

*Effective crisis communications plans are living, breathing documents. Just as a plant requires critical components in its ecosystem, crisis communications plans also require certain elements for survival.*

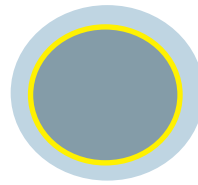
## ATMOSPHERE

An atmosphere of support for the communications function is critical. No crisis plan, regardless of how well it is designed, will be healthy and effective without a supportive corporate culture. Plants have a two-way relationship with oxygen - they need it to live, and they also produce it. Similarly, companies get from crisis communications what they put into it. Organizations' true personalities come out during times of crisis. You can't transform an organization's culture the instant a crisis breaks, so it's important to build and foster a healthy atmosphere today.



## SUNLIGHT

If a plant doesn't see the light of day, it won't thrive; this is equally true for crisis communications plans. So dust off the crisis communications plan, or – if you don't have one – shed some light on the value of crisis communication preparedness with your team, upper management and other departments.



## WATER

Water keeps plants alive. Similarly, the ongoing maintenance and updates of the crisis communications plan is like watering a plant. Crisis plans, like plants, need to be carefully nurtured. This means updating contacts, conducting frequent tabletop exercises and drills and holding internal meetings that test crisis communications processes. If you starve the plan of new inputs, updates and corporate familiarization, it will wither and die.



## SOIL

The crisis communication plan must be rooted in cross-departmental terrain. Just as soil provides different nutrients for plants, so too must the plan draw upon diverse organizational expertise and input. In times of crisis, communications is a 'function' not a 'department' and it needs roots in various parts of the organization including the executive table, HSE, HR and legal. Crisis communications plans must also integrate with operational emergency plans.

