

The Story of...

# CHARLIE HEBDO

## The Magazine and the Incident

Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical Magazine founded in 1970. They are an atheistic magazine that advocates for freedom of expression, anti-terrorism and secularism. The Magazine features cartoons, reports, jokes and polemics of a very provocative nature. Catholicism, Judaism and Islam are often the targets of their parodies.

On January 7th, two gunmen headed to the Charlie Hebdo headquarters and murdered several members of Charlie Hebdo. Their battle cry, 'Allahu Akbar' indicated religious motivations: it is considered an offense to draw prophets of Islam, an act that Charlie Hebdo continually refused to cease.

The incident rattled the entire nation of France; there was a vigil a day after with thousands of Parisians gathering in solidarity, mourning those who died during the attacks.

## The Campaign: "Je Suis Charlie"

The slogan "Je suis Charlie" was first used on twitter as a hashtag. Thursday evening, the day after the attack, there were nearly 6,500 tweets per minutes. The hashtag broke records as one of the most used hashtags of all time (around 7 million tweets within the week).

## The Writing and Imagery

In defiance, Charlie Hedbo announced that it will still be releasing the next issue of the magazine and will be producing 1 million copies of the issue, up from 60,000.

The January issue: The issue, dubbed the 'survivors issue' featured a drawing of muhammad on the cover with the words "toute es pardonne" or "all is forgiven." The Background colour is an "Islamic Green."

## Lessons for PR Practioners

- Never underestimate the power of imagery and symbolism
- Heed cultural and racial sensitivities
- Twitter is a powerful mobilizing tool
- Be consistent with key messages, try not to appear contradictory
- Great writing can enhance your reputation even if vulgar

