MARKETING · CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS · BRAND · PUBLIC RELATIONS

A REPUTATION CRISIS THAT MOVED FROM AN OPERATIONAL FAILURE TO A QUESTION OF TRUST

Reading the shift inside a large service organization

A communications committee watches negative conversation fall after its statement and concludes the crisis is on its way to being contained. Taking that conversation apart says something else. Talk about the failure dropped from 7,950 posts to 1,510, and talk about earlier experiences quadrupled over the same period. The volume fell. The subject of the complaint changed.

This document sets out 13 discussion points, in the order a real crisis review works through them.

−38%
Fall in negative conversation after the statement

×4
Talk about earlier experiences over the same period

−11 points
Trust in published figures fell while satisfaction recovered

90×
The claimed gap in cost per trust point between two options

This is a hypothetical analytical model built for executives, experts, and practitioners: a space to take indicators apart and test how decisions are built. The organization is fictional, and every figure is designed as a simulation scenario serving the analytical argument. None of it is observed market data.

THE SITUATION

A LIMITED FAILURE. A STATEMENT THE SAME DAY. THEN A SPREAD NO ONE EXPECTED

A large service organization serving a wide public in Saudi Arabia through a digital platform and a branch network. The service is used frequently, weekly in most cases, and nine months ago the organization announced a public promise: every request handled within 24 hours.

In the first week of monitoring, a limited operational failure hit one part of the service. The organization issued a clarifying statement the same day, apologized, and announced the fix. Two weeks later, negative conversation had widened and its subject had moved from the failure to doubt about the organization itself.

The head of corporate communications has been in the role for five months. The public promise was not launched under him, and the plan he owes goes to the communications and reputation committee, and from there to the chief executive.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

A plan to restore trust, supported by analysis, ready for the committee within 10 days.

HOW TO READ THIS CASE

Thirteen discussion points in a deliberate order. It starts with the angle of view, then the practical starting point, then reading the evidence, then the arithmetic and the trade-off, then what goes to the decision maker, and it ends with what can defeat the recommendation after approval. Each point puts three or four proposals on the table, and every proposal carries its verdict and its reason immediately.

THE FILE

Organization	Large service provider. Digital platform and branch network
Market	Saudi Arabia. A frequently used service
Period	Four weeks of monitoring, and three prior quarters of performance

CRISIS TIMELINE

Before the incident

Baseline
Negative share 21% · trust 68%

Week one

The failure and the statement
Negative share 70% · trust 55%

Week two

Volume falls
Negative share 64%

Week three

Widening on another subject
Negative share 67% · trust 47%

The line breaks at week two. What follows is not a continuation of what came before, it is a different phenomenon.

DISCUSSION POINT ONE · THE ANGLE

WHICH QUESTION DOES NOT BELONG IN ASSESSING A REPUTATION CRISIS?

Before looking at any number, how should a matter like this be framed? Four questions are on the table. Three belong, one does not.

PROPOSAL ONE · IN PLACE

Has the subject of the negative conversation changed, or is it still the same failure?

The subject defines the type of crisis. What is about an incident closes when the incident is handled. What is about credibility does not close with a statement.

PROPOSAL TWO · IN PLACE

Who is talking now, and are they the people who talked at the start?

A change in who speaks signals that the incident has become an entry point to another subject. Ignoring the question means measuring the crisis by volume alone.

PROPOSAL THREE · IN PLACE

Did the gap between promise and performance exist before the incident?

If it did, the incident exposed the gap rather than created it. That moves the plan from managing an event to treating a cause.

PROPOSAL FOUR · NOT IN PLACE

How long did the organization take to issue its first statement compared with common practice?

Response speed is a fair measure of readiness, not a diagnosis of a crisis that widened after the statement. The statement went out the same day and the crisis widened anyway, so the question of speed explains nothing here.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

Speed protects against the charge of ignoring people. It does not protect against a credibility gap. When a crisis widens after a fast statement, the cause sits in the content of the promise, not in the timing of the reply.

