



**Starbucks Coffee Company**

**Crisis Management Plan**

**PART I**

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## **Introduction**

Starbucks Coffee has emerged as the world's leader in branding of specialty coffees for customers worldwide since its 1971 founding in Seattle's Pike Place Market in the state of Washington. The expansion of Starbucks to all 50 states in the US is due to our commitment, dedication, and passion for creating the best possible products and experience for our customers.

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## **Crisis Team Mission**

The mission of the Starbucks Crisis Management Plan is to provide detailed information and guidelines in regards to response and recovery in the event of a crisis or other unplanned interruptions. Identifying such interruptions early can help our partners and organization minimize the likelihood of crisis development and assist Starbucks in its continued thriving.

## **Purpose of the Crisis Management Plan**

Managing a crisis is much more than simply dealing with the damage appropriately after it occurs. The purpose of the crisis management plan is also to focus on prevention, awareness, and planning to keep the foundation of Starbucks, our partners, and our community strong. Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz states, "We have always believed that to be successful we must always strive to meet our own high ethical standards for how we care for our people, source our coffee, serve communities and operate in the countries where we do business."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Farfan, 2012.

## Possible Crises (Likely and Severe)

### Crisis Categories and Likely Scenarios of Each:

- Natural Disasters
  - Problems with coffee supplies due to weather, such as droughts or fires
- Rumors
  - Competitor attacks in the media
- Technical-error products harm
  - Product recalls
  - Food recalls
  - Health hazards such as e. coli presence
- Technical-error accidents
  - Shipping error causes shortage of coffee/products
- Challenges
  - Protests against our business practices (with growers, partners, etc.)
  - Inappropriate social media posts by partners
  - Economically-driven downsizing and loss of partner jobs
  - Customer complaints about product taste and quality
- Human error accidents
  - Partner injured in workplace
  - Customer injured in Starbucks
- Workplace violence
  - Issues of discrimination (e.g. harassment of gay or female partners)

### Unlikely but highly impactful crises Starbucks might face:

- Workplace violence
  - Employee shooting or other gun-related incident
- Challenges
  - Ceasing to offer free Wi-Fi; angry customer reactions
- Malevolence
  - Large-scale protest against Starbucks (and its “culture of consumerism”/corporate nature) turns violent and gains widespread media attention
- Human error accident
  - Contamination of product due to injury (much like the rumors Wendy’s faced regarding body parts in their chili)
- Organizational misdeeds
  - Insider trading
  - Partners with serious criminal records (i.e. felonies) are mistakenly hired at multiple locations, in management roles or corporate positions

## The Starbucks Crisis Management Team

### **Crisis Communication Manager**

Grace Baznik, the Crisis Communication Manager, will be the key decision maker and provide leadership to the rest of the crisis communication team. Baznik will take on roles of other team members if team is unavailable and will provide guidance and coordinate crisis response.

### **Spokesperson**

Bianca Lawson is the spokesperson of Starbucks. As her role as spokesperson she has been fully prepared to be the face of Starbucks in any given situation. She is available to media and other shareholders to answer any questions and provide all information necessary for the public to know.

### **Crisis Communication Team Member**

Madeline Zenz is a dedicated crisis communication team member. As her role is essential in the event of a crisis, she must be prepared to handle a variety of crises events. Zenz is well rehearsed in the event of any crisis regarding the organization for whom she works. She is the communication channel for disseminating information to the rest of the crisis team. Along with her fellow team members, Zenz has attended numerous crisis communication seminars to be better prepared in the event of a crisis.

### **Crisis Communication Administrator**

Brittany Tepper is the main administrator for the crisis communication team. Her role is essential in the organization of all crisis documents and all initial media inquires. Tepper is the primary contact when requesting the assistance of the crisis management team.

### **Media Relations**

Abigail Brennan will serve as the key media liaison. She will arrange interviews with spokespeople (Bianca Lawson and CEO Howard Schultz) as necessary, field questions, provide background information and is available as a point-of-contact for reporters. She is responsible for media outreach and media releases. As needed, Brennan will also contribute to the research, fact-checking and assembling releases and information.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Special Olympics, 2002.

## Starbucks Key Publics and Stakeholders

- Board of Directors
- Shareholders
- Employees
- Coffee Farmers
- Customers
- Distributors/Suppliers
- Groups associated with Starbucks
- Competitor's: Seattle's Best, Caribou Coffee, any coffee supplier
- Community members
- Stores affiliated with Starbucks
- FDA- any governmental organization associated with Starbucks
- Media

In the event that communication needed to be put out to our key publics and stakeholders Starbucks Coffee Company pledges to do so in an order that reciprocates to the event in place.

