



# Guarding Your Good Name

## Measuring Reputation Risk in Faith Communities

*April 16, 2026*

# Today's Flight Plan

- **Reputation. Brand. Crisis.** Defined.
- 2026 **Reputational** Issues and **Crises** for Your Religion
- Trust and Religion
- Measuring and Monitoring Risks
- Reputation S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework
- Your Participation and Q&A



**Casey Boggs**, President, **ReputationUs**, a public relations, reputational risk management and crisis mitigation firm.

## Front Line Reputation Risk Management

- **Recovering Journalist.** NPR, NBC & Fox - affiliate station in Southern California
- **Dot.com Boom/Bust.** Represented several .coms.
- **9-11.** Represented the airline industry.
- **Financial Crisis.** Director of Public Relations at AIG.
- **Fall-out of Great Recession.** Representing financial institutions communicate through cease & desist and TARP.
- **Today's Issues.** Cyberattacks, AI Crises (Deepfakes, fraud, bots), Natural Disasters, HR issues, active shooters.
- **Industry Issues.** Representing police departments, Insurance, nursing associations, health care, NBA teams, nonprofits, food & beverage, and banking.

# Brand

/ˈbrænd/

*What you say about your faith-based organization*

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# Rep·u·ta·tion

/ˌrɛpyəˈtɑːʃ(ə)n/

*What others say (or misperceptions) about your  
faith-based organization*

# Crisis

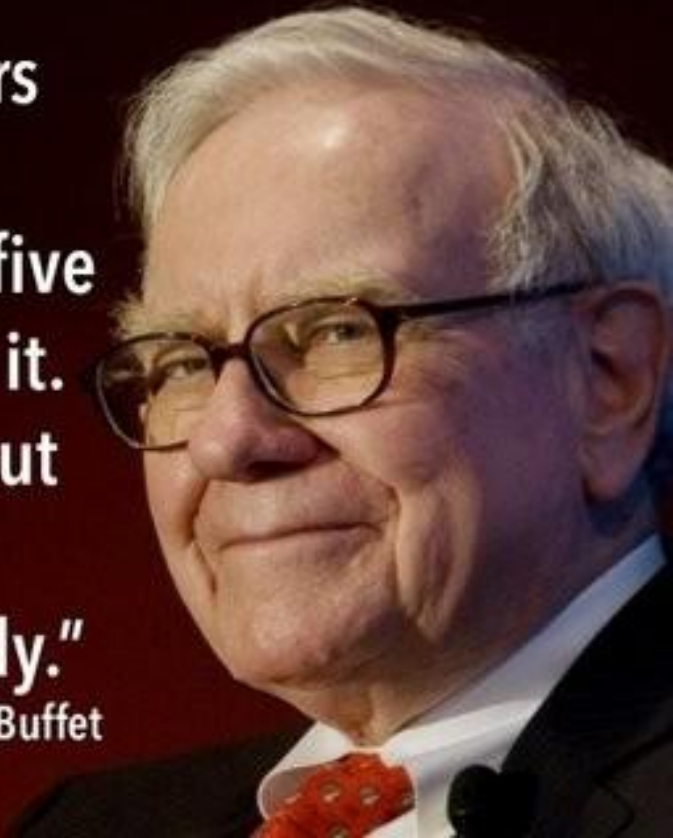
/cri·sis/

*A time of intense difficulty, trouble or danger*



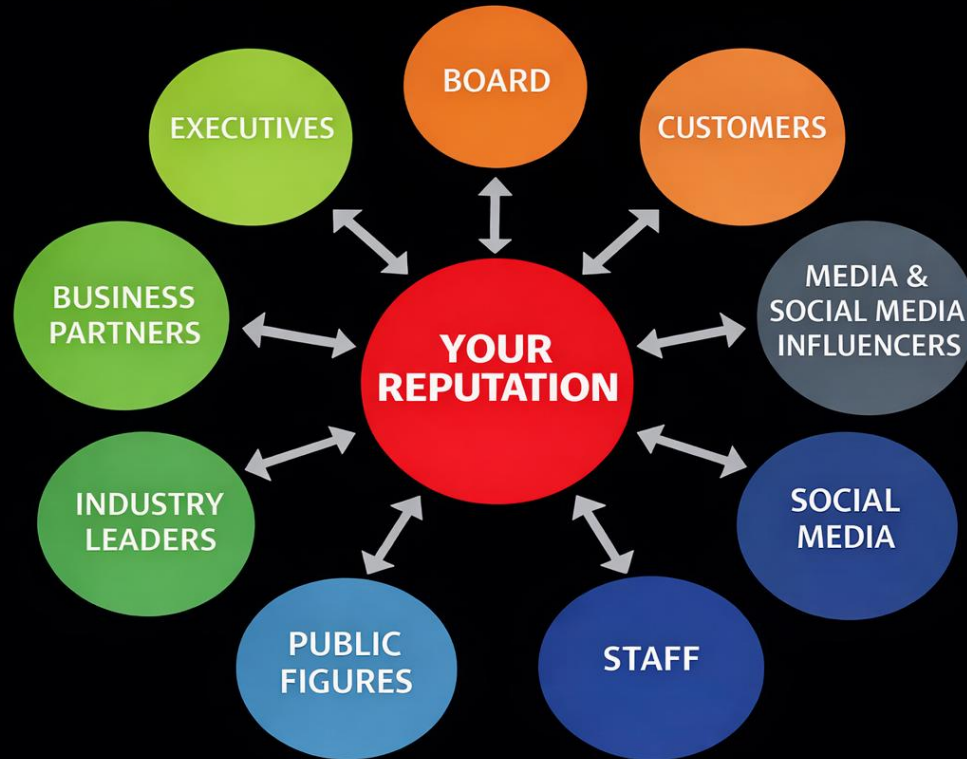
**"It takes 20 years  
to build a  
reputation and five  
minutes to ruin it.  
If you think about  
that, you'll do  
things differently."**

**– Warren Buffet**



*“In faith communities, reputation isn’t just about perception...it’s about witness. How we manage it reflects not just who we are, but what we truly believe.”*