DISCUSSION POINT TWO · THE ANGLE

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SATISFACTION, TRUST, AND REPUTATION?

Three indicators are used in reports as if they were synonyms. They measure different things. Three formulations are on the table.

PROPOSAL ONE · CORRECT BUT INCOMPLETE

Satisfaction measures the last experience, trust measures expectation, and reputation measures what is said about the organization.

The description points in the right direction. It does not bring out the time relationship between them: satisfaction moves in a week, trust in months, reputation in years.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

Satisfaction is a verdict on a transaction that ended, trust is the expectation that the next one will go as promised, and reputation is a collective balance built from both and from what others say.

This formulation explains what is happening here. Satisfaction can recover as soon as the failure is fixed. Trust only recovers when the promise matches what actually happens. That is why the first can rise while the second falls at the same time.

PROPOSAL THREE · NOT IN PLACE

Trust follows satisfaction, so whoever is satisfied with the service trusts the organization.

This is the most common confusion in communications reporting. Satisfaction with one transaction produces no trust if the user expects the next one may not go as promised. This case is direct evidence: satisfaction recovered 3 points while trust in published figures fell 11 over the same period.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

When satisfaction rises and trust falls, the problem is not the service. It is the promise made about it. Fixing the service will not repair what an unmet promise broke.

THE TIME HORIZON OF EACH INDICATOR

Satisfaction	A week · a verdict on a transaction that ended
Trust	Months · the expectation that the next transaction will go as promised
Reputation	Years · a collective balance built from both and from what others say

DISCUSSION POINT THREE · THE STARTING POINT

WHERE DOES A TRUST RECOVERY PLAN ACTUALLY BEGIN?

A plan is due in 10 days. Four proposals for the starting point.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED AT THIS STAGE

Draft a new communication message, stronger than the first statement.

Premature. It is not yet known whether the message was the problem at all, and drafting one before diagnosis means answering a crisis no one understands.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

Take the negative conversation apart by subject and by source across the four weeks.

This is the beginning. Total volume does not reveal whether the conversation is one thing or has changed subject, and no plan is built before knowing what is being said today and who is saying it.

PROPOSAL THREE · IN PLACE BUT NOT FIRST

Review operational performance against the public promise.

A necessary step, and its turn will come. It follows knowing that the conversation moved to earlier experiences. Otherwise it is a review with nothing tying it to the crisis.

PROPOSAL FOUR · NOT IN PLACE

Measure the impact of the crisis on business and revenue indicators.

A legitimate question for another committee. What is required here is a trust recovery plan, and tying the crisis to revenue changes neither the content of the plan nor the order of its steps.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

In a crisis the first thing requested is a message, and the first thing that should be done is to take the negative conversation apart. A message drafted before the subject and the source are diagnosed answers the wrong question with high confidence.

TABLE ONE

VOLUME OF CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Week	Total posts	Negative posts	Negative share
Before the incident	1,850	390	21%
Week one (failure and statement)	14,200	9,940	70%
Week two	9,600	6,140	64%
Week three	11,300	7,570	67%

Negative conversation fell 38% in week two, then rose 23% in week three.

TABLE TWO

THE SUBJECT OF THE NEGATIVE CONVERSATION

Subject	Week one	Week two	Week three
The operational failure itself	7,950 (80%)	3,070 (50%)	1,510 (20%)
Earlier experiences unrelated to the incident	990 (10%)	2,150 (35%)	4,540 (60%)
Doubt about the credibility of the statement	700 (7%)	800 (13%)	1,140 (15%)
Other	300 (3%)	120 (2%)	380 (5%)

Talk about the failure fell from 7,950 posts to 1,510, while talk about earlier experiences quadrupled over the same period.

DISCUSSION POINT FOUR · READING THE EVIDENCE

WHAT DOES THE VOLUME TABLE SAY, AND WHAT DOES IT NOT SAY?

