

# Crisis Communications for Events

John Thorburn – Bold Hat Productions

March 24, 2020

## Quick Background

- Marketing Director at Bold Hat Productions since 2014
- Northwest Marine Trade Association (Seattle Boat Show) 2003-2014
- At Bold Hat, we produce Lake Chelan Winterfest, Seattle Scotch and Beer Fest, U District StreetFair, Fremont Fair, Kirkland Uncorked, South Lake Union Block Party, Fremont Oktoberfest
- Bold Hat launched in 1997 and is a team of 6 full-time staff

## What is Crisis Communications for events?

*The effort taken by event producers to communicate with the public and stakeholders when an unexpected event occurs that has negative impact on the event's reputation or the ability to proceed with the scheduled event as planned.*

What is our  
crisis?

*A global pandemic has forced  
virtually all public gatherings to be  
cancelled for the foreseeable  
future.*

SEATTLE  
**SCOTCH  
and BEER**



**POSTPONED**  
NOVEMBER 27 & 28



Bold Hat events  
impacted already

# U DISTRICT STREET FAIR

POSTPONED  
UNTIL 2021



Bold Hat events  
impacted already

SEATTLE  
**SCOTCH  
and BEER**

**FEST**

**POSTPONED**  
NOVEMBER 27 & 28

**U DISTRICT  
STREET FAIR**

**POSTPONED  
UNTIL 2021**





Crisis Communications  
factors to consider

# Timeline

- **Be Quick!**
- **Immediate if possible.**
- **Don't sacrifice accuracy for speed.**

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the word "Audience" in white text. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

# Audience

- **Ticket Holders / General Public**
- **Craft/Food Vendors**
- **Sponsors**
- **Staff / Volunteers**
- **Local/State Officials (City Services, Permits)**
- **Venue Management**
- **Entertainers**

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the text 'Stakeholders'. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

# Stakeholders

- **Staff**
- **Board members**
- **Non-profit partner**
- **Venue manager**
- **Ticketing agency**
- **Contractors**



# Communication Channels

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the text 'Communication Channels'. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

## Communication Channels

- **Email**
  - Who is sending? Who is monitoring replies received?
- **Social Media**
  - Who is deploying? Who is responding to comments?
- **Website**
- **Press Release**
- **Press Conference**



# Crafting the Message

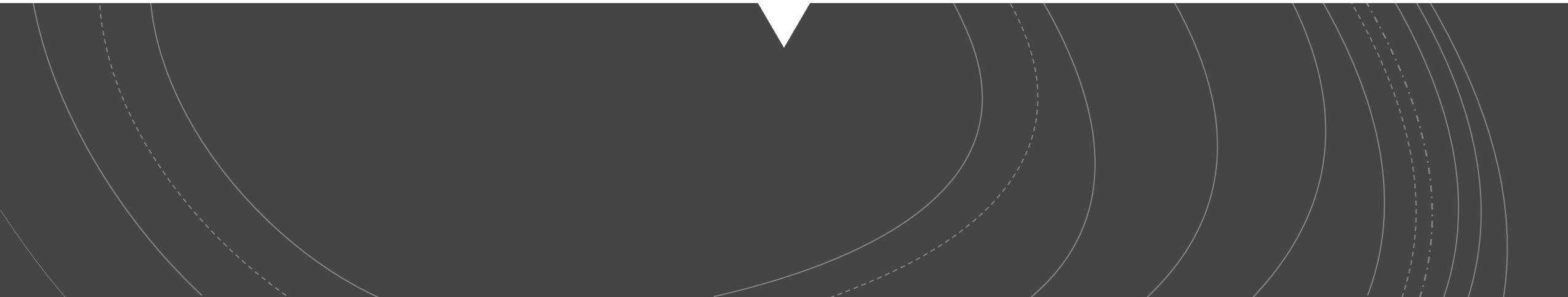
## Crafting the Message

- **Work with what you know**
- **Deal with the facts as they are today**
- **Avoid “possibility” in your language that creates uncertainty**