# Reputation Is **EVERYTHING**



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**ENHANCE** the  
**Reputation** that  
**Precedes** Your Faith-  
**based** Organization...

...**BEFORE** a Crisis  
**DEFINES** It.

# Public Trust in Religious Institutions

A reputation rebound may be emerging, but it's fragile.

Public perception is shifting, but not yet strongly positive

Trust in the church as an institution remains low by historical standards. In 2025, **about 36% of U.S. adults say they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence** in the church, **up slightly** from recent lows, but still far below mid-20th century levels.

--Lifeway Research

**Long-Term Decline:** Confidence in churches and organized religion once exceeded **65% in the 1970s...**dropping to the **low-30s** in recent years.

--Gallup

# Perceptions of Clergy and Religious Leaders

Lifeway

GALLUP®

**Ethics and honesty ratings** of clergy have fallen significantly. Gallup data show the share of Americans saying clergy have high/very high ethics **dropped from 56%** (2000s) to about **30% today**...one of the largest declines among professions.

--Gallup

Trust in pastors specifically hit record lows: **Fewer than one-third** of Americans rated pastors as highly honest or ethical in recent polls.

--Lifeway Research

Trust is **continuously evaluated**,  
not assumed.

## TRUST

### Faith organizations face...

- Increased transparency expectations
- Heightened scrutiny of leadership actions
- Amplified digital narratives (fair or not...accurate or not)

Trust is **continuously evaluated**,  
not assumed.

### True Trust Indicators:

- Do people defend you when you're criticized?
- Do stakeholders give you the benefit of the doubt?
- Do internal teams feel aligned with leadership?
- Are actions perceived as consistent with values?

"Sentiment tells you how people feel today.  
Trust tells you how they will respond tomorrow."



