisis Response Team members, alternates, and contact information:

POSITION, DEPARTMENT	CONTACT INFORMATION	ALTERNATE
Governor of New York	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1234 governor@newyork.gov	Secretary of the Governor Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1234 governor@newyork.gov
Chief of Staff	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1111 chiefofstaff@newyork.gov	Assistant Chief of Staff Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1112 chiefofstaff2@newyork.gov
Budget Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 2111 budget@newyork.gov	Director of Finance Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 2112 finance@newyork.gov
Policy Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 3111 policy@newyork.gov	Legislator Director Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4111 legislator@newyork.gov
Legislator Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4111 legislator@newyork.gov	Legal Counsel Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4112 legal@newyork.gov
Communications Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 5111 communications@newyork.gov	Media Relations Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 5112 media@newyork.gov
Secretary	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 6111 secretaryofgov@newyork.gov	Chief of Staff Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1111 chiefofstaff@newyork.gov
Cabinet Officers	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 7111 cabinet@newyork.gov	Alternate Cabinet Officer Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 7112 cabinet2@newyork.gov
Police Commissioner	Cell: (646) 610-5000 Ext: 8111 governor@nypd.gov	First Deputy Commissioner Cell: (646) 610-5000 Ext: 8112 deputy1@nypd.gov

Designated meeting location once playbook activated:
Governor's Office conference room A, room 411

ACTION PLAN

Section 3, separated by department, explains the specific tasks for individuals on the CRT and the time frame in which the tasks need to be completed. Note: This is a guide, not a requirement.

COMMUNICATIONS / MEDIA RELATIONS

TASK	INDIVIDUAL	TIME FRAME
Draft a statement explaining the purpose behind the root cause of activism	Communications Department	Immediately
Supervise the public's reactions	Communications Department	Immediately
Release drafted statement once activism escalates	Director of Communications	30 minutes after riots/activism occurs
A statement that caters to human emotion where the Governor connects to the activists	The Governor	1 hour after riots/activism occurs
Making a plan for how to address the citizens not involved	Communications Department	1 hour after riots/activism occurs
Continue to publish messages as the crisis continues	Communications Department	As new information emerges from riots

ACTION PLAN

Section 3, separated by department, explains the specific tasks for individuals on the CRT and the time frame in which the tasks need to be completed. Note: This is a guide, not a requirement.

COMPLIANCE / LEGAL DEPARTMENT

TASK	INDIVIDUAL	TIME FRAME
Call/communicate with our state lawyers to inform and collaborate about the issue	Policy Director / Legislator Director	Immediately
Call/communicate with the Chief of Police	Policy Director / Legislator Director	Immediately
Collaborate with Chief of Police to figure about how to calm the riots and how the police will secure the riots	Policy Director / Legislator Director	Immediately
Figure out the severity of the riots	Legal / Compliance Team	Throughout the riots
Communicate with The Governor and Communications Department about the development	Legal / Compliance Team	Ongoing

ACTION PLAN

Section 3, separated by department, explains the specific tasks for individuals on the CRT and the time frame in which the tasks need to be completed. Note: This is a guide, not a requirement.

SECURITY

TASK	INDIVIDUAL	TIME FRAME
Communicate & work alongside law enforcement	Police Commissioner	Immediately with hourly updates
Assist in ensuring safety of citizens	Police Officers	Immediately
Creating boundaries and guidelines to guide police officers through the riots	Chief of Police	Throughout the riots, updated as needed
Draft media release to express the goal of enforcing police to disperse and calm down the rioting	Police Commissioner	Immediately, intended to release statement when riots get to the point where police enforcement is needed

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Section 4 outlines the time, method, and communication that needs to be expressed to the stakeholders. The communication process will happen at a rapid pace. To simplify the process, the exact needs from each stakeholder are clearly defined below.

Once the Governor understands the nature of the situation, it's important that the Office of the Governor's key stakeholders are made aware of the Governor's reaction and response. Especially in times of rioting and violence, it is imperative that the Governor and his staff go the extra mile to ensure trust and stability. Safety is the number one priority in this type of situation, and the information that goes out to stakeholders must be planned and revised accordingly.

Once the message is crafted by the Communications Department, along with the input of the Governor, it will be finalized and shared with key stakeholders listed below.