## Crafting the Message

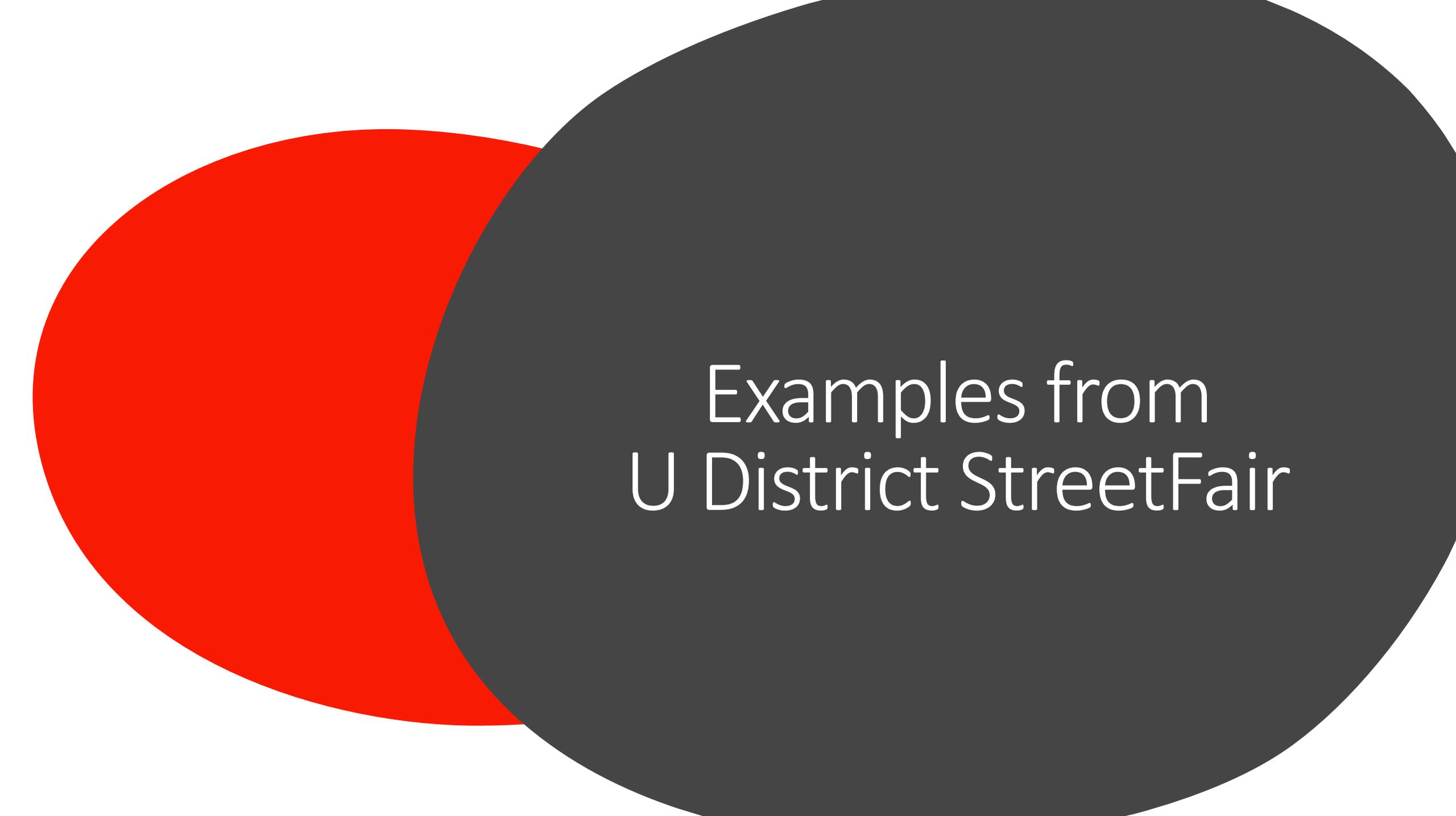
- **Being authentic and upfront is critical**
- **Be empathetic when appropriate**
- **Be quick, but be precise**
- **Leave no room for misinterpretation**