— THE —  
*Evolving Role*  
— of the —  
**COMMUNICATOR**

Today's communicator is:

- **Advisor:** Guiding leadership decisions
- **Strategist:** Shaping narrative and positioning
- **Ethical Guardian:** Ensuring alignment with values and truth

**Bottom Line:** *You are not just managing communication...you are safeguarding trust.*

# 5 Leading Indicators of Reputational Risk

*See the storm before it hits.*

## 5 Leading Indicators in Faith Organizations

- **Internal Misalignment**
  - Staff/volunteers unclear on messaging or direction
- **Leadership Credibility Drift**
  - Small inconsistencies between words and actions
- **Community Distance**
  - Reduced engagement, rising skepticism
- **Digital Narrative Shift**
  - Emerging criticism, misinformation, or confusion online
- **Silence During Tension**
  - Delayed or unclear responses to sensitive issues

# Perception Blind Spots

*Expose the most dangerous blind spot.*



Leadership View	External View
"We're transparent"	"They only share what they want"
"We're mission-driven"	"They're protecting themselves"
"We communicate often"	"We hear from them too late"

## Why This Matters

- Crises often emerge in these GAPS
- Internal confidence ≠ external trust

# Measuring Reputation:

## Internal & External Assessment

***WHO WOULD YOU SURVEY?  
WHAT WOULD YOU ASK?***

### **Internal:**

- Anonymous staff/volunteer surveys
- Leadership alignment interviews

### **External:**

- Community listening sessions
- Social/media narrative analysis
- Stakeholder perception surveys

# Predictive Reputation

Shift from **REACTIVE** to **PREDICTIVE**

“Reputation crises rarely start as crises...they start as signals.”

Ask:

“What is likely to happen next?”

## Key Predictive Signals

- ✓ Repeated internal concerns
- ✓ Patterns in community feedback
- ✓ Increased question volume on sensitive topics
- ✓ Narrative inconsistencies

## Simple Predictive Model

- ✓ **Listen** (internal & external inputs)
  - ✓ **Identify Patterns**
  - ✓ **Assess Risk Level**
    - ✓ **Act Early**

# Is Your Faith-Based Organization READY FOR A CRISIS?





# Play *Defense* With Your Reputation

# Crisis Management is...

**99%** Preparation

...And **1%** Execution

### The Top 5 Mistakes Faith-based Organization Leaders Make During A Crisis

**“Employees/Church can forgive bad news. They do *not* forgive being left in the dark.”**

### 5 Mistakes During a Crisis

1. Silence or Delayed Response (“Let’s wait and see...”)
2. Over-Spiritualizing the Crisis Instead of Owning It
3. Defensiveness Instead of Humility
4. Lack of Internal Alignment Before Going Public
5. Focusing on Institutional Protection Over Human Impact

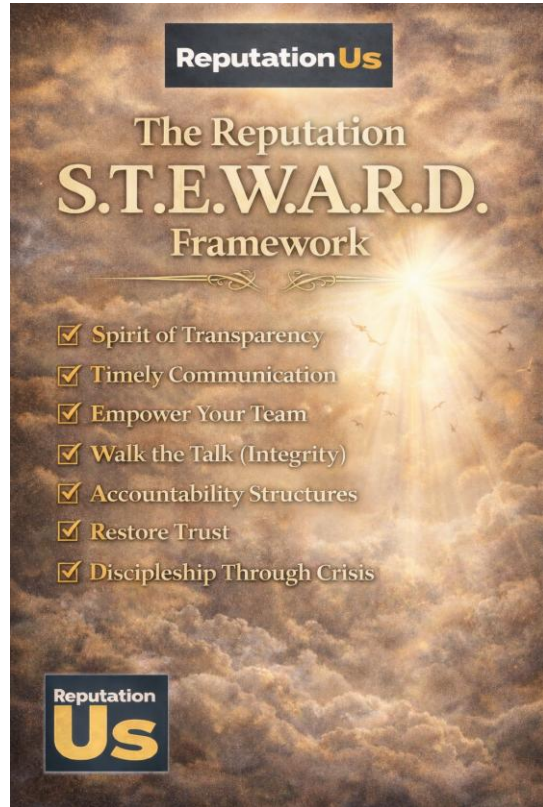


### Crisis Scenario **EXERCISE:**

A faith leader's comment is taken out of context and begins circulating online.