STAKEHOLDER	NEEDS	DESIGNATED COMMUNICATOR	METHOD
The Governor's Staff	Where is the location(s) of the activism/violence? Is law enforcement on site? If anyone is injured, how many? When does a statement need to be made?	Governor	Meeting / Zoom Meeting
Mayor of New York	Where is the location(s) of the activism/violence? Is law enforcement on site? If anyone is injured, how many?	Director of Governor Communications	Phone Call
New York Citizens	Where is the location(s) of the activism/violence? Are there alternative plans in place for citizens' safety? Is there a city-wide curfew? Is law enforcement patrolling high risk areas?	Chief of Staff	Press Conference

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

STAKEHOLDER	NEEDS	DESIGNATED COMMUNICATOR	METHOD
Federal Government	Where is the location(s) of the activism/violence? Is there federal assistance needed for the situation? What are the plans in place to settle the activism and decrease the violence?	Chief of Staff	Meeting / Zoom Meeting
News Media	General information about organized activism (rioting/violence). They will need to know the Governor's strategy to assess, correct, and move forward with the activism.	Director of Media Relations	Phone Call
Police Commissioner	Where is the location(s) of the activism/violence? How many people are injured? Where are law enforcement officers deployed to? Have any officers been injured? What are we doing to stop the violence?	Chief of Staff	Press Conference

FIRST RESPONSE / HOLDING STATEMENT

Good [morning/afternoon],

As of [date] we have seen an uptick in organized activism that has turned into violence and rioting as a result of [law] that has been passed.

The Governor of New York's top priority right now is the safety of New York citizens. The Governor's Staff has created an action plan that is ready to be implemented in the nature of these incidents.

The Governor's Chief of Staff will continue to communicate via press conference as the situation develops and as the crisis action plan is fully implemented.

Sincerely,

Office of the Governor

POST-CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Office of the Governor is ready to move to post-crisis management if:
- Law enforcement officers have gained control over the violence
- Released statements have been taken positively
- Violence/destruction has significantly decreased
- Crisis Response Team has clear understanding of the next steps
- Business can be operated without interruption or hindrance

If all conditions have been met, the Crisis Team can disband and move to post-crisis management.

POST-CRISIS MANAGEMENT:

Action steps, regain public trust
- Take necessary steps to ensure activism violence doesn't happen again
- These steps may include:
  - Ongoing communication between government officials and the people of New York
  - Consistent updates on laws & bills being discussed
    - Include results from government discussion on those said subjects
  - Continue to monitor media releases (Posts, Tweets, etc.) from citizens pertaining to the government

Communications:
- Draft and release media statement and press release with the Governor's Office of New York's intended action steps

Crisis Response Team:
- Conduct a meeting with all who were involved in the crisis playbook
  - Discuss what went well and what could have been done differently
  - Update the playbook with improvements and adjustments
  - Create detailed summary of crisis situation and management
    - What happened?
    - What was the timeline of resolving the crisis?
    - Who was involved?
    - When and how was the crisis resolved?
- Draft a letter to the stakeholder owners with the summary of the crisis and how it has been handled

Crisis Readiness Playbook:
Release of Falsified Data / Information

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PLAN ACTIVATION - WHEN / HOW TO DECLARE A CRISIS

Section 1 outlines specific guidelines that help determine when a situation becomes an intentional organized act against the Government and when the playbook needs to be activated. The table can be used by any member of the Crisis Response Team (CRT).

Stage	Characteristics
Business as Usual	• No questions are asked • Media is not yet involved
Activate Standby	• Media begins to get involved and word begins to spread
Playbook Activation	• Public loses trust in government officials due to lack of transparency • Human lives are at stake • Media floods government officials for statements / answers

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Chief of Staff	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1111 chiefofstaff@newyork.gov	Assistant Chief of Staff Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1112 chiefofstaff2@newyork.gov
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Policy Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 3111 policy@newyork.gov	Legislator Director Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4111 legislator@newyork.gov
Legislator Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4111 legislator@newyork.gov	Legal Counsel Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4112 legal@newyork.gov
Communications Director	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 5111 communications@newyork.gov	Media Relations Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 5112 media@newyork.gov
Secretary	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 6111 secretaryofgov@newyork.gov	Executive Assistant of the Governor Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 4321 govassistant@newyork.gov
Cabinet Officers	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 7111 cabinet@newyork.gov	Alternate Cabinet Officer Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 7112 cabinet2@newyork.gov
Police Commissioner	Cell: (646) 610-5000 Ext: 8111 governor@nypd.gov	First Deputy Commissioner Cell: (646) 610-5000 Ext: 8112 deputy1@nypd.gov
New York Federal Representatives (for all 27 NY congressional districts)	Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1211 nyrepdis_@nypd.gov	Governor of New York Cell: (212) 681-4580 Ext: 1234 governor@newyork.gov

Designated meeting location once playbook activated:
Governor's Office conference room A, room 411

ACTION PLAN

Section 3, separated by department, explains the specific tasks for individuals on the CRT and the time frame in which the tasks need to be completed. Note: This is a guide, not a requirement.