Three conclusions are on the table, all of them true against the numbers. The task is to identify which one carries a decision.

PROPOSAL ONE · TRUE, CARRIES NO DECISION

Week three is higher than week two by 1,430 negative posts.

The number is correct. It describes the movement of the indicator without explaining it, so no decision rests on it.

PROPOSAL TWO · TRUE, CARRIES NO DECISION

Negative share stayed above 60% across all three weeks.

Statistically true, but it describes the persistence of the state without detailing its causes.

PROPOSAL THREE · STRONGEST

The table shows a rebound after a decline, and that is not a pattern a single incident produces while it heals.

This is the conclusion that carries a decision. A crisis caused by one incident declines continuously after the fix. A rebound means either the incident recurred, or another cause entered. The failure was fixed and did not recur, so the second possibility is what must be checked.

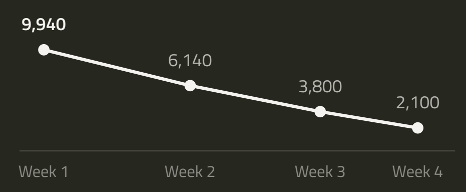
THE PRACTICAL POINT

A table that shows volume does not show cause. The value is in reading the shape of the curve, not its level. A continuous decline means containment. A rebound means what is being measured today is not what was measured yesterday.

THE SHAPE OF THE CURVE · NEGATIVE POSTS PER WEEK

Expected path · continuous decline

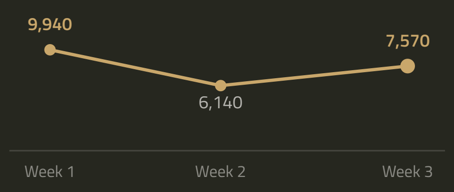
One incident, fixed in week one



A continuous fall. Reading: containment.

Actual path · rebound after decline

The failure was fixed and did not recur



A 23% rise, 1,430 posts. Reading: a second cause has entered.

The difference shows up in week three alone, so what deserves checking is the cause that entered after the fix.

TABLE THREE

WHO IS TALKING

Group	Week one	Week three	Change
Directly affected by the failure	62%	14%	−48 points
Current users, not affected	24%	58%	+34 points
Non-users	9%	19%	+10 points
Media accounts and influencers	5%	9%	+4 points

Whoever was talking in week one is not who is talking in week three.

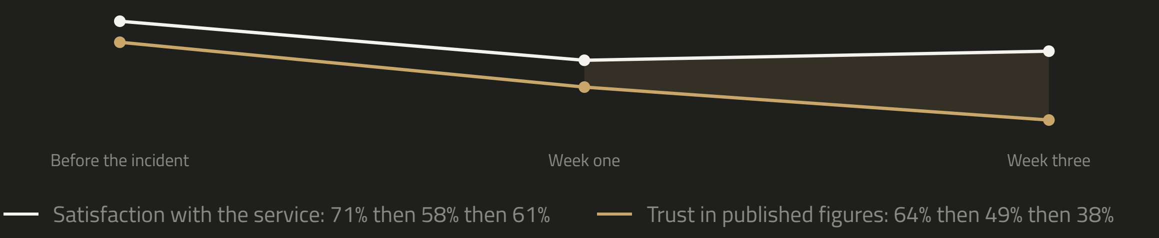
TABLE FOUR

SATISFACTION AND TRUST INDICATORS

Indicator (sample 1,200 weekly)	Before the incident	Week one	Week three
Satisfaction with the service	71%	58%	61%
Trust in the organization	68%	55%	47%
Trust in its published figures	64%	49%	38%
Willingness to recommend the service	54%	41%	39%

Satisfaction with the service recovered 3 points while trust in published figures fell a further 11.

SATISFACTION REBOUNDS WHILE TRUST KEEPS FALLING



DISCUSSION POINT FIVE · READING THE EVIDENCE

WHAT DO THE AUDIENCE GROUPS AND THE TRUST INDICATORS TELL US?

