



Crisis Planning Assignment: LF Stores

INTRODUCTION

LF Stores prides itself on its unique clothing and shopping experience. Always forecasting the latest trends, it is the perfect store tailored to fashionistas and trendsetters. This retail outlet is notorious for its styling sessions, reworked vintage pieces and edgy, innovative styles. There used to be 26 LF Stores locations— from coast to coast. Although LF has moved online, I will pretend that this store has its tangible locations. It might also be helpful to note that the shutdown of LF’s retail stores was due to a costly lawsuit (this is top secret, but I am willing to drop some information for the sake of this assignment). I would like to hone in on some aspects that could have prevented this lawsuit and the transition to “online only.”

CRISIS INVENTORY

- I. **Theft:** The store that I worked at was located down the street from a police station, so naturally, there has never been any concerns of break-ins. The owners of LF also live a block over from the store. The more pressing issue was theft of merchandise. Even though the store had cameras, they were rarely surveilled. None of the items had security tags, so it was easy for people to steal with no penalty. In regards to extremely valuable items, such as business information, there was a vault— ensuring some safety. However, there needs to be a security sensors on items, as well as having detectors for

when people walk in and out of the store. There should also be a security button installed when we are certain that people are stealing.

- II. **Bad Exposure:** An ongoing stereotype of an LF girl is that they are cool, but extremely stuck up and rude. Online, people (customers and former employees) continue to voice their horrible experiences. LF needs to ensure a healthy work environment, by checking up with their staff and promoting activities amongst the employees— a way to create a friendly work environment. LF should also respond to customers who have had bad experiences. Offering customers with styling sessions, as well as a generous discount can help rebrand a bad reputation.
- III. **Workplace Violence:** During my time there, I noticed the same men walking in, only to talk to my coworkers and me. Nothing ever went farther than leaving a number or being asked out, but the company should have some sort of protocol of how to go about these uncomfortable encounters. Especially because LF employees are primarily women, the company needs to educate women on how to deal with situations like these. They should also offer self defense classes in case harassment arises.
- IV. **Organizational Misdeeds:** One of the biggest misdeeds of LF was overworking their staff. The company needs more staff on deck. Working close to 14 hours a day was not only extremely tiresome, but illegal.
- V. **Merchandising:** The display of clothing items often got messed up by customers. There needed to be some kind of display that made it easy for customers to browse, while also creating less of a mess for employees to clean.
- VI. **Sabotage:** The downfall of LF was the lawsuit. This ties in with the organizational misdeed of overworking their staff. An employee was tired of working strenuous hours, so she filed a lawsuit. As for other employees, they did not mind working extraneous hours as a way to make a living.

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

- Business Owners: LF is a family run operation. Family invests time and money into creating a company that will keep them and their employees financially afloat.
- Management: People who carry out leadership roles and organize ways to promote the brand. They are the driving forces of the brand. (Usually have had years of experience with the brand).
- Employees/Stylists: Staff who work endlessly to lure in customers and build rapport with clients. Also have goals and strategies in order to sell products.
- Fashion Lovers (aka Customers): The people paying for an experience and unique clothing items. Customers are the driving force in a successful retail business.
- Influencers: People online who are able to represent and help sell the brand to their own audience.

VULNERABILITY AUDIT QUESTIONS

**Questions may be applied to any of the stakeholders*

Business Owners

1. In the state of a crisis, how would you like to be contacted?
2. Do we have a crisis management team? Who do you need to help alleviate or resolve this crisis?
3. What outlets do you need to go to as a way to confront the issue at hand?
4. What possible crisis do you fear the most?
5. What is something that you never need to worry about? Sometimes the things we least expect can happen— so it is good to have an idea of what to do in a situation that you do not necessarily need to worry about.
6. What do your expenses look like if a costly crisis were to happen?
7. How will you be able to recover and bounce back after a crisis?
8. How will you ensure safety and stability to your customers and employees?
9. How honest and ethical are your policies to the other stakeholders?

Management

1. What kind of attitude will you lead with when a crisis hits?
2. Does the company give you instructions of what to do for varying crises?
3. When a crisis arises and is dealt with, does the company review your productivity?
4. As a leader, how often are you scanning the environment as a way to catch a crisis in its premature stage?
5. What is the most convenient way to stay in contact with your employers (ie: the business owners)?
6. When is it the most appropriate time to tell other employees/ stylists about the crisis?
7. What are your biggest concerns? In other words, what crisis situation do you fear the most?
8. How ready do you think you are when it comes to dealing with curveballs?

Employees/ Stylists

1. How do you receive news of a crisis? Do you think it is in an effective way?
2. What role do you play when it comes to a crisis? Are you allowed to be vocal, or is your voice minimized?
3. Is there some kind of protocol that management provides for you in case of a crisis?
4. Do you find yourself responsible for keeping an eye out for possible crisis?
5. What is one crisis that you fear the most? Why? Is it something easily preventable, or is it something more instantaneous?
6. Do you think that your work environment is run in an ethical and honest way? If not, explain some faults and solutions.
7. When it comes to theft, how proactive are you? What is the store's protocol for stealing, and do you think it is functional?

8. Is there anything the company can do for you to make you feel more confident and proactive in the workplace?

Customers/Influencers

1. Are there any troubles or concerns you have with this company?
2. Do you believe this brand is inclusive and ethical?
3. What are some things that make LF unique?
4. How do you connect with the LF team? Do they respond efficiently?
5. What do you constitute as a crisis for a clothing store?
6. Is the LF content engaging and informative?
7. Do you know LF's message? If so, do you think it stays consistent?
8. Are the employees welcoming and helpful?

CRISIS TEAM STRUCTURE

During my time at LF, it was unclear if there was an actual crisis team on standby, so I am theorizing my own crisis structure. LF is a family run business and valued their privacy. There were other family members heavily involved with the company, but rarely made appearances in meetings— it was unclear what their positions were as an employee. Mrs. Furst's son lived down the street from the store location I worked at, so he was always coming in and updating us on upcoming drops and sales. In the structure, I place Laurie Furst on the top because she is the owner and obtains the most information about the company. Then we have Marielle and Mark— the head of management. Katie and Danica have been involved with LF for about seven years, so they know the ins and outs of the company. When business appears slow, they think of ways to promote LF's clothes. Katie and Danica record daily updates of how the store is performing. These data sheets are sent to Mark and Marielle— any noticeably good or bad information is sent to Laurie.