COMMUNICATIONS / MEDIA RELATIONS

TASK	INDIVIDUAL	TIME FRAME
Draft a statement about the release of falsified data	Communications Department	Immediately
Supervise the public's reactions	Communications Department	Immediately
Release drafted statement about the falsified data	The Governor	1 hour after the public is notified about falsified data
Continue to monitor the media and reactions of the citizens	Communications Department	As new information emerges about the effects of the falsified data
Continue to publish messages as the crisis continues	Communications Department	As new information emerges about the effects of the falsified data

ACTION PLAN

Section 3, separated by department, explains the specific tasks for individuals on the CRT and the time frame in which the tasks need to be completed. Note: This is a guide, not a requirement.

COMPLIANCE / LEGAL DEPARTMENT

TASK	INDIVIDUAL	TIME FRAME
Call/communicate with our state lawyers to inform and collaborate about the issue	Policy Director / Legislator Director	Immediately
Gauge the issues that the falsified issues are causing to the public	Policy Director / Legislator Director	Ongoing
Make decisions about what new guidelines/actions are going to occur from the release of the data	Policy Director & Governor	Immediately after data release is recognized
Figure out the severity of the effect of the falsified data	Legal / Compliance Team	Ongoing

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Section 4 outlines the time, method, and communication that needs to be expressed to the stakeholders. The communication process will happen at a rapid pace. To simplify the process, the exact needs from each stakeholder are clearly defined below.

Once the Governor is ready to admit fault, it's important that the Office of the Governor's key stakeholders are made aware of the Governor's reaction and response to the incident. Especially in times of distrust and instability, it is imperative that the Governor and his staff go the extra mile to ensure trust and stability. Regaining public trust is the number one priority in this type of situation, and the information that goes out to stakeholders must be planned and revised accordingly.

Once the message is crafted by the Communications Department, along with the input of the Governor, it will be finalized and shared with key stakeholders listed below.

STAKEHOLDER	NEEDS	DESIGNATED COMMUNICATOR	METHOD
The Governor's Staff	What was the information/data that was released? Why was it released? Intentional or accidental? How will this affect stakeholder trust?	Governor	Meeting / Zoom Meeting
Mayor of New York	What was the information/data that was released? Why was it released? Intentional or accidental? How will this affect stakeholder trust? How will the state of New York move forward?	Director of Governor Communications	Phone Call
New York Citizens	What is the true data that should have been released? Why was false data released? How do we know that this incident won't happen again in the future?	Chief of Staff	Press Conference

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

STAKEHOLDER	NEEDS	DESIGNATED COMMUNICATOR	METHOD
Federal Government	What was the information/data that was released? Why was it released? Intentional or accidental? Will it affect the government at the federal level (and if so, how?)	Chief of Staff	Phone Call
News Media	General information about the falsified data and released misinformation. They will need to know the Governor's strategy to assess, correct, and move forward with the error of releasing, or the intentional release of data that is false.	Director of Media Relations	Email Phone Call Interview

FIRST RESPONSE / HOLDING STATEMENT

Good [morning/afternoon],

As of [date] we have released false information about [the situation at hand] which has been harmful to the public and the citizens of New York. This release of false information wasn't meant to be deceitful or insincere. The Office of the Governor apologizes for the harm that the misinformation has caused.

The Governor of New York's top priority right now is rebuilding the relationships and trust of New York citizens. The Governor's Staff has created an action plan that is ready to be implemented in the nature of these incidents.

The Governor's Chief of Staff will continue to communicate via press conference as the situation develops and as the crisis action plan is fully implemented.

Sincerely,

Office of the Governor

POST-CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Office of the Governor is ready to move to post-crisis management if:
- The Government is taking action to correct the falsified data
- Communications has released all known information to the people
- The legal department is at the end of their investigation and coming to a conclusion with how to handle the repercussions of the crisis
- The citizens are starting to become less emotionally invested in the crisis

If all conditions have been met, the Crisis Team can disband and move to post-crisis management.

