



## THE CRISIS MANUAL



*engaging, always.* These are the words we live by at Weber Shandwick.

They have three distinct meanings: that we create campaigns to *engage audiences* with the brands and issues that matter to them, inciting them to act; that we're especially good at it because engagement is *what we've always done*; and that we are *always doing it*, every second of every day because that's what the world demands.

This idea is especially relevant in the digital world we live in today, where we are relentlessly focused on the now.

The internet and the rise of social media mean that much of what happens occurs in the present, in real time. Futurist, Douglas Rushkoff, sees it this way: “If the end of the twentieth century can be characterized by futurism, the twenty-first can be defined by presentism.”


In our world, instantaneity impacts everything — financial markets, news, marketing, communications, shopping, sports, politics. It determines seismic global issues and tiny second-to-second decisions between friends.



## WELCOME TO “IN THE NOW.”

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Living “In the Now” can be thrilling. It allows people to share experiences as they’re happening. It gives the world access to news and events as they unfold. It allows us to come together in communities around things we care about.



*This world can be  
perilous, as well,  
especially for brands  
and institutions.*

Because everything is knowable, and everything is sharable, bad news travels fast. Poor customer service, a defective product, a management gaffe, a disgruntled employee, financial irregularities, an environmental accident, the theft of personal data: all can be broadcast to millions. A single event, even a rumor, can blow up in a crisis. Once manageable in a world with a linear timeframe, “In the Now” crises take on a life of their own.



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“IT CAN TAKE

**20 YEARS**

TO BUILD A REPUTATION, AND ONLY

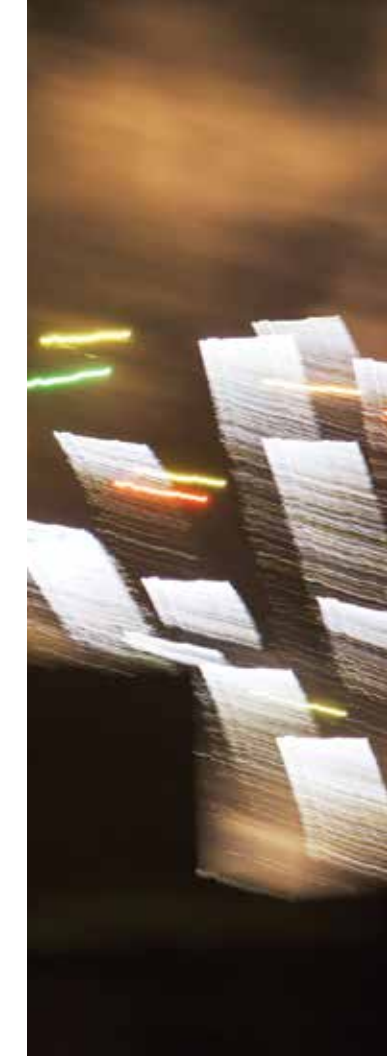
**FIVE MINUTES**

TO RUIN IT.”

— Warren Buffett

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In fact, five minutes may be longer than it actually takes today. The reason is people. As we see every day, anyone with a smart phone and an internet connection can wreak havoc. And once the conversation starts, it can't be turned off.



