



How to Respond to a Crisis in Business

December 9, 2025

Today's Communication Landscape



Leaders Fail at Crisis Response Because:

1

They
let fear
lead

2

By
over-
confessing

3

Or
**under-
confessing**

ASTRONOMER

and the **terrible, horrible,**
nogood, very bad
crisiscommunicationsstrategy



What Happened—A Quick Recap:

- On July 16, 2025 at Coldplay concert, the spotlight wasn't just on the stage—it was on CEO Andy Byron and his head of HR.
- Caught on the jumbotron in an intimate moment, the pair scrambled to hide their faces as Chris Martin quipped, “Either they’re having an affair or they’re just very shy.”
- The internet did the rest—calling them out, speculating wildly, and essentially stringing them up in the court of public opinion.

Andy's Initial Response?



I want to acknowledge the moment that's been circulating online, and the disappointment it's caused. What was supposed to be a night of music and joy turned into a deeply personal mistake playing out on a very public stage. I want to sincerely apologize to my wife, my family, and the team at Astronomer — you deserve better from me as a partner, as a father, and as a leader.

This is not who I want to be or how I want to represent the company I helped build. I'm taking time to reflect, to take accountability, and to figure out the next steps, personally and professionally. I ask for privacy as I navigate that process.

Andy's Initial Response?



I also want to express how troubling it is that what should have been a private moment became public without my consent. I respect artists and entertainers, but I hope we can all think more deeply about the impact of turning someone else's life into a spectacle.

As a friend once sang: "Lights will guide you home, and ignite your bones, and I will try to fix you"

Astronomer's Real Response:



Astronomer is committed to the values and culture that have guided us since our founding. Our leaders are expected to set the standard in both conduct and accountability. The Board of Directors has initiated a formal investigation into this matter and we will have additional details to share very shortly.

Alyssa Stoddard was not at the event and no other employees were in the video. Andy Byron has not put out any statement, reports saying otherwise are all incorrect.

Why It's Wrong:

- This is a playing-it-safe, standard statement that rarely moves people to increased brand loyalty.
- It's overly formal and feels like a copy/paste from Astronomer's crisis communications manual.
- It's true, you should stick to the facts, but when it comes to matters of the heart and moral failures, less is not more.

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Astronomer's Second Response:

Astronomer

Why It's Wrong:

- Too late – 9 days after the initial crisis.
- Spoke to the general population, not customers and prospects.
- The default is still bare minimum facts, so they won't look guilty.
 - Even if the facts prove you did nothing wrong, you need to offer them in the context of your audience's most pressing concerns.
- Is Astronomer a company we <<its customers>> can trust?

How It Helped:

- Because it was lighthearted and self-aware, it changed the narrative ... somewhat.
- Instead of the public conversation being entirely about the scandal, a little attention went to what they do (data pipelines, workflow automation).
- It generated high visibility and brand awareness. • May win awards for being a clever crisis-response move.

01

[POWER PHRASES: HOW TO PREPARE FOR ANY CONVERSATION](#)

01

[POWER PHRASES: HOW TO PREPARE FOR ANY CONVERSATION](#)



02

[BAD NEWS DELIVERY & OTHER TOUGH CONVERSATIONS](#)

02

[BAD NEWS DELIVERY & OTHER TOUGH CONVERSATIONS](#)



Power Phrases

Block & Bridge



Elements of a Power Phrase:

1

They
tell the truth

2

They're
considerate

3

They're
objective

[SABOTAGER](#)

[HATER](#)

[AWKWARD GAL](#)

[HARASSER](#)
[HARASSER](#)



[PREVIOUS](#)
[PREVIOUS](#)

R

US

Power Phrases:

- First, let me clarify.
- I don't know if that's an accurate characterization.
- Right now, we need to focus on this issue. Not exactly; let me explain. I
- wouldn't say that. I can't speak to all of that... here's what I can tell you... Tell
- me more about that ...
- I hear what you are saying.
- My preference is to share my thoughts about [name] when they are
- present. If that turns out to be the case, then we will take action. Thanks for
- sharing your insights with me. It's been my experience that... Let me
- reaffirm what I mentioned earlier...
-
-

SABOTAGER
SABOTAGER

HATER
HATER

AWKWARD GAL
AWKWARD GAL

HARASSER
HARASSER



PREVIOUS
PREVIOUS

Benefits of a Power Phrase:

1

They
**buy you
time**

2

Help you
**diffuse the
situation**

3

Show
diplomacy

[SABOTAGER](#)

[HATER](#)

[AWKWARD GAL](#)

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[HARASSE](#)



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Breakout Session

Power Phrases



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PREVIOUS
PREVIOUS



**BAD NEWS
DELIVERY:**
and other tough conversations

Bad News (Framework)



Delivering Bad News (Framework):



Alert your recipient that news is coming.
Share the worst news (rip the band off). Offer any consolation or “good” news (apply the medicine).
Explain the reason why (until your recipient knows the news, they can’t hear the why).