POST-CRISIS MANAGEMENT:

Action steps, regain public trust
- Take necessary steps to ensure that falsified data doesn't happen again
- These steps may include:
  - Creating a system that will prevent falsified data from being released
    - A third party audit that checks and approves the data before the data is released is verify the correct information
  - Being completely transparent with the citizens of New York to start gaining their trust back

Communications:
- Draft media statements, and prepare press releases for Chief of Staff
- Ongoing communication from the Office of the Governor to the people of New York via social media/news media

Crisis Response Team:
- Conduct a meeting with all who were involved in the crisis playbook
  - Discuss what went well and what could have been done differently
  - Update the playbook with improvements and adjustments
  - Create detailed summary of crisis situation and management
    - What happened?
    - What was the timeline of resolving the crisis?
    - Who was involved?
    - When and how was the crisis resolved?
- Draft a letter to the stakeholder owners with the summary of the crisis and how it has been handled

Phase V: Implementation

1. Organized Activism Against the Organization
2. Release of Falsified Data/Misinformation

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS SIMULATION: ORGANIZED ACTIVISM AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT

Background:

Since 1665, the New York Government has been governing and guiding the state of New York and its citizens. They strive to make the community a better place to live by implementing and enforcing laws to create a safe and healthy environment for residents, companies, and visitors. With over 20 million citizens to serve, the New York Government office prides itself on enhancing the economic security of low-income families, assisting individuals in accessing benefits and services, and enhancing child well-being while reducing child poverty.

You have been serving the role of Communications Director for the Governor's Office of New York. You are skilled at effective and efficient communication between stakeholders. You are the key of communication between the Governor's office and the media. Your role is crucial on the crisis ready team.

Phase 1 (10 Minutes):

You get a call from the New York Police Commissioners Office stating that there have been a few activism marches that have turned into violent riots in the heart of New York City. People are beginning to livestream some of the riots on Facebook. Posters and chants are being created to rebel against the new law that was passed the day before.

Answer the following questions:
What are real-time steps we must take at this point?
What information do we need to know before taking action?
Who should you be informing about this situation? How much does each stakeholder need to know of at this point?

Phase 2 (15 Minutes):

The riot crowds are growing larger very quickly, and it's apparent that New York citizens are growing extremely concerned about public safety. No one in the office truly knows what is going on at the riots and if people's lives are in danger, for they cannot see it for themselves at this moment. Trust between the citizens and the Office of the Governor are beginning to falter.

Answer the following questions:
What are 3-5 questions your stakeholders might ask you? And how would you answer them?
What are 2-3 key messages to release on the necessary media platform(s) after knowing this new information?
What other steps are necessary to take at this point in the crisis?

Phase 3 (15 Minutes):

At this point, it's been reported that three individuals have been shot and killed due to the violent riots. The Mayor of New York is contacting you about next steps to ease the situation. The news stations are featuring family members of those killed in the riots. Emotions are high and trust is low.

Answer the following questions:
1. Who on the crisis ready team are important information contacts at this moment? What information do you need from each of them to pass on to the Mayor?
2. With citizen trust being low, what can you release to help citizens know that this is a crisis that is prioritized in the office right now?
3. How are you communicating with your stakeholders about how you're handling this crisis? What is written in the message you are sending to each stakeholder?

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS SIMULATION: RELEASED OF FALSIFIED DATA / INFORMATION

Background:

Since 1665, the New York Government has been governing and guiding the state of New York and its citizens. They strive to make the community a better place to live by implementing and enforcing laws to create a safe and healthy environment for residents, companies, and visitors. With over 20 million citizens to serve, the New York Government office prides itself on enhancing the economic security of low-income families, assisting individuals in accessing benefits and services, and enhancing child well-being while reducing child poverty.

You have been serving the role of Communications Director for the Governor's Office of New York. You are skilled at effective and efficient communication between stakeholders. You are the key of communication between the Governor's office and the media. Your role is crucial on the crisis ready team.

Phase 1 (10 Minutes):

You have an intern that has been working in the office for the past 6 months on the communications team. This intern accidentally released a pre-made statement 2 hours ago about a law that is in the process of being approved that the public is not aware of yet. You are now aware of this accident. You have received multiple phone calls from the Governors helpline within minutes of the release.

Answer the following questions:
1. What is the first thing you should do?
2. Which stakeholders need to be aware of this situation? How should each stakeholder be addressed (email, phone, in-person, etc.)?
3. What information do you need to know about this law and information that was leaked?
4. What is going to be the primary concern from the information leaked?
5. When is the right time to handle the concerned citizens calling the help line? What is the most effective way to handle this specific outlet?

Phase 2 (15 Minutes):

The media has now got a hold of the released information and is broadcasting it across the state and nation. There are over 30 news stations calling the office and waiting outside of the Governor's steps to get answers about the released statement. You and your team are getting calls from the state capital seeking immediate answers. Not only do you have them calling but also the people of New York city are now coming together to make plans to protest this information.

