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Advanced Public Relations Theory
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Final

RPIE Process:

**PR Plan for Healthy Foods Haven E. Coli Outbreak
(As of March 21st-to be updated as campaign progresses)**

• **R: Research**

- The first thing I would do after learning about these E. coli strawberries would be to alert the CDC and the California Department of Food and Agriculture so that we may consult with them on how to handle the situation and so that they may begin an investigation into these strawberries. It'll allow us to get answers once they learn more and could prevent any of the staff that may have been responsible from destroying evidence and such based on fear of being found out.
- I then would do research on product recall, how other companies have dealt with E. coli, and what the public's opinion on it, do they find it scary? Will it cause a panic? Will people get angry? I need a vague idea of how they'll take hearing about their favorite store having E. coli items because in some people's minds everything in the store will have E. coli and I'd like to avoid having the consumer associate Healthy Foods Haven with E. coli.
- After having the Los Angeles Healthy Food Haven closed temporarily to reduce further spread of E. coli. I would then reach out to our distributors, the area's general manager, and the grower who grew our E. coli berries so that we could begin alerting consumers and to find out the source so that they can begin taking preventative measures.
- I would then alert my CEO and update them on the situation, no news isn't good news in this situation so having already reached out to the intended parties I can then consult with my CEO without having them worrying about containment/spread of the E. coli.
- Then, I would try and meet up with our Legal Department, Human Resources, and Marketing. We would need to find out any of our weak points that this may have created, whether its inside the company, legally, or economically so that we can prepare ourselves for the media's scrutiny.
- I would then meet with our Social Media team so that they can begin brainstorming the publics concerns, possible questions being asked, and how we will respond to them through our Social Media accounts.
- After that I would focus on engaging our employees to update them on the situation and be as transparent as possible and let them know to refrain from engaging with the media on this matter until we have prepared our public statements and press releases.

If Healthy Foods Havens has been unionized I would reach out to the Union to identify any safety issues or concerns that the employees have reported to them.

- Then, once I have all the information I need, I would begin drafting up our Press Release, the Official Statement, and notify my CEO by sending them a memo highlighting the key information on what we've learned, who I've reached out to and their responses (if they've responded), the media outlets we plan to contact, which public we are trying to reach, and invite them to include their input on the situation.

- **P: Planning/Programming**

- **Goals:**

- 1) Reassure the public and our consumers that the spread of E.coli is being contained and that our produce is safe to eat.
- 2) Reach out to employees and to assure them that the situation is being handled and try to unite them as apart our Healthy Foods Havens family and that their concerns are valid.
- 3) Keep our image that Healthy Foods Havens is a healthy, clean, community driven grocery store and not "that dirty hippie store".
- 4) Improve our relationship with the public and media by showing them we are competent and can safely handle foodborne illnesses.
- 5) Showing our stockholders and other potential investors that Healthy Food Havens is a profitable venture that can successful navigate a crisis without major loses.

- **Publics being targeted:**

- Our consumers and the public
- Other Healthy Foods Haven employees working in our nationwide chains
- Local government in Los Angeles
- News Outlets
- Potential Investors and Stockholders

- **Objectives:**

- Increase social media presence ten-fold, with a minimum of 3 posts a day at each of the key meal times to reassure the public that we are listening to them and to slowly help draw public focus back to our other products
- Hold an open forum at the end of each month between employees and higher level staff with a meeting transcript to be sent to our Human Resources department.
- Increase the amount of Media Campaigns to at least 6 to regain the public's trust and restore our companies images. This will include having our CEO do at least 2 television interviews, appearances on ALL local radio and any national radio stations that are popular in Los Angeles.
- Reach out to any of our affiliates and donors to remind them of our previous business together and to reassure them that the E. coli situation is being properly managed.

- Start an annual marketing campaign with coupons and easily attainable rewards to bring our customers back into our stores. We will reach out to couponing blogs to help spread the word of good deals.

- **Strategies:**

- Create a coupon based game with easily attainable rewards that are awarded when shopping and spending money at our Healthy Foods Haven stores to bring customer back in.
- Working with our Federal Food and Agriculture department we will introduce more rigorous safety training to our employees that handle all produce and meat products to help reduce any anxiety employees may feel about potentially infecting produce and losing their job.
- Get involved with charity foundations that are locally based in the towns with Healthy Foods Haven chains to regain local support.
- Get a series of at least 10 health inspectors to inspect all of our suppliers, stores, and delivery services to show the public that Healthy Foods Haven is safe to shop at.
- Have our Healthy Foods Haven endorsed by Food Safety Experts, Celebrity Chefs, and Celebrity Doctors.
- Sponsor “insta-famous” fitness pages, bodybuilders, and food photographers by supplying them with our products to be used in their posts.

- **Tactics/Tools:**

- Conduct more meetings, introduce or address an(the) employee newsletter that will keep them informed on what is going on with the company to reassure them that we are all in this together.
- Send out press releases and set-up interviews ASAP with our executives, CEO and other senior staff to reassure the media and public that we take this situation seriously and are handling it with the upmost diligence.
- Send out information on the situation to our customer mailing lists, both physical and e-mail, that will cover our newly implemented safety measures, address their concerns, and inform them of our new coupon game to thank them for their continued loyalty.
- Create an online survey that for both employees and customers that will allow them to rate their experience, make suggestions for improvement, or to voice any concerns they may or may not have.
- Activities/timeline (to be updated as campaign goes on):
 - Bryan will draft press release and show to CEO for approval beginning immediately (est. March 23rd)
 - Bryan will begin to reach out and doing pitches to local media by March 25th after receiving approval to send the press release out. By March 26th we will begin doing pitches with national news outlets.
 - Ronda and Mary-Anne will begin working, starting March 30th, with our Web team to create our online survey system. (est. release April 30th)

- Travis and Bryan will prepare social media and organize a “customer response” team to address the public’s questions and concerns.
- Ronda will begin organizing possible charities to become affiliated with and will begin reaching out to see who is interested in working together (The goal is to have a list of interested organizations by April 1st).

3) I: Implementation

- PR campaign timetable:

- March 21st 2017-March 1st 2018 (1 year campaign)

- Budget:

- Travel for Media Interviews=\$23k
- Social Media=\$32k
- Marketing=\$150k
- Survey Site= \$15k
- Coupon Game=\$250k
- Total=\$470k for campaign

- Sample messaging:

- We here at Healthy Foods Haven offer our humblest of apologies for the inconvenience that this has caused you, and rest assured this is an isolated incident that has been approached with the utmost care in concerns to shopper safety. We thank you for your loyalty and continued support in this unfortunate incident.
- To the people and family members that have been affected by our strawberries, we would like to reach out to you and know that we are here to listen to your concerns and take action as a result. Our food handling practices have been addressed and improved above industry standards. We thank you for your loyalty and are glad to have you as a part of our Healthy Foods Haven family.
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4) E: Evaluation

- What went well in the PR campaign included:

- Media coverage went well, we were able to ride in the storm of a much bigger controversy and most negative attention only came from local consumers.
- Saw a slight dip in sales by 12% during the first quarter after the press release but profits leveled out as a result of the coupon game in the following quarter.
- The survey site surprisingly revealed a public demand for more cooking utensils in our stores as opposed to food concerns.

- What could be improved next time:
 - Our attempts to sponsor insta-famous and other blogs show little to no impact on our stores public image or increase in sales.
 - One of our chain stores in Minnesota had a major sale of strawberries during this time and we were publicly embarrassed on twitter, needed to have better control what kinds of sales events are going on at this time.