Four conclusions are on the table across the two tables.

PROPOSAL ONE · TRUE, CARRIES NO DECISION

Talk about the failure fell 81% from week one to week three.

The arithmetic is right. It confirms that fixing the failure worked, which was never in doubt.

PROPOSAL TWO · TRUE BUT INCOMPLETE

Talk about earlier experiences became the dominant subject at 60%.

True and important. On its own it can be read as an opportunistic pile-on, and that reading ends in a single recommendation: wait for the momentum to fade.

PROPOSAL THREE · STRONGEST

The subject changed and the speakers changed with it in the same direction, so the incident became an entry point to a subject that already existed.

This is the link that carries the decision. Directly affected users falling 48 points and unaffected users rising 34 points map exactly onto the change of subject. An audience that never experienced the incident is talking about earlier experiences, which means there was ready material that predated the incident and was waiting for an occasion.

PROPOSAL FOUR · NOT IN PLACE

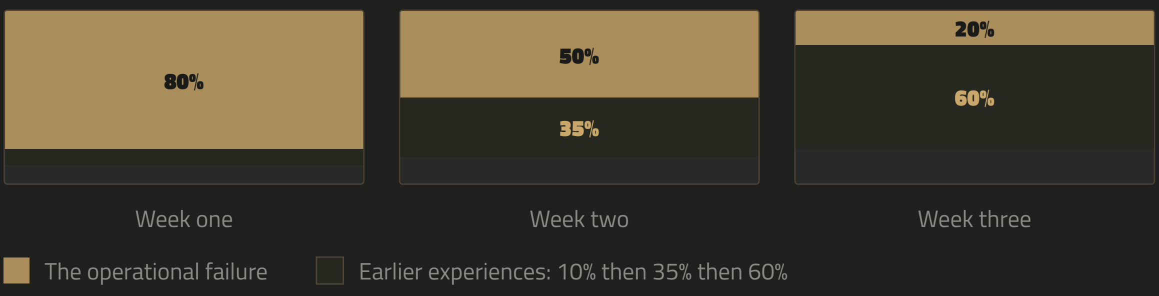
Non-users rising 10 points points to an organized campaign against the organization.

The data does not support it. 19% non-users is a reasonable share in a widely spread public conversation, and the real jump came from current users, not from outside. Looking for an external actor here pulls the plan away from its actual cause.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

When the subject of a crisis changes and the speakers change in the same direction, the incident did not create the crisis, it opened a door to it. A plan that treats the incident has treated 20% of what is being said.

THE SPEAKERS CHANGE WHILE THE VOLUME OF ENGAGEMENT DOES NOT



DISCUSSION POINT SIX · THE PARADOX

SATISFACTION RECOVERS WHILE TRUST FALLS. HOW IS THAT READ?

This is the most important paradox in the file. Four readings are on the table.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED

The recovery in satisfaction is an early signal that trust will follow after a lag.

A comfortable reading with nothing behind it. Trust did not lag satisfaction, it moved in the opposite direction. An opposite direction is not a delayed response, it is evidence that the two indicators are measuring two different causes.

PROPOSAL TWO · REJECTED

The difference between the two indicators comes from the sample or the wording of the question.

A methodological possibility, quickly ruled out. The sample is fixed at 1,200 and measured weekly with the same instrument. Sending every uncomfortable result back to the measurement tool disables the analysis at its root.

PROPOSAL THREE · STRONGEST

The service returned to its level so satisfaction recovered, and the public promise stopped being believable so trust fell.

This is the reading that explains both indicators with one cause. The user saw the failure fixed, so satisfaction with his own transaction rose. At the same time he saw a wide conversation about a 24 hour promise that is not met, so his trust in what the organization publishes fell. Satisfaction is a verdict on what has passed, trust is an expectation of what is coming.

PROPOSAL FOUR · REJECTED, IT MERGES TWO EXPLANATIONS

It is a mix. Part of it is the incident and part of it is an existing gap, and the plan treats both in parallel.