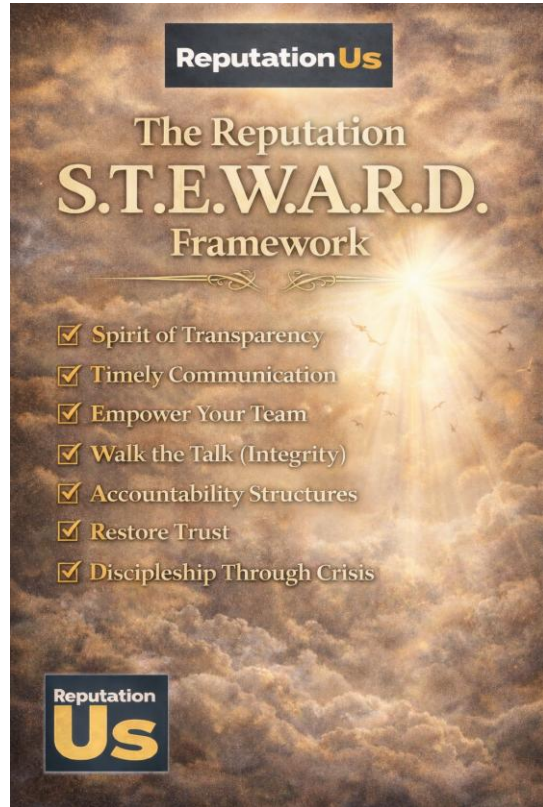
A few critical posts gain traction. Internal staff are unsure how to respond.

1. Where there any early warning signs?
2. What would you do in the **first 24 hours**?
3. What NOT to do?



# The Reputation S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

- **S**pirit of Transparency
- **T**imely Communication
- **E**mpower Your Team
- **W**alk the Talk (Integrity)
- **A**ccountability Structures
- **R**estore Trust
- **D**iscipleship Through Crisis



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# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

## **SPIRIT** of Transparency

- Lead with truth, not spin.
- Acknowledge what is known, what isn't, and when updates will come
- Reject defensiveness and secrecy
- Model humility publicly (“We own this, and we are addressing it”)



# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

## TIMELY Communications

- Silence creates narratives. Speed builds trust.
- Respond quickly: Even if only to say “we’re aware and assessing”
- Designate one spokesperson
- Update consistently (don’t disappear after the first statement)



# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response

## S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

### **EMPOWER** Your Team

- Internal trust fuels external credibility.
- Brief staff and key volunteers before the public hears it
- Equip leaders with talking points and FAQs
- Encourage pastoral care alongside operational response



# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response

## S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

### **WALK** The Talk (Integrity)

- Alignment matters more than appearance.
- Ensure actions match stated values
- Avoid over-promising restoration or outcomes
- Demonstrate repentance through behavior, not just words



# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response

## S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

### ACCOUNTABILITY Structures

- Trust grows where oversight is visible.
- Use independent review when appropriate
- Clarify governance roles (board, elders, leadership)
- Document decisions and processes



# A Faith-Centered Crisis Response

## S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

### RESTORE Trust

- Restoration is a journey, not a press release.
- Apologize clearly where harm occurred
- Prioritize victims and impacted communities
- Communicate progress over time



# The Reputation S.T.E.W.A.R.D. Framework

## DISCIPLESHIP Through Crisis

- Crisis becomes formation when led well.
- Teach biblical responses to conflict, failure, and grace
- Frame the moment as spiritual growth, not just damage control
- Reinforce mission and identity: *“Who are we becoming through this?”*

# *Final Thoughts*

Reputation is:

- **Not PR...It's *stewardship***
- **Not reactive...It's *proactive***
- **Not owned...It's *earned continuously***

# THANK YOU!

## Q & A

# 2026 Reputation & Crisis Planning, Training & Support

## Contact@ReputationUs.com