- First the Crisis Team will assess the situation and get the information relevant to resolving the crisis.
- The Board of Directors will be notified first from the Crisis Communication Team of the crisis to decide what actions will be taken.
- Our priority is to get our key stakeholders aware of the situation and then proceed to get that information out to our publics in the appropriate manner.
- Work in a way that reflects the values of Starbucks Coffee Company

## Plan for Crisis Preparation and Prevention

It is our goal to take the proper steps and implement preventative measures to be prepared before a crisis occurs.

- Communicate clearly.
- Keep a strong and intact reputation that reflects the values of Starbucks Coffee Company.
  - This includes being involved with community and giving back to our stakeholders.
- Identify all risks within the company to lessen vulnerabilities, and be open to employee ideas and suggestions.
- Take small issues seriously and resolve them appropriately to avoid an issue from turning into a crisis.
- A team will be implemented for environmental scanning through social media, newspapers and other outlets of information.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Coombs, 2012.



## Media Audit

Starbucks is constantly in the public eye. If a crisis was to occur all major news outlets are likely to cover the crisis. The following chart shows all major media outlets in the United States.

News Outlet	Type of Outlet	Email	Phone
FOX NEWS CHANNEL	Television	news@abc.com	212-301-3000
MSNBC	Television	news@msnbc.com	201-583-5000
CNN	Television	news@CNN.com	201-567-4000
NBC NEWS	Television	news@nbc.com	212-664-4444
ABC NEWS	Television	news@abc.com	233-566-8000
CBS NEWS	Television	news@cbs.com	201-578-8909
New York Times	Newspaper	news@nyt.com	212-556-1234
USA Today	Newspaper	news@ustoday.com	800-872-0001
Los Angeles Times	Newspaper	news@LATimes.com	201-567-001
The Wall Street Journal	Newspaper	news@wallst.com	212-455-6800
Washington Post	Newspaper	news@WApост.com	212-301-3000
Tribune	Newspaper	news@tribune.com	312-677-8909
Time	Magazine	news@time.com	312-566-9000
News Week	Magazine	news@week.com	212-301-3010
NPR	Radio	news@NPR.com	301-677-9000
Forbes	Web	news@forbes.com	212-566-8750
HuffPost Taste	Web	news@huffpost.com	212-400-4321
dearcoffeeiloveyou.com	Web/Coffee Blog	Clove@yahoo.com	356-678-9000
Pure Coffee Blog	Web/Coffee Blog	purelove@msn.com	344-567-8900

## Social Media Strategy

Starbucks will use social media to connect with its customers during a crisis.

Our social media team will consist of highly skilled and trained individuals. To demonstrate multiple ways of responding to this crisis, the various media channels will include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Starbucks.com
- E-Mail

The social media response team will briefly meet before an initial statement is put online. This will ensure a unified message and strategy for the specific crisis. Consistency in the top factor here. All team members will understand what message they are putting out, who is responsible for what, and when/how content should be posted. The social media team must think of their response as very strategic. The following are some guidelines to be discussed at the initial meeting:

- All messages will be consistent and systematic. All posts will be scheduled and checked by the social media manager.

- The crisis team will not respond to each individual's comments through the comments section on Facebook, they will address the issue by posting one or two general responses on Starbucks' wall.

-No messages should be deleted

- Social media will not be posted after 7 p.m., unless deemed necessary by the social media manager.

- All social media posts will continue as normal. It is important that we start new conversations and not dwell on the crisis.

### Third Party-Supporters and Potential Supporters

Name	Title	Relationship	Contact
Bob Perciasepe	Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	We have worked with the EPA to create a water-saving initiative. Our past relationship may be helpful in a crisis	Bpeciasepe@EPA.org
Dr. Rob Van Dam	Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health	Van Dam has conducted several reputable health studies on the effects of caffeine. <sup>4</sup>	VanDam@HarvardRole.com
Panos Mourdoukoutas	Writer for Forbes	Mourdoukoutas has written positively about Starbucks in the past.	PMour@Forbes.com
Professor Amleto D'Amicis	Head of the Nutritional Information Unit for the Naziondale School in Rome, Italy	D'Amicis is an expert in coffee research for the International Coffee Organization. <sup>5</sup>	Amelto@ITALAN.com

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<sup>4</sup> Van Dam, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> D'Amicis, 2004.