The formulation looks balanced and in fact it misleads the diagnosis. Table two says talk about the failure is now only 20%, so the two causes do not carry equal weight. A plan that splits its effort evenly between a cause weighing 20% and a cause weighing 60% has misallocated effort, not only misdiagnosed.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

An explanation that gathers every possibility is not more accurate, it is less executable. Diagnosis requires a call, and a call means accepting one explanation and setting another aside for a stated reason.

TABLE FIVE

THE PUBLIC PROMISE AGAINST ACTUAL PERFORMANCE, BEFORE THE INCIDENT

Period	The public promise	Requests completed within 24 hours	Gap
First quarter after launch	24 hours	88%	−12 points
Second quarter	24 hours	79%	−21 points
Third quarter	24 hours	71%	−29 points

The gap between promise and performance widened 17 points across three quarters, before the incident and independently of it.

TABLE SIX

THE OPTIONS ON THE TABLE AND THEIR COST

Option	Cost (SAR million)	Time to implement	Effect on trust in published figures
Communication campaign to restore trust	12.0	6 weeks	+3 points, temporary
Revise the public promise to match capacity	0.4	3 weeks	+9 points, sustained
Raise operational capacity to meet the promise	47.0	9 months	+14 points, sustained
Publish a periodic performance report	1.1	4 weeks	+7 points, sustained

Cost, time, and effect do not move in the same direction, so choosing between them is not a choice made on cost.

COST

Lowest cost first

2	Revise the promise	SAR 0.4m
4	Periodic report	SAR 1.1m
1	Comms campaign	SAR 12.0m
3	Raise capacity	SAR 47.0m

TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Fastest first

2	Revise the promise	3 weeks
4	Periodic report	4 weeks
1	Comms campaign	6 weeks
3	Raise capacity	9 months

EFFECT ON TRUST

Highest effect first

3	Raise capacity	+14 points
2	Revise the promise	+9 points
4	Periodic report	+7 points
1	Comms campaign	+3 temporary

The ranking changes with the criterion. The cheapest and fastest option is not the highest impact, and the highest impact is the most expensive and the slowest.

DISCUSSION POINT SEVEN · THE ARITHMETIC

DID THE INCIDENT CAUSE THE COLLAPSE IN TRUST, OR ONLY SPARK IT?

The task is to connect table five to what came before it. Three proposals.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED

The incident is the cause. Trust was 68% before it and fell to 47% after.

The link looks tight and it is incomplete. A trust measure captures the state at its own moment, and table five shows performance sliding quarter after quarter before that. The user was living the gap and had no reason to voice it.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

The gap widened 17 points before the failure occurred, and the incident was only a spark that brought an existing complaint to the surface.

This is what all three pieces of evidence support together. The gap predates it in table five, the conversation moved to earlier experiences in table two, and the speakers became people unaffected by the incident in table three. Three independent pieces of evidence pointing at the same conclusion.

PROPOSAL THREE · TRUE BUT INCOMPLETE

The public promise was above operational capacity from the day it launched.

True, and the evidence is a 12 point gap in the first quarter, from the very beginning. But it describes the root cause rather than answering the question asked, and the question is about the relationship between the incident and the collapse.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

An incident whose crisis widens after it is fixed is not a passing incident, it is an occasion that exposed an older cause. The difference is that an incident is managed through communication, and a cause is only treated by revisiting what was promised.

DISCUSSION POINT EIGHT · THE ARITHMETIC

WHAT DOES A POINT OF TRUST COST IN EACH OPTION?

Correct arithmetic does not mean correct logic. The error sits in the unit of measure, not in the calculation. Three proposals assessed.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED · DIVIDED ON THE WRONG BASE

A trust point costs SAR 4 million in the campaign and SAR 44 thousand in revising the promise, so the second is 90 times cheaper.

