

Communication nightmares

The scandal and controversy surrounding golf icon Tiger Woods in 2009 had marketing departments of several major companies in a difficult position. They had some tough choices to make in deciding whether or not to keep him as their spokesman and potentially lose business by upsetting consumers. There was no way to accurately predict if more news would hit the headlines to further complicate the matter.

This particular scenario made headlines around the world, not only with the news of Tiger's personal life, but also how the fallout would impact his sponsorship and endorsement agreements. The Business Insider reported that Tiger Woods lost 22 million dollars in endorsements when companies like AT&T, Gatorade, Gillette and Accenture dropped him.

Nike Golf took a risk with their famous 'swish' logo and stood behind the sports celebrity, saying this was just a minor blip in the life of a famous athlete and that he would recover from the media making a big deal out of it.

Source: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1948181,00.html#ixzz1qpvyAf1x>

No doubt meetings around several organizations including his handlers and those at the Tiger Woods Foundation discussed the communication nightmare ahead of them late in 2009.

This remarkable comeback story has remained a top sport's focus as Tiger Woods enters the 2012 season. His first major tour win netted him 2,448,541 Facebook followers who took the time to click 'like' on his story.

Activity 4-3

Using all the information you have received in this course, imagine you represent one of the sponsor organizations when the first news broke about the Tiger Wood's scandal. Analyze and make a decision about whether or not your company will continue to sponsor Tiger Woods. Assume you are part of a group (pod) of five and what you decide will impact your group.

- a) What communication strategies will be put in place in the next few weeks?
- b) Describe the big picture versus detailed planning that is needed to handle the situation.
- c) How will you communicate or interact using social media?
- d) Consider context factors; physical, historical, psychological and social. How will they impact your decisions?
- e) What group communication roles would you assign each pod member and how would these assignments impact group communication?
- f) Would your organization drop or continue your sponsorship? Why?

Share your study in the **Discussion 4-2: Case Study** topic in the Discussions area.