# Common Elements in Crisis Messaging



## Common Elements in Crisis Messaging

- **Brief description of what happened**
- **What is being done to rectify the situation**
- **Steps being taken to prevent the situation from happening again (if applicable)**
- **Key contacts, names and details like time, location and anything else that is known**
- **A website, social media handle/page or toll-free number for additional assistance or information**



Examples from  
U District StreetFair

## Example: Social Media

It's one of our favorite things to host artists, crafters, musicians, chefs and more in the U District neighborhood. We are deeply saddened to announce that this year's University District StreetFair is canceled. With the latest health and safety guidelines, we determined that it is in the best interest and well-being of our community to pause the festival in 2020, and continue being diligent in slowing the spread of COVID-19. The U District StreetFair has been a vibrant craft and food festival for 50 years, and we are confident that it will return better than ever in May 2021.

Communication to participating vendors is going out this week for refunds and next steps. We hope to see you in 2021.

# U DISTRICT STREET FAIR

POSTPONED  
UNTIL 2021



Image used with  
Social Media  
announcement.

## Example: Website

*It's one of our favorite things to host artists, crafters, musicians, chefs and more in the U District neighborhood. We are deeply saddened to announce that this year's University District StreetFair is canceled. With the latest health and safety guidelines, we determined that it is in the best interest and well-being of our community to pause the festival in 2020, and continue being diligent in slowing the spread of COVID-19. The U District StreetFair has been a vibrant craft and food festival for 50 years, and we are confident that it will return better than ever in May 2021.*

Example:  
Email to  
Vendors

Dear vendors,

We are deeply saddened to announce that this year's University District StreetFair will be cancelled in light of the current COVID-19 situation. Due to growing concerns across the state and country as a whole, our partners at the U District Partnership and our team at Bold Hat Productions has determined that we will not be able to execute the StreetFair at the quality level the public and you, the vendor, has come to expect. The decision was made this week to cancel this year's festival for reasons including, but not limited to:

...

## Example: Email to Vendors

- With the CDC's current guidelines of banning large gatherings for 8 weeks, that timeline ends very close to our scheduled festival dates. It is entirely possible that ban may extend beyond the current 8-week guideline.
- We realize that as a small business, you need every opportunity to sell your crafts and food. During these difficult times, we determined it would be a prudent decision to cancel the event and put your booth fees back into your pocket quickly.
- UDSF relies on a vibrant and engaged audience to attend and shop. While we remain hopeful that public life will have returned to a level of normalcy by May, we do not expect public sentiment toward participating in large gatherings to rebound immediately. It will take time for all of us to feel safe gathering together again.

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the text 'Example: Email to Vendors'. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

## Example: Email to Vendors

### All vendors will be given full refunds.

- NO action is required.
- All vendors can expect to receive an email with refund confirmation from Bold Hat Productions within 24 hours.
- All refunds will appear on your credit card statement within 7-10 days from today.

The U District StreetFair has been a vibrant craft and food festival for 50 years, and we are confident that it will return better than ever in May 2021.

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the text 'Example: Email to Vendors'. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

## Example: Email to Vendors

These are difficult times. As a small business that proudly serves the small business community, we know the challenges you face in keeping things afloat, taking care of employees, and even feeding your family. Our hope is that we will all be able to bounce back come summer/fall with a strong and profitable event season for all of our vendors and partners.

### **VENDORS**

If you are a vendor with any further questions about the refund process, please contact [vendors@boldhatproductions.com](mailto:vendors@boldhatproductions.com).

Example:  
Email to  
Vendors

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

- [The U District Partnership](#) website has a growing list of small business resources
- [#wegotthiseattle](#) has a great compilation of resources for local businesses.
- Artist Trust has created a [growing list of resources](#) to support artists.
- Resources for those recently unemployed due to coronavirus outbreak from [United Way](#).
- Join the [King County Creative Facebook page](#) for updates and resources.
- US Small Business Association [small business guidance and loan resources](#)
- City of [Seattle Community, Business, and Employee Resources](#)
- King County Creative [COVID Creative Industries Handbook](#)



Questions?

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