Answer the following questions:
1. What are your three top priorities/stakeholders that need to be addressed?
2. In order to calm the media, what type of information needs to be released?
3. What are 3 questions that the media outlets could be asking? How would you answer them?
4. What are actions that need to be taken to insure the citizens don't start protesting?
5. What will be your primary communication vehicles (press release, email, social media post, etc.)?
6. Who will take the lead in communication with the stakeholders?

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS SIMULATION: RELEASED OF FALSIFIED DATA / INFORMATION

Phase 3 (15 Minutes):

People from all spectrums are demanding answers. The state officials from Washington D.C. are flying into town to demand answers and solutions. The media is now surrounding the Governor's office, flooding the air with questions about the released statement. There are different stories that multiple media outlets are sending out to the public that are creating new problems due to the media's portrayal of the situation. Citizens are angry all over the city of New York and the citizens are expressing their loss of trust from the government (in person, online, phone calls, emails, etc.).

Answer the following questions:
1. When is the right time to give the citizens answers?
2. What is going to be said to the media and to the citizens?
3. What are solutions that the office will put in place for this to not happen again?
4. What are the short-term impacts of this crisis? Long-term impacts?
5. How will you gain the trust of the citizens back?

POST-CRISIS REVIEW

The post-crisis review serves as a way to reflect on how your current staff handled the simulation(s). It also is a learning point for the company looking back on how all phases of the crisis were handled. In a real crisis, the review would be used to reflect on what went well, what can be improved, etc. By simulating a post crisis review, we are hoping to continue to create constant and clear communication with the staff, with honesty and transparency in mind. As the organization continues to practice and run through crisis simulations along with consistent reviewing conversation,, an actual crisis will be handled with less stress and relief knowing that communication is clear from everyone.

Organized Activism Against the Government Review:
- What additional actions could have been beneficial in order to improve efficiency?
- What information from the playbook was the most useful? What information was not needed?
- What can be added to the playbook in order to be more prepared in the future?
- How can the Governor's Office regain trust with the public?
- How effective was communicating with your stakeholders? Which stakeholders were most important during this crisis?
- Can a crisis like organized activism be prevented? If so, how?
- What ways can you prevent / minimize organized activism in the future?

Release of Falsified Information Review:
- What additional actions could have been beneficial in order to improve efficiency?
- What information from the playbook was the most useful? What information was not needed?
- What can be added to the playbook in order to be more prepared in the future?
- How can the Governor's Office regain trust with the public?
- How effective was communicating with your stakeholders? Which stakeholders were most important during this crisis?
- How can you regain trust with your stakeholders after this type of crisis?
- Can a crisis like releasing falsified information be prevented? If so, how?
- What ways can you prevent / minimize falsified information in the future?

Conclusion

After extensive research and analyzing the Governor's Office of New York, as well as Governor Cuomo's time in the office, we concluded that they were not crisis ready when it came to the Covid-19 pandemic due to their lack of a "crisis-ready" culture. While Cuomo and his team had clear communication through one another, they lacked communicating their decisions to their stakeholders and ultimately broke the trust they worked hard to build with them. Below are a few takeaways for the Governor's Office of New York going forward:

COMMUNICATE ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING

No matter what the information is, communicate with your stakeholders. Your stakeholders are the reason the organization continues to function. Without them, the organization can quickly fall apart. In this case specifically, an important stakeholder of the Governor's Office of New York are the citizens of New York. Once their trust is lost, the team in office will be quickly removed by the power of the people. Even if the information the Office receives is negative, communicating with your stakeholders about it is an expectation. They can help bring insight to a missing perspective on the issue / crisis, or even help the organization discover the most appropriate solution.

USE SIMULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT CRISIS-READY CULTURE

Not all crises can be fully prepared for, but having a crisis-ready culture can help any crisis be handled swiftly and effectively. Using this report, the Governor's Office of New York should be able to reflect on their current culture and adjust their organization's foundation to be crisis ready. We recommend the Office examines their external factors and focuses on their role when handling a crisis, as well as adjusting their overall communication strategy and tone towards their stakeholders in crises.

EXAMINE COMPANY CULTURE

To increase preparedness for a crisis, the organization should be confident in their internal culture. The Governor's Office of New York naturally faces the challenge of working through split opinions and views. Regardless of those differences, the main role of the Governor's Office is to serve the citizens of New York, and make decisions that are in the best interest of the people. In a crisis, the Office simply doesn't have time to disagree over their internal views. They need to act fast and act as one. Using this report, the Office should be able to examine their organization's culture and understand how it plays a role in crisis readiness. We recommend the members of the Office have open conversations with all internal stakeholders on how to make unity a staple in the organization's culture.

Authors

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