## THE **CRISIS READY™** FORMULA FOR MANAGING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES



## By Melissa Agnes

Controversies are amongst the most difficult types of negative events to manage effectively. Why? Because they are **emotionally charged situations that automatically segregate your audience**. Not to mention that, due to their emotional relatability, they present a high-risk for fast escalation and virality.

Furthermore, with our current societal climate—with everything from the *Me Too* and *Time's Up* movements, to society's collective stance against racial discrimination, and more—controversial issues are an increasing high-risk scenario for many organizations.

Fortunately, there is a 4-step Crisis Ready formula for effectively managing the majority of controversial issues. Share this formula with your team prior to experiencing a controversy, and be ready to get ahead of this type of incident that threatens both high-velocity of reach, and long-term impact on your brand's reputation.

STEP 4

STEP 3

BE QUIET AND MONITOR Once steps 1 through 3 have been taken, there is nothing left to say. Let the conversation take place, continue to monitor, and establish a threshold that, if surpassed, requires notification and escalation to leadership.

STEP 2

**BE CLEAR** Release a strong statement that clearly and concisely explains your position, decision, and reasoning. Do not be ambiguous or leave room for misinterpretation or misconception.

STEP 1

BE DECISIVE Take a decisive stance in alignment with the organization's values. Know that you will not appeal to or please everyone as controversy segregates, which means that being decisive is important. Don't make a decision you will go back on and ensure your team understands that some stakeholders will most likely not be happy.

BE THOUGHTFUL Think through the situation in alignment with the organization's core values; seek to understand all sides of the controversy and its emotional relatability; and assess all potential risk on the organization's reputation and its connection with its stakeholders.

## THIS FORMULA SHOULD BE USED

- When preparing for an inevitable or self-imposed controversy
- When managing an escalating controversial issue