## Immediate Response Checklist

This checklist provides an outline of procedures that the Starbucks staff and crisis management team will handle during a time of crisis.

### 1. Identify the Crisis

- Determine the level of the situation and collect information to prepare for the crisis
- Request assistance from the Crisis Communication Team through the Crisis Communication Administrator. If Administrator is unavailable, contact members of the Crisis Team sequentially
- Coordinate with the Crisis Communication Team

### 2. Assess and Review Crisis

- Gather and record all facts available
- Assess the nature of the crisis which includes potential damage to stakeholders
- Crisis Administrator will alert the appropriate members of the Crisis Communication Team
- Determine format of team meeting. i.e. conference call, face-to-face
- Contact additional employees to secure their involvement in the crisis plan

### 3. Meet and Plan Crisis Response

- Begin with crisis debriefing and updates
- Plan a crisis response strategy and ensure execution
- Create key messages and public statements to be conveyed by the spokesperson
- Monitor the media via media relations

## Communication Channels Worksheet

In the case of a crisis the following communication channels will be used to inform the stakeholders of the situation.

- Board of Directors
  - E-mail, phone call, face-to-face
- Shareholders
  - E-mail, press conference, Starbucks newsroom
- Employees
  - E-mail, face-to-face, press conference
- Coffee Farmers
  - E-mail, Starbucks newsroom
- Customers
  - Social Media, Starbucks website, Starbucks newsroom, newspapers, television
- Distributors/Suppliers
  - E-mail, phone call
- Stores/Groups associated with Starbucks
  - E-mail, Starbucks newsroom
- Competitor's: Seattle's Best, Caribou Coffee, any coffee supplier
  - Social media, Starbucks website, Starbucks newsroom, newspapers, television
- Community members
  - Social media, Starbucks website, Starbucks newsroom, newspapers, television
- FDA- any governmental organization associated with Starbucks
  - Media liaison, e-mail
- Media
  - Media liaison, e-mail, phone call, Starbucks newsroom, press conference

## Message Map Worksheet

Scenario: The media noted Starbucks in an article about the negative effects of caffeine

Stakeholder: Starbucks customers, shareholders, and employees

Concern: STAKE HOLDERS WILL TAKE THIS RIDICULOUS ATTACK SERIOUSLY.

KEY MESSAGE 1 <span style="float: right;">→</span>	KEY MESSAGE 2 <span style="float: right;">→</span>	KEY MESSAGE 3
<b>Starbucks has supported the community.</b>	<b>Starbucks supports all lifestyle, including a healthy one.</b>	<b>Starbucks is the victim of an attack by the media.</b>



<b>Support Point 1.1</b>	<b>Support Point 2.1</b>	<b>Support Point 3.1</b>
Starbucks employees volunteer in the community and genuinely care about their customers.	Starbucks has been a leader in restaurant health initiatives. They were the first restaurant to eliminate all trans-fat in their foods.	The media is rooting for Starbucks to fail. They write stories to sell papers. Starbucks was cited because of their visibility and name recognition.
<b>Support Point 1.2</b>	<b>Support Point 2.2</b>	<b>Support Point 3.2</b>
Starbucks has always been a part of the community, and we hope that you will support us during this minor crisis.	Starbucks' menu has a variety of options, including organic and gluten free options.	Studies have shown that coffee can be good for you in moderation.
<b>Support Point 1.3</b>	<b>Support Point 2.3</b>	<b>Support Point 3.3</b>
Starbucks values the support of each individual customer.	All nutrition information is available online and in-stores.	The media was invasive and exploitative of CEO, Howard Schultz.



[Date]  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Email: [press@starbucks.com](mailto:press@starbucks.com)

Contact: [Press Contact]  
Phone: 206-318-7100

## Crisis Response Press Release Template

**DATELINE** – Summary lead that addresses issue at hand and provides enough information for stakeholders who may not be aware of the crisis yet.

Expression of empathy or concern as needed. Reassure stakeholders of Starbucks' continued care and investment. If necessary, the expression of concern or empathy may come before the summary lead (depending on the nature of the crisis).

Address and answer the who, what, when, where, why and possibly how of the situation. **Who** is this affecting? **What** has occurred? **When** did it happen and **where**? **Why** does it matter? **How** did it occur?

Reiterate key messages and points of support. The key messages should include a description of how Starbucks is addressing and resolving the situation. Include two to three key messages with support for each.

Quote from spokesperson, if appropriate. This can tie into the key messages and support.

A brief profile of Starbucks.

Contact information: media relations information and where to find more information (e.g. Starbucks.com).