The arithmetic is numerically correct, and the error is in what the cost was divided by, not in the operation itself. The three points from the campaign are temporary and the nine from revising the promise are sustained. Dividing cost by units that are not equivalent produces a number that cannot be compared.

THE DIVISION AS PERFORMED: COST ÷ ALL POINTS

Communication campaign · SAR 12m ÷ 3 temporary points	Revise the promise · SAR 400k ÷ 9 sustained points
SAR 4 million per point	SAR 44 thousand per point

The two sides are not measuring the same thing, so a 90 times difference is a number unfit for comparison.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

Cost is divided by sustained points alone, which makes the cost per point in the campaign incalculable because its share of sustained points is zero.

This is the logical correction. The campaign delivers temporary points only, zero sustained, which makes its cost per sustained point a division by zero. The comparison only holds when each option's cost is divided by its sustained points alone, as the cards below show.

THE CORRECT DIVISION: COST ÷ SUSTAINED POINTS ALONE

Communication campaign · SAR 12m ÷ zero	Revise the promise · SAR 400k ÷ 9	Periodic report · SAR 1.1m ÷ 7	Raise capacity · SAR 47m ÷ 14
Not calculable	SAR 44 thousand	SAR 157 thousand	SAR 3.36 million

The last three figures are comparable because each one is the cost of a single sustained point.

PROPOSAL THREE · REJECTED

Raising capacity is the best option because it delivers the highest effect at 14 points.

Preferring the largest effect while ignoring the time and money constraints removes the proposal from reality. The option needs 9 months and SAR 47.0 million, while the situation demands a plan delivered in 10 days so its effect lands before peak season.

HIGHEST EFFECT AGAINST THE TIME CONSTRAINT

Raise capacity · effect	Raise capacity · time	What the committee asked for
14 points	9 months	10 days

THE PRACTICAL POINT

Before dividing cost by effect, make sure the units of effect are equivalent. A temporary point and a sustained point are equal numbers in the table and entirely different in meaning, and putting them through one division produces sound arithmetic with a meaningless result.

DISCUSSION POINT NINE · THE TRADE-OFF

REVISE THE PROMISE, OR RAISE CAPACITY?

Both options are acceptable, and choosing between them is the heart of the recommendation. Three positions are on the table.

PROPOSAL ONE · ACCEPTABLE IF THE REASON IS STATED

Revise the promise first, then raise capacity over a longer horizon.

A defensible position. Its reason is that the gap predates the incident and the promise is its source. Revising it stops the gap widening within three weeks at a cost of SAR 400 thousand, which buys time to raise capacity without the loss continuing.

PROPOSAL TWO · ACCEPTABLE IF THE REASON IS STATED

Raise capacity first, and revise the promise only if that proves impossible.

A defensible position. Lowering the ceiling of a promise can be read as retreating from a commitment in front of a wide public that does not accept softened promises, and the price of that is a gap that continues for nine months.

PROPOSAL THREE · REJECTED

Revise the promise because it is the cheapest and the fastest to implement.

The conclusion is acceptable and the justification is not. Cost and speed are constraints an implementation plan respects, not criteria reputation choices are built on. Otherwise the decision changes with the budget rather than with the substance of the issue.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

Where two paths are both valid, the decision maker is judged on the justification, not on the path taken. An acceptable reason is one that ties the decision to the nature of the issue, not to low cost or ease of delivery.

THE TRADE-OFF MATRIX

	Fast	Slow
Sustained	Revise the promise SAR 0.4m Periodic performance report SAR 1.1m	Raise capacity SAR 47.0m
Temporary	Communication campaign SAR 12.0m	No option in this cell

The preferred option is the one that falls in the fast and sustained cell. The horizontal axis is speed of effect, the vertical axis is durability of the result.

DISCUSSION POINT TEN · BRINGING IT TOGETHER

WHAT REASON IS PUT TO THE COMMITTEE?