Bad News (Framework)



Delivering Bad News (Framework):



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Share the worst news (rip the band off). Offer any consolation or “good” news (apply the medicine).
Explain the reason why (until your recipient knows the news, they can’t hear the why).

Delivering Bad News (Project Delay):



I wish I were sharing different news. Testing will begin on June 1st instead of May 1st.

We are still on track to break ground as planned.

Because access to the job site wasn't immediately available, we had to shift the initial timeline.

Delivering Bad News (Block & Bridge):

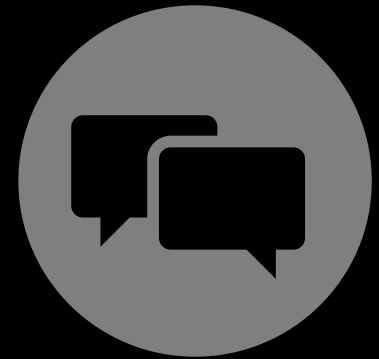


I know this is difficult to hear. Again, I wish I was sharing different news. If there was any way I could be sharing different news with you today, I would.

Right now, we need to focus on next steps for you. What questions do you have?

Power Phrases

PREPARED



Elements of a Power Phrase:

1

They
tell the truth

2

They 're
considerate

3

They 're
objective

Plus you must:

Cast everyone
in ~~favorable~~ a
light as
possible.

And Avoid Emotionally Charged Words:

- Love...hate R am ifications
 - Inferior...dumb
 - You never...you always
 - Fail...terrible Axe to
 - grind...in the hot seat
 -
- Claim ...dem and Dange r...s hocki
 - ng Di sappointe d...ir ritated...
 - frustrated
 - Se Ifis h
 - Unfair

And Avoid Emotionally Charged Words:

- Love...hate (like / unfavorable)
- Ramifications (result / impact)
- Inferior...dumb (inattentive)
- You never...you always (at times)
- Fail...terrible (misstep / problematic)
- Axe to grind...in the hot seat
- Claim...demand (ask, request)
- Danger...shocking (affords risk)
- Disappointed...repeatedly
- Frustrated (challenge / I wish this had gone a different way)
- Selfish (see this from another's perspective / through the eyes of)
- Unfair (has two sides)

Saying No Nicely:



I want you to be successful, and I wish there was a way I could make this happen for you. With the additional requirements, we'll need to engage another resource. Let me know what your timeline looks like, and I'll see when we can accommodate you.

Let me give you an idea of where we're at...

Personality Conflicts:



My preference is to share my thoughts about Alex's work ethic/ performance/ contributions when she is present.

Let's schedule a time when the three of us can sit down together and discuss this.

I can't speak for Alex, but based on the information I have, here's what I can tell you . .

Holding Others Accountable:



I need your help to clear up a potential misunderstanding. Some steps were missed on the XYZ project last week.

What can you tell me about your recent contributions?

Addressing Mistakes:



(Be proactive) I'll have your plan ready early tomorrow morning. I just need to tweak the bullets and get a little distance from the content to make sure it's as strong as it can be.

(Neutralize blame) My intent was to get this to you yesterday afternoon. If there had been any way for me to do that, I would have.

Awkward Moments & Personal Attacks:



Melissa, you're pushy, aggressive and overbearing.

Awkward Moments & Personal Attacks:



Can you give me an example of a time when you've seen me exhibiting these characteristics? I want to make sure I understand how these characteristics are affecting my performance.

Awkward Moments & Personal Attacks:

“Hey Blondie!”: • “My preference is for you to address me by my first name.”

“I was just kidding”:

- “That may be so. My preference is still for you to refer to me as [name].”

Awkward Moments & Personal Attacks:

“You’re pretty young/old to be working here.”: • “I prefer to focus on my accomplishments.” “How come you’re still single/without children?”:

- “I want to answer most of your questions. Do you have another one?”



Q&



Let's Connect



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n. com

(763)670-6701

Appendix

SABOTAGER

HATER

AWKWARD GAL

HAR AS SE



PREVIOUS

PR E VIO

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SABOTAGER

I'll present this to the execs.

SABOTAGER

HATER

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PREVIOUS
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SABOTAGER

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PREVIOUS
PREVIO

R

US



HATER

That's the ugliest shirt
I've ever seen.

[SABOTAGER](#)

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[AWKWARD GAL](#)

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[PREVIOUS](#)
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You look like that person I hated
at my last job.

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HARAS

Why are men likediapers/ Hey babycome sit on my lap.

SER

SABOTAGER

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PREVIOUS PR E VIO

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