



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

How to not handle a crisis communication: A LESSON FROM COCA-COLA

The current controversy around Coca-Cola is a perfect example of what can go wrong when communication is not handled well. The company, in this case, had to eat at least some humble pie after it fostered bad publicity by its handling of the situation around its bottling firm in the Gaza strip. This link has led to calls for its boycott in several countries, while in Bangladesh, consumers are increasingly turning to local alternatives.

ZARIF FAIAZ

To douse the fire, Coca-Cola Bangladesh rolled out an ad dealing with the matter at hand. Yet the campaign has not only failed to silence its audience, it has made things worse.

The advertisement: a case study in poor execution

The recent advertisement by Coca-Cola Bangladesh was just a textbook case of how not to handle a crisis. The starting frame is a disaster, lacking any knowledge of the issue at hand and why people are upset. The copywriting and dialogues are subpar, failing to be up to the mark for such a delicate subject, which needed a lot of finesse and sensitivity. Instead of making reasonable arguments or even accepting the consumers' concerns, it just offers obscure, non-committal comments against a backdrop that leads to a conclusion of a statement that "Coca-Cola even has a factory in Palestine."

The hurriedly done, poorly researched narrative did not serve the cause but signaled exactly a tone-deaf crisis approach. These are clear indications that the campaign's creators did no homework to try to understand the socio-political context or the depth of feeling on the matter among the public.

Coca-Cola's iconic advertisements: a stark contrast

Coca-Cola has a storied history of producing iconic advertisements that have not only resonated with audiences but have also become

case studies in effective marketing. From the "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke" campaign in the 1970s, which promoted a message of unity and harmony, to the "Share a Coke" campaign that personalised the brand experience, Coca-Cola has consistently set high standards in advertising.

The campaigns worked because they were the result of significant research and insight, carefully and thoughtfully designed, resonant with deep values and emotions, and culturally intelligent. They showed a great understanding of the intended audience, and were carried out in a way that is oddly missing from the most recent Bangladeshi ad.

The fundamentals of effective crisis communication

Crisis communication is an art and a science. It requires a nuanced approach that balances transparency, empathy, and strategic messaging. Here are some best practices that Coca-Cola's advertising team should have adhered to:

Understanding the audience

Before crafting any message, it is crucial to understand the audience's concerns and perspectives. This involves thorough research and genuine engagement with the affected communities. In Coca-Cola's case, acknowledging the historical and political sensitivities surrounding the Gaza Strip would have been a prudent starting point.

Transparent and empathetic communication

In times of crisis, transparency and empathy are paramount. Brands must acknowledge the issue at hand, express genuine concern, and provide clear, factual information. Coca-Cola's ad failed to demonstrate empathy or offer any substantial information that could alleviate the public's concerns.

Strategic messaging

Effective crisis communication requires strategic messaging that is coherent, consistent, and aligned with the brand's values. The messaging should aim to rebuild trust and demonstrate a commitment to resolving the issue.

Engaging with stakeholders

Engaging with key stakeholders, including customers, employees, and community leaders, is essential in managing a crisis. This engagement should be ongoing and not limited to a one-off advertisement. Coca-Cola could have benefited from a more inclusive approach that involved dialogue with its Bangladeshi consumers and other relevant parties.

The recent advertisement from Coca-Cola in Bangladesh is a good example of how a lack of adept crisis communication can significantly hurt a brand's reputation. It is not the first company to screw up when trying to be sensitive, and likely won't be the last, but it serves as a perfect example of why we need to take a critical, empathetic, and transparent approach to delicate situations if we want polarized communities to trust us.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited

SAP SD Specialist

Deadline: June 12

Eligibility:

● Bachelor's or Master's degree in Computer Science/Software Engineering or relevant fields.

Minimum experience: 4 years



Standard Chartered Bank



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Director, Outbound

Deadline: June 12

Eligibility:

● Financial graduate, preferably with experience in consumer banking roles.

Minimum experience: 7 years

Optimizely

Full-stack .NET developer

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

● Prior hands-on experience in .NET development encompassing both Framework and Core.

Minimum experience: 3-5 years



Embassy of Sweden Dhaka

Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka

Trade Facilitator

Deadline: June 19

Eligibility:

● University degree in Economics or Business Admin (or equivalent academic qualification).

Minimum experience: 2 years

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QUOTE OF THE DAY



"Trust yourself. You probably know more than you think you do. Trust that you can learn anything."

MELINDA FRENCH GATES

FREE GOOGLE COURSES to level up your AI skills

Are you curious about artificial intelligence (AI) and its growing impact on the world? Whether you're a complete beginner or looking to expand your existing knowledge, here is a quick list of some introductory-level, free courses you can take in Google's Cloud Skill Boost platform to improve your knowledge and understanding of AI and the subject's many principles.

Building a strong foundation

If you're interested in learning about how AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini work, Google's 'Introduction to Generative AI Learning Path' is a good place to start. Consisting of video lectures, reading materials, and a quiz - the completion of which will earn you a 'Completion Badge', this learning path is a recommended option for beginner learners. It consists of the following three lecture-based courses.

Introduction to Generative AI: This introductory course demystifies generative AI, a powerful technology capable of creating entirely new data. You will learn how it works, its applications, and how it differs from traditional machine learning methods.

Introduction to Large Language Models (LLMs): Dive deeper into the world of LLMs. This course explores what these AI models are, the exciting possibilities they offer, and how to fine-tune them for even better

01 Introduction to Generative AI

Course 45 minutes Introductory +800 pts

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This is an introductory level microlearning course aimed at explaining what Generative AI is, how it is used, and how it differs from traditional machine learning methods. It also covers Google Tools to help you develop your own Gen AI...

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02 Introduction to Large Language Models

Course 30 minutes Introductory +800 pts

This is an introductory level micro-learning course that explores what large language models (LLM) are, the use cases where they can be utilized, and how you can use prompt tuning to enhance LLM performance. It also covers Google tools to...

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03 Introduction to Responsible AI

Course 30 minutes Introductory +800 pts

This is an introductory-level microlearning course aimed at explaining what responsible AI is, why it's important, and how Google implements responsible AI in their products. It also introduces Google's 7 AI principles.

Start course

performance.

Introduction to Responsible AI: This course explores the concept of responsible AI, its importance, and Google's commitment to ethical AI practices. While introductory level, this course is a must-try if you want to get into the industrial

standards and practices of AI.

Expanding your knowledge

For a broader understanding of AI's potential, explore these additional courses. These are also introductory-level courses, but you might still need other

complementary introductory-level courses to fully grasp all the learning content.

Innovating with Google Cloud Artificial Intelligence: This course provides a high-level overview of how organisations can leverage AI and machine learning to transform their businesses.

Introduction to Vertex AI Studio: This course will acquaint you with Vertex AI Studio, a powerful tool for building and customising generative AI models through interactive lessons and hands-on labs.

Introduction to Image Generation: This course delves into diffusion models, a cutting-edge technology powering many image generation tools. Learn the theory behind these models and how they can be trained and deployed using Google Cloud's Vertex AI platform.

Deepening your expertise

If you're ready to take a step further and gain hands-on experience, consider these in-depth courses.

Prompt Design in Vertex AI: This interactive course delves into prompt design, a crucial aspect of working with generative AI. Through labs and challenges, you will learn to craft effective prompts, guide AI outputs, and apply these techniques to real-world marketing scenarios.

Responsible AI: Applying AI Principles with Google Cloud: This course is part of the 'Google Cloud Next 2023 Learning Path', with which you can explore how Google Cloud integrates responsible AI principles into its products and services, offering valuable insights for your own AI endeavours.