The recommendation is ready and its reason has to be drafted. Four formulations are on the table.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED

Revising the promise lowers the volume of negative conversation and protects the organization's indicators in coming reports.

The reason is right in its result and wrong in its purpose. Protecting an indicator in a report is not a purpose, and the wording invites a fair question from the committee: are we treating trust, or treating what appears in the report?

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

The public promise went unmet for three consecutive quarters, and continuing to publish it produces a credibility gap faster than any operational crisis.

This formulation ties the recommendation to its actual cause and supports it with evidence from table five. It is fit for a committee that reports to the chief executive, because it puts a decision on the promise rather than on the message.

PROPOSAL THREE · TRUE BUT INCOMPLETE

Revising the promise is far cheaper than the campaign per sustained trust point.

The arithmetic is sound, and it is support for the recommendation, not its reason. Cost is stated in the pack to confirm feasibility. It is not offered as the main justification for a decision about the credibility of the organization.

PROPOSAL FOUR · REJECTED AT THIS STAGE

The promise was launched before the current communications leadership, so the gap is inherited.

The information is correct and out of place here. The committee is looking at a remedy, and introducing the timing of responsibility into the reason turns the discussion from the decision to the allocation of blame.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

The reason put to the decision maker must be the reason the analysis was actually built on. When it is swapped for a more palatable one, the recommendation becomes indefensible at the first serious question.

DISCUSSION POINT ELEVEN · THE PACK

WHAT GOES INTO THE COMMITTEE PACK, AND WHAT STAYS OUT?

The pack is limited and the time is 10 days. Four items are proposed for inclusion.

PROPOSAL ONE · INCLUDE

The table of negative conversation by subject across the three weeks.

Included first. It is the evidence that overturns the diagnosis, and without it the recommendation looks far removed from the incident the committee was convened for.

PROPOSAL TWO · INCLUDE

The table of public promise against performance across three quarters.

Included. It proves the gap predates the incident, and it is the direct support for the recommendation.

PROPOSAL THREE · DO NOT INCLUDE

A detailed analysis of the clarifying statement, its reach and its engagement.

Not included. The statement was not the source of the problem, and including an analysis of its performance steers the committee toward assessing communication instead of assessing the promise.

PROPOSAL FOUR · DO NOT INCLUDE

A comparison with similar organizations, their public promises and performance levels.

Not in this pack. The comparison is useful later, when the promise is being redrafted. Including it now opens a debate on the right promise before the committee has accepted that the promise itself is the issue.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

What is left out of the pack shapes the outcome as much as what goes into it. Every extra item opens a line of discussion, and a line opened at the wrong time postpones the decision.

DISCUSSION POINT TWELVE · THE FINAL PRESENTATION

ONE SLIDE IN FRONT OF THE COMMITTEE. WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT?

The slide is titled: negative conversation fell 38% after the statement. Below it sits a chart of conversation volume across the four weeks, and at the bottom a line reading: the recommendation is to revise the public promise. Three proposals diagnose the flaw.

PROPOSAL ONE · TRUE BUT INCOMPLETE

The title gives a number and not a conclusion, so the reader does not know what is being asked of him.

The title presents a figure with no conclusion, leaving the reader without direction. The flaw is real, and it is not the only one on the slide.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

The title supports the claim that the crisis is being contained while the recommendation below proposes revising the promise, so the slide carries evidence for one thing and a recommendation for another.

This is the more serious flaw. Whoever reads the title concludes the crisis is being contained, then finds a recommendation for a structural fix with no link between them. The first question will be: if conversation fell 38%, why revise a public promise? The slide does not carry the answer.

PROPOSAL THREE · REJECTED

The chart shows conversation volume and not its breakdown by subject.

That is not a design flaw, it is a gap in content, and it is a consequence of the second flaw rather than an independent one. Once the title carries the conclusion, the chart that is needed becomes obvious.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

Separating the finding from the recommendation destroys the credibility of an analytical case. Full consistency between title, evidence, and recommendation is the basic condition of any decision slide.