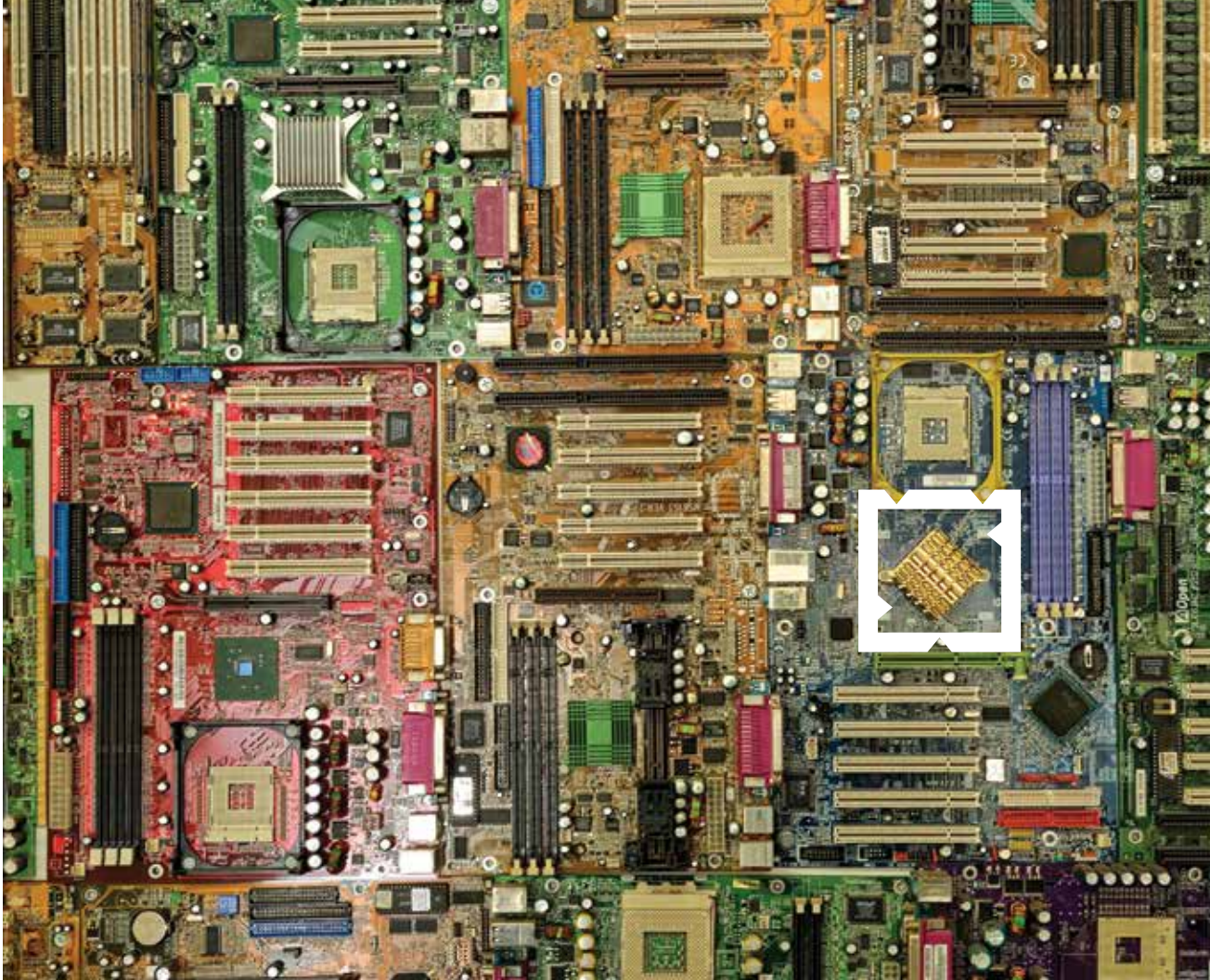
Rushkoff sees the rapidly falling dominoes this way: “Social media lets people feed back their responses immediately and to one another instead of just back to the business or politician concerned.

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**THEN OTHER PEOPLE RESPOND AS MUCH TO THOSE MESSAGES AS THEY DO TO THE PRODUCT OR POLICY. THEY ARE FEEDING BACK TO ONE ANOTHER.**

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In a landscape with instantaneous lateral feedback, marginal box office on the opening night of a movie — even if it has nothing to do with the movie — ends up being Tweeted to the next day’s potential viewers. The negativity iterates, and the movie fails.”



And crises are costly.  
To reputation, profit, growth.

