



BETA THETA PI
— MEN OF PRINCIPLE —

VICE PRESIDENT
COMMUNICATION MANUAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Key Roles and Responsibilities.....	8
Audiences	10
Communication Committee.....	12
Public Relations	15
Social Media	25
Digital Media.....	35
Crisis Management.....	43
Website Management.....	51
Email Marketing.....	55

**“IF I WAS DOWN
TO MY LAST DOLLAR,
I WOULD SPEND IT ON
PUBLIC RELATIONS.”**

*– Bill Gates
Chairman, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*



VP COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, congratulations on your election to serve as vice president of communication for your chapter. You may not realize it, but your position bears great significance for all aspects of your chapter's operations. In fact, Beta Theta Pi believes that your responsibilities go above and beyond the duties of a secretary or public relations chairman. You are responsible for how your chapter is perceived – not only by your brothers, but potential new members, parents, peers, campus officials and the general public. For many industry leaders, your job is the most important of them all.

**“IT TAKES 20 YEARS
TO BUILD
A REPUTATION
AND FIVE MINUTES
TO RUIN IT.”**

*– Warren Buffet
Chairman, Berkshire Hathaway*

YOUR ROLE. YOUR RESULTS.

OUR PROMISE.

YOUR ROLE

As vice president of communication, you may simply choose to execute tasks related to communicating chapter social, recruitment and service events. However, a truly successful vice president of communication will view himself as the chapter's chief information officer and brand manager, largely responsible for shaping the chapter's image and communicating to your campus and the world how you and your brothers are executing Beta's mission to develop men of principle for a principled life.

YOUR RESULTS

The best vice presidents of communication do not operate in a silo. They work with their fellow officers and chapter members to create compelling content, tailor-made to audiences across the campus, town and continent. In doing so, they enhance their chapter's reputation and build good will with campus organizations and administrators, community leaders and others.

If done correctly, the actions a vice president of communication takes during his term of service can create ripple effects that will benefit the chapter for a generation or longer. If anyone thinks they're "just" secretaries, they're wrong.

OUR PROMISE

For those in this role who are pursuing a degree in communications or public affairs, many of the traditional, social and digital media trends and strategies contained within this guide may already seem familiar. Conversely, those with limited exposure to communications practices may find that the manual is overwhelming, or creates a number of questions not answered within.

Regardless of where you fall on that spectrum, Beta's Administrative Office is home to a five-person Communication Department specializing in message development, graphic design, email marketing, social media strategy, digital media production, brand management, and public and media relations. For assistance in any of these areas, please contact Director of Communication Martin Cobb, *Eastern Kentucky '96*, at 800.800.BETA.



KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of a vice president of communication is multi-faceted. At its core, the position strives to develop a positive chapter image for a host of constituents. However, the officer also shoulders the responsibility of influencing chapter culture as a member of the executive committee. And he must also learn to be a proper manager as the leader of the communication committee.

There's an old saying: "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." To be sure, a key responsibility as vice president of communication is to sell the Beta experience. But you're not a miracle worker – if your chapter is not creating a positive culture based on brotherhood, personal growth and a sense of home, your position becomes immensely more difficult. Your ability to influence that culture is an equally important part of your leadership.

To be successful during your term in office, you must first understand the key roles and responsibilities of the vice president of communication as follows:

KEY ROLES

- ▶ Chief information officer
- ▶ Social media manager
- ▶ Photographer and videographer
- ▶ Website and graphic designer
- ▶ Archivist and media curator
- ▶ Writer and editor-in-chief
- ▶ Public relations director
- ▶ Communication committee chairman

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- ▶ Appoint and manage the communication committee
- ▶ Create a communications plan
- ▶ Keep your chapter informed of all upcoming events and chapter news
- ▶ Improve university relations and public perception by sharing positive news about your chapter and brothers
- ▶ Support recruitment efforts by promoting a positive and accurate view of your chapter
- ▶ Encourage alumni involvement by informing your alumni of chapter events and needs
- ▶ Keep parents informed of chapter news and milestones
- ▶ Meet with each member of your committee and outline position expectations
- ▶ Develop a list of needed changes/improvements and create an action plan to do so
- ▶ Maintain an active presence on social media channels
- ▶ Create and manage a functional chapter website with regular updates that can serve as a resource for brothers, potential new members, parents and other audiences
- ▶ Produce visual images and protect Beta's brand through compliance with the