###



## Starbucks Company Profile

Since 1971, Starbucks has been cultivating community through coffee. We began with a single store in Seattle’s Pike Place Market. While we have grown to nearly 18,000 stores in over 60 countries, great coffee and inspiring connections is at the heart of all we do.

Today, “Starbucks is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world. And with every cup, we strive to bring both our heritage and an exceptional experience to life.”<sup>6</sup>

Our mission is to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.<sup>7</sup>

That starts with our **coffee**. We are committed to serving the highest quality coffee made from the most ethically sourced beans. It then extends to our **stores**, which serve as gathering places for friends and families in neighborhoods across the world. We pride ourselves on excellent service, an inviting atmosphere and an exceptional cup of coffee. Of course, the Starbucks Experience would not be possible without our **partners**, or employees.

We are pleased to offer a variety of **products** to our customers, including a wide range of coffee, handcrafted beverages, merchandise, fresh food and consumer products. The **Starbucks Brand Portfolio** includes Starbucks Coffee, Seattle’s Best Coffee, Tazo Tea, Evolution Fresh, La Boulange and Torrefazione Italia Coffee.<sup>8</sup>

Because community is at the heart of all we do, Starbucks prides itself on being an **ethical** and **responsible** company. We are committed to ethically sourcing the highest quality coffee, reducing our environmental footprint and fostering a spirit of volunteerism and community involvement.

For more information, including investor information, please visit [www.starbucks.com](http://www.starbucks.com).

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<sup>6</sup> Our heritage, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Our Starbucks mission statement, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Starbucks company profile, 2012.



## Media Log Sheet

**Crisis Situation**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Message for:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Date/time of call:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Caller:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number(s):**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Media outlet/Name:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Return call by/Deadline:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of inquiry:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Who responded to the inquiry?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Date/Time:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of response:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Further action needed?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Contact Information

### Starbucks Corporation

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P.O. Box 34067, Seattle, WA 98124-1067

Phone: (206) 447-1575

Fax: (206) 447-3432

<http://www.starbucks.com>

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Chief Operating Officer

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Vice President Administration

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Fax: (206) 447-3432<sup>9,10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Leadership Directories, Inc., 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Lead 411, 2013.

## **Procedure for Testing Crisis Management Plan**

This plan will be tested semiannually by each Starbucks restaurant. All employees should be familiar with the plan in the event of a crisis. All employees should know where the crisis management plan is located and how to apply it to each hypothetical crisis situation.

Crisis drills should be implemented semiannually when Starbucks employees are required to respond to an artificial crisis. Worksheets should be filled out as if this was a real crisis. This will ensure that employees are well rehearsed in the event of a crisis.



**Starbucks Coffee Company**

**Crisis Management Plan**

**PART II – Response to *New York Times* Article**

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## Starbucks Responds to New York Times Article on the Dangers of Caffeine

The Sunday, July 9 edition of The New York Times published a front page article about the health risks associated with caffeine. While not a direct attack on Starbucks, our product was cited extensively throughout the article and CEO Howard Schultz was even mentioned. This has caused concern from our customers and must be addressed quickly and honestly.

The strategies we will employ to navigate this crisis will include a combination of diminishment and bolstering.<sup>11</sup> We will emphasize that Starbucks is not directly responsible for the health risks of caffeine while also downplaying these risks. Furthermore, we will remind our partners and customers that we have their best interests in mind. Starbucks's relationship with the community is paramount. Our reputation and brand identity are strengths that can help us weather this storm. While reminding our stakeholders of our care, concern and good relationship, we will also stress that Starbucks, too, has been harmed by this article.

No Starbucks partner or spokesperson should apologize for this in any way, as we are not directly culpable nor responsible. Apologizing would weaken our strong reputation, which is one of our best assets as we attempt to resolve this situation. Our community comes first, so thanking customers and partners for their continued support and loyalty will be instrumental.

One key consideration will be to not make a mountain out of a molehill. That is, the response to this article should not become out of proportion to the issue and create a crisis where none existed. We will follow our editorial calendar and continue to post content as usual instead of focusing solely on responding to this article. We will respond initially with one press release and via social media (see below). However, past that response to concerns should be on a strictly as-needed basis.

Howard Schultz will be a key spokesperson as we deal with concerns about this article. Our strong media relations will also be a boon, and the Media Relations Team should be available to respond to inquires from journalists and bloggers.

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<sup>11</sup> Coombs, 2012.