An analysis of the stock prices of companies affected by unintended “black swan” events in 2009 and 2010 in the oil, automobile, aircraft manufacturing and financial services industries shows that within two months after a crisis, an average of 18% of shareholder value was lost, relative to the S&P 500. Moreover, stock price performance continued to diminish over time: on average, shareholder value came down 33% within a year.

A CRISIS IS  
MADE UP OF A STRING OF

# CRITICAL NANO- MOMENTS.

Each is important on its own because each one alters the trajectory of the conversation. “In the Now,” these Nano-Moments gain momentum and mass at avalanche speed. The crises they create are, in a word, chaotic. The job is to not just to control the chaos, but master it.



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*At Weber Shandwick, we've  
been successful working  
"In the Now" because of our  
unique approach.*

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**WE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF URGENCY,**  
and can act on it because we're built for agility. Our dedicated teams work seamlessly across time zones, language and fields of expertise. We are former journalists, policy-makers, lawyers, data scientists, authors and artists who help clients navigate the fast-moving currents of criticism and commentary across all social media platforms in real time.



Brands and reputations are built by stories.

Great stories engage audiences and help create deep, emotional bonds between people and businesses. When a crisis happens, stories break down. The main narrative, set by the business and then shared by all participants far and wide, is taken over by an angry public.



*In a*

# CRISIS

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*a company must be seen not only as storyteller but as truth-teller, as well.*

Because the narrative is created as people write and retell it, the story has no predictable arc and the ending will only be known at the end. But if the conversation is managed through honesty and transparency, our experience shows that the outcome can be managed, too.

Managing reputation in these perilous waters requires a relentless focus on delivering a consistent message. We call it “One Voice” which ensures company stakeholders share the same narrative. Then we counsel a dual approach: be prepared and act proactively.



“Fortune favors  
the prepared mind.”

— Louis Pasteur

AT WEBER SHANDWICK, WE CALL IT

“A Culture of Preparedness.”

It's a mindset that begins by anticipating, mitigating and managing issues before they become crises. We don't ask *if* a crisis will happen, but *when*. And when responding, *how* can often make the difference between recovery and failure.

A focus on  
prevention by  
*preparing in  
peace time*

A *comprehensive  
review of known  
risks*

Thorough knowledge  
of *allies and  
detractors*

Internal training  
and education, and  
cross-enterprise  
readiness and  
alignment

*Agile decision-  
making*

*Cross-functional  
rapid-response  
capability*

*Global listening  
and learning*





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AND BECAUSE WE  
DON'T LIKE TO  
LEAVE ANYTHING TO  
CHANCE, WE BELIEVE  
IN REHEARSING.

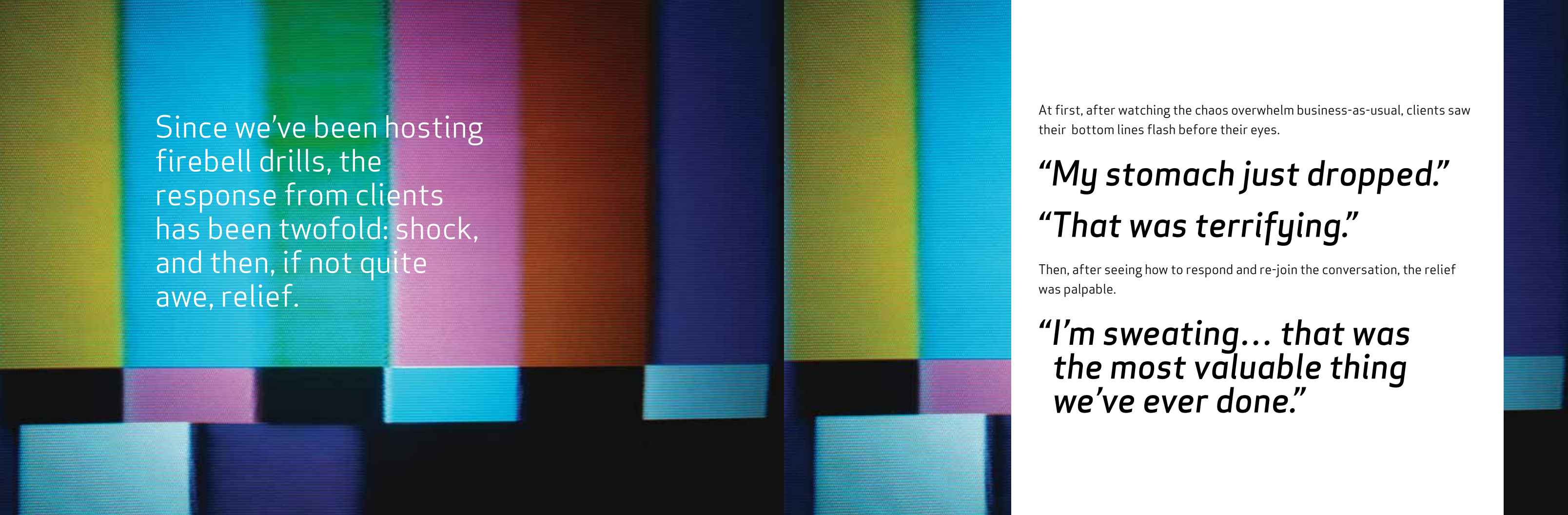
*Which is why  
since 2011,  
we've offered  
firebell.*

