

Tiger Woods Foundation

Communication Strategy Memo

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On November 25, 2009 the *National Enquirer*, a gossip type, supermarket newspaper released a story that Tiger Woods was having an extra marital affair. While this itself is not tangible proof of an affair, it was enough to cause people to place their eye on Mr. Woods' personal life. Within forty-eight hours of this media release, Mr. Woods was involved in a motor vehicle accident whereby he crashed his Cadillac Escalade into his own home at 2:30 AM. In addition to this event is the allegation that Mr. Woods' wife, Elin smashed out the back window of the vehicle with a golf club. Within hours of the police report, the news media was connecting the alleged affair, window smashing, and car crashing together. During the next few days more women began to come forward claiming to have had affairs of various natures with Mr. Woods.

As Director of Corporate Communications for The Tiger Woods Foundation I will address the issues regarding Mr. Woods behavior, how it affects our public image and the image of our donors, as well as how it may affect future donors. In addition, we will identify if these events may have a negative impact on the children and communities whom we serve. It is unfortunate that Mr. Woods maintained total secrecy about this situation. It would have been beneficial if Mr. Woods had provided us with even a modicum of information when he suspected this scandal would come out. We might have been in a better position to manage the crisis in a more expeditious manner. While it is important to recognize that Mr. Woods has influence over a wide spectrum of fans, corporate sponsors, tournaments, and charitable organizations we, at The Tiger Woods Foundation, have an obligation to protect the integrity of the foundation and the values it possesses and portrays to the public. If our work in managing this crisis helps Mr. Woods, his family, and his personal sponsors then our work will have added benefit.

Many of the sponsors of The Tiger Woods Foundation have aligned themselves with the organization because they believe in our core values and our mission to help children. These sponsors also benefit socially and commercially from their association with the foundation and Tiger Woods himself. The message that Mr. Woods recent behavior delivers is that we may not be as pure as everyone may think. It sends a message that we, as fiduciaries for tens of millions of dollars and custodians for the well-being of children, may have other issues that are yet to be disclosed. The Foundation will now have to maintain an even higher level of transparency than any charitable organization has ever done.

In 2008, The Tiger Woods Foundation received donations of over twelve million dollars. This is up more than twenty-five percent since 2006. This year however as the economy has seen a significant downturn the foundation's receipts to date are just over five million. Our corporate donors work on a fiscal calendar with most of their support flow based on pledge contracts that coincide with promotional events. Traditionally the month of December is when 18% of most individual donors contribute to charitable organizations (Brooks, 2008). This scandal may jeopardize the year-end gifting that our foundation relies on from individual donors. We will reassure our sponsors and donors that the work the foundation does for children is above any of Mr. Woods' transgressions.

While financial concern is important, the Foundation is in a position to be able to function for at least five years without receiving donations. Unlike some other educational organizations, we have managed our finances well and have built significant reserves. This was a mandate from the founders Earl Woods and Tiger Woods, that the organization never be desperate for money. What this allows us to do is show the children, their parents, the communities, our employees, and suppliers that The Tiger Woods Foundation is solid and the

programs will remain intact while Mr. Woods seeks out the help he needs. We will develop a community campaign that illustrates our successful youth and how our programs work not only for individual successes but for community success as well.

Some may ask how we “handle” Tiger. Others may suggest that we distance ourselves from him. Earl Woods never backed away from a challenge. He worked with Tiger from a young age to help build confidence and skill. However, Earl knew Tiger was not a machine, that he was just a man, and that all men are fallible. He would be the first to take in a troubled youth and help him. It is important that everyone at the Foundation take the approach that Earl wrote about in his book *Training a Tiger*, that we help Tiger with wisdom on mental training and facing the challenges of life. We now need to treat Mr. Woods as any other troubled youth that comes to us for help. We need to be understanding, compassionate, and provide a pathway for future success. This is an opportunity for the organization to demonstrate our expertise in helping promising talent find its zenith. By sticking with Tiger, we demonstrate that this organization has sound values with the ability to instill greatness.

We do not know the precise implications Mr. Wood’s scandal will have on the Foundation. However, it is predictable, based on similar scandals from other prominent people that there will be significant fall-out. One recent case was with President Bill Clinton, yet even after all the trouble the dust settled and Mr. Clinton went on and continued his good work for the public. We should expect some sponsors to drop us. We can expect some parents to question whether their children should remain in the programs. However, mostly we can expect that there is more to the scandal than we already know. As the days and weeks progress, and as the tabloids spend millions of dollars “investigating,” we can expect more ugliness to come out. Whether any of the information is true or not the appearance will have some damaging effects on the

Foundation. The job of this Communications Department is to construct sufficient messages and distribute them in a targeted manner to the largest populations with every delivery method available to say that at The Tiger Woods Foundation it is business as usual. To that end, we will implement the following:

- Create Response Statements for all stakeholders
- Hold Press Conference
- Release Annual Report early
- Prepare Press Releases Highlighting 2008 Successes
- Schedule meetings with all stakeholder sponsors
- Increase Year End Contribution Solicitations to three times normal
- Highlight Accomplishments of Board Members and Teachers
- Conduct interview training with all senior executives who may be contacted by press
- Update website with new material
- Increase Social Networking staff assigning for real-time monitoring and response.

The time-line for the above communications program begins immediately and will continue in an organic manner responding to the crisis as needed. We have analyzed existing staff for workload, expertise, and availability and concluded we need to add four full-time staffers on a contract basis to carry the workload. We expect to keep this higher level of activity for nine to twelve months. Advertising and development departments have agreed to coordinate messages with the Communications Department to ensure that the values of the Tiger Woods Foundation are communicated in the spirit with which this organization was founded.

This outlines the Communications Departments understanding of the current situation and illustrates a preliminary plan of addressing the needs of the organization in this difficult time. This is the first crisis the organization has encountered, how we handle it and our support of Tiger Woods, will show the children we serve how leaders should respond when challenges arise. Our resolve will show the world that we know what is important to our organization and that we will fulfill our promises to all of our stakeholders.

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