

Save the Whales? A Public Relations Crisis at Lego

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Abstract

This critical incident describes Greenpeace's social media and direct-action campaign targeting Lego for its business relationship with Shell Oil. Greenpeace was opposed to Shell's plan to drill in the Arctic and was concerned that Shell used Lego to greenwash its image in the eyes of children and the public. Greenpeace created a satirical video using Lego that showed the Arctic being polluted by oil. The video went viral and was viewed more than 5 million times on YouTube. Greenpeace also engaged in a number of direct action activities targeting Lego's relationship with Shell that caught the attention of the media. Greenpeace's social media campaign and Lego's response to the public relations crisis are central to the critical incident.

Learning Outcomes

In completing this assignment, students should be able to:

1. Describe how advocacy groups use public relations, social media, and direct action when protesting corporations.
2. Analyze a public relations crisis from the perspective of multiple stakeholders.
3. Evaluate how socially responsible firms respond to public relations problems.
4. Judge the effectiveness of ways firms manage a public relations crisis.

Application

This critical incident is designed for use in undergraduate Marketing, Public Relations, or Introduction to Business courses.

Key Words

crisis management, public relations, marketing, ethics

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