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We created it to simulate  
a crisis in real time,

so clients get an up-close and participatory experience in how crises unfold  
and how they're managed. This tool is an award-winning industry first:

- Interactive and hands-on
- Scenario-based
- Working replicas of brand/organization social channels
- On- and off-line
- Practical tools and techniques
- Case histories of successful crisis management practices
- Highly experienced trainers and practitioners



Since we've been hosting firebell drills, the response from clients has been twofold: shock, and then, if not quite awe, relief.

At first, after watching the chaos overwhelm business-as-usual, clients saw their bottom lines flash before their eyes.

***“My stomach just dropped.”***

***“That was terrifying.”***

Then, after seeing how to respond and re-join the conversation, the relief was palpable.

***“I’m sweating... that was the most valuable thing we’ve ever done.”***



From the moment a crisis occurs, the company's chief task is to remain a credible and respectful source of authoritative information while addressing stakeholder concerns.

*Honesty, transparency  
and, above all, facts are  
what audiences demand.*

From Rushkoff again: "People are not engaging with one another over Twitter and Facebook about critters who make cookies.

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They are not telling stories in 140 characters or less, but sharing facts. Updates concern things that matter in the present tense:

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What's really in this cookie? Did you hear what I found out about the factory they're made in? When people are concerned with questions like these, brand mythologies cease to have any relevance ... Instead, people compete to provide one another with valuable information or informed opinions as a way of gaining popularity, or social currency, in their networks. The feedback is not just to companies or governments, but to one another."



**“Get action. Seize the moment.  
Man was never intended to  
become an oyster.”**

— Theodore Roosevelt

Knowing this behavior as well as we do, we guide clients with imperative behaviors in managing social channels during a crisis:

Near immediate response, if only to state awareness of a situation

Immediate activation across targeted functions within organization

Ignition of crisis plan

A human voice without “legalese” or “PR spin”

Understanding of audience tone/ vernacular/beliefs

Holistic monitoring to assess level of viral-ness of news/ information

Understanding of social platform functionality

Content creation for scenario at hand and regular social channel updates

Understanding of people’s concerns, even if not responsible



And because the world doesn't sit at desks anymore, we're working to provide new technology to clients with simple ways to stay in the know and engage with key stakeholders — even during crisis.

AT WEBER SHANDWICK, WE LOVE WORKING  
**“IN THE NOW.”**

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We love the highs, and know how to navigate the lows. “In the Now” will be increasingly how the world works. We can help you succeed. In the times that thrill, and the ones that make us lose sleep. Contact us. We'll get right back to you.

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weber  
shandwick  
engaging. always.