DISCUSSION POINT THIRTEEN · IMPLEMENTATION RISK

THE RECOMMENDATION IS APPROVED. WHAT DEFEATS IT?

The committee approved revising the public promise and publishing a periodic performance report. Four proposals for what could defeat implementation.

PROPOSAL ONE · REJECTED

Public rejection of the revised promise, read as a retreat from a commitment.

A real possibility, and it was already priced in. Revising a promise downward while publishing actual performance reads as transparency, not retreat, and the evidence is that trust in published figures recovers fastest when what is published matches reality.

PROPOSAL TWO · STRONGEST

Communications announces the promise and operations delivers it, and no single owner holds both.

This is the actual risk. Revising the promise is a communications decision, meeting it is an operational capability, and publishing a periodic performance report requires data from operations, accurate and on schedule. Unless one owner is named for matching the published to the delivered, the same gap returns in new wording.

PROPOSAL THREE · IN PLACE BUT NOT FIRST

The measurement tooling needed to issue reliable periodic performance reports.

A genuine risk, and a branch of the second. Measurement exists, table five proves it. The question is who owns publishing it and committing to it, not whether it exists.

PROPOSAL FOUR · NOT IN PLACE

The approaching peak season and its pressure on operational performance.

Seasonal pressure is a timing constraint, not a risk to the recommendation. It explains why raising capacity was ruled out as the first option, and that is a settled choice not under review.

THE PRACTICAL POINT

A public promise sits on the boundary between two functions. Whoever announces it cannot deliver it, and whoever delivers it cannot announce it. Every credibility gap starts at that boundary, and it is only closed by naming one owner for matching the published to the delivered.

CONCLUSION

THE INCIDENT DID NOT CREATE THE CRISIS. IT GAVE AN EXISTING COMPLAINT AN OPPORTUNITY TO SURFACE

A fall in the volume of negative conversation is a sign that the incident was handled, not that the crisis was contained. Here the volume fell 38% while the subject changed completely: the original complaint shrank from 80% to 20%, talk about earlier experiences rose in its place to 60%, and the speakers changed in the same direction.

The decisive evidence is in table five. The gap between the public promise and actual performance widened 17 points across three quarters before the incident.

That is why satisfaction with the service recovered 3 points at the same time as trust in published figures fell 11. Satisfaction is a verdict on a transaction that ended, trust is the expectation that what was promised will happen. Fixing the service does not repair a promise that is not met.

FROM THE INCIDENT TO THE CAUSE

WHAT APPEARED

A limited operational failure in one part of the service.

Fixed the same day, and it did not recur.

WHAT WIDENED

Talk about earlier experiences at 60%, from an audience that was not affected by the incident.

The subject changed and the speakers changed with it, in the same direction.

WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE

A 29 point gap between a 24 hour promise and actual performance at 71%.

This is the cause, and it is the last thing to appear.

SURFACE ▲ DIRECTION OF CAUSE | CAUSE

THE DECISION THIS CASE ENDS ON

A promise should not be drafted on expectation or marketing ambition, but on the real limits of operational capacity, so that communication reflects and supports what is actually delivered instead of covering gaps in performance.

ABOUT

STRATEGY IS MEASURED BY THE IMPACT IT LEAVES, NOT BY THE PLANS IT PRODUCES.

Majed Altir

Strategic leader in marketing, communications, public relations, and brand management

+15

Years

+120

Campaigns, carrying success stories with outstanding teams

+15

Sectors, within Saudi Vision 2030

8

Awards, with outstanding teams

I work with organizations from strategy through to execution: building strong brands, designing marketing campaigns that land, and putting communication systems in place that strengthen presence, establish trust, and create sustainable value.

Strategic communication, brand, corporate narrative, and reputation building meet in an approach that goes past producing messages to producing impact. It is grounded in a close reading of the transformations underway in the Kingdom and the targets of Saudi Vision 2030, connecting strategic direction to measurable results.