July 9, 2013  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Email: [press@starbucks.com](mailto:press@starbucks.com)

Contact: Abigail Brennan  
Phone: 206-318-7100

## **Starbucks Response to *New York Times* Article on Health Risks of Coffee**

July 9, 2013 – On behalf of Starbucks partners and customers, we would like to address concerns surrounding a recent *New York Times* article claiming that caffeine consumption is harmful to your health. This article extensively cites Starbucks in detrimental and negative examples.

Starbucks was founded on the simple idea of community. The health and safety of our customers and partners is of greatest concern, and we would like to make it clear that we would never deliberately sell products contrary to these ideals.

While Starbucks is not the subject of the article, the author uses caffeine content in our beverages as examples throughout. It even suggests that the recent health problems faced by our CEO Howard Schultz are due to his years of coffee drinking. These tactics are sensational at best and exploitative at worst. The cause of Schultz's health issues is unknown at the moment. More than that, however, it is personal information and should be kept as such until Schultz chooses to disclose it.

Furthermore, Starbucks is an industry leader in providing fresh and healthy refreshment. We were one of the first to eliminate trans-fats and preservatives from our food offerings. We strive to provide healthy alternatives to our customers, including caffeine-free options. The examples cited in the *New York Times* article were extreme, atypical and failed to take into account a number of independent studies suggesting coffee may actually have long-term health benefits.

At Starbucks, we value our customers above all else. We are privileged to be part of neighborhoods around the globe and continue to value the support and understanding of each of our customers.

-- more --

**About Starbucks Corporation**

Since 1971, Starbucks Coffee Company has been committed to ethically sourcing and roasting the highest quality Arabica coffee in the world. Today, with stores around the globe, the company is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world. Through our unwavering commitment to excellence and our guiding principles, we bring the unique Starbucks Experience to life for every customer through every cup.

**For more information:**

Starbucks Coffee Company

206-318-7100

[press@starbucks.com](mailto:press@starbucks.com)

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## Key Messages/Talking Points

- Dedication to community
  - We are privileged to be part of neighborhoods around the world and this community is very important to us.
  - We continue to value the support of each individual customer.
- Support of healthy living
  - Starbucks is a leader in healthy initiatives. We were one of the first major restaurant chains to eliminate all trans-fats in our foods. Our syrups contain no high fructose corn syrup. We are also expanding organic and free-trade offerings.
  - The article fails to cite numerous, independent studies that have found coffee may actually benefit long-term health.
  - We are committed to providing healthy alternatives, including caffeine-free ones.
- Starbucks as victim
  - Using the recent health problems faced by CEO Howard Schultz was an invasive and exploitative tactic
  - The story is sensationalized, meant to sell newspapers. Starbucks was cited as an example due to our high visibility and name recognition, not because of any actual malicious intent.

## Social Media Strategy

Social media networks will be an important tool in managing this crisis as so many of our customers are expressing their concerns via social media. This will also be the fastest way to reach our consumers in a relatively short time period.

Our social media team will consist of highly skilled and trained individuals. To demonstrate multiple ways of responding to this crisis, the various media channels will include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Starbucks.com
- E-Mail

To demonstrate our genuine concern for the health of our customers, we will address the issue adequately via several media channels. We would never sell something to our customers that we ourselves would not consume.

Starbucks will post a status update on its Facebook page thanking customers for their continuing support. Starbucks will not respond to each individual comment, rather address major concerns via status update. The reason there will be no responses to individual comments is because we fear Starbucks response will get lost in the masses and create another crisis embedded within the exiting crisis (as evident in the Applebee's example) Starbucks will explain its commitment to meeting the health needs of our customers, and remind them of the healthy alternatives we offer. As previously stated, Starbucks should not apologize for this crisis, as it is not directly related to the corporation. The same strategy will be implemented via Twitter. We will thank our customers and remind them of our fabulous reputation. A Facebook and Twitter update should be posted immediately following the article. This shows our desire to handle the crisis quickly, while diminishing its magnitude of impact.

Following The New York Times article, Howard Shultz will post a YouTube video thanking customers and communicating how important they are to the organization. We want to make our customers feel as though they play a major role in the success of our corporation and we are eternally grateful for their support. Shultz will also remind Starbucks customers of the healthy and low calorie options Starbucks has to offer. This video will also be sent to all Starbucks stakeholders that are signed up on the e-mail listing. The video will also be posted to Starbucks website. We feel it is essential to put a face to our company, and a personal video message from Schultz is a great way to do this. The use of convergence via several media channels will be implemented in disseminating the response to our publics.

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