

Urban Outfitters inappropriately handed the crisis because the company did not follow up on its initial crisis response, which ruined its reputation by showing a lack of preparation for the crisis. After Buzzfeed reported on the website at 3:08 am, Urban Outfitters immediately removed the Kent State sweatshirt and posted a public apology at 7:00 am. Later that afternoon at 4:33 pm, “In an emailed statement, Kent State University lashed at the retailer’s decision to sell the sweatshirt. ‘We take great offense to a company using our pain for their publicity and profit’” (Ohlheiser 2014). Urban Outfitters did not provide any further explanation or response about the incident after the initial response. W. Timothy Coombs, a crisis expert, states, “There is important follow-up communication that is required” for crisis responses (Coombs 2014). Because Urban Outfitters continuously released controversial shirts that outraged different groups of people, the company needed a prepared integrated plan to rebuild the public’s trust and repair its reputation. Additionally, Coombs stated that the organization needs to release updates on the recovery process and corrective actions (Coombs 2014). If Urban Outfitters were to publicly publish regulations on new designs, the company would be able to rebuild its reputation as consumers would begin to trust the brand and, thus, reconsider purchasing from the company. Because of Urban Outfitters’ ineffective crisis management and crisis preparation, in the same year, “same-store sales fell 7% at the namesake brand, which courted controversy in the third quarter,” (Huddleston 2014). From this situation, Urban Outfitters resolved the crisis inappropriately because the overall crisis response was unprepared, which increased reputational damage.

Reference:

- Coombs, W. Timothy (2014, September 23). Crisis Management and Communications (Updated September 2014) | Institute for Public Relations. *Institute for Public Relations*. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/crisis-management-communications/>
- Urban Outfitters [UrbanOutfitters]. (2014, September 15). Urban Outfitters sincerely apologizes for any offense our Vintage Kent State Sweatshirt may have caused. It (cont) http://www.twitlonger.com/show/n_1sagorq [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/UrbanOutfitters/status/511515053791907840>
- Urban Outfitters (2014, September 15). Urban Outfitters [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.twitlonger.com/show/n_1sagorq
- Nocera, Jess (2014, Sept. 19). Urban Outfitters and Kent State. *Uloop*. Retrieved from <http://keene-nh.uloop.com/news/view.php/136029/Urban-Outfitters-and-Kent-State>
- Ohlheiser, Abby (2014, Sept. 15). Urban Outfitters apologizes for its blood-red-stained Kent State sweatshirt. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/09/15/urban-outfitters-red-stained-vintage-kent-state-sweatshirt-is-not-a-smart-look-this-fall/>
- Tom Huddleston, Jr. (2014, Nov. 17). Urban Outfitters' profits and shares tumble. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2014/11/17/urban-outfitters-shares-dip-as-namesake-brand-weighs-down-same-store-sales/>
- Dyke, Michelle (2014, Sept. 15). Urban Outfitters Features "Vintage" Red-Stained Kent State Sweatshirt. *BuzzFeed*. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/mbvd/urban-outfitters-features-vintage-red-stained-kent-state-swe?utm_term=.ofNORNIVJ#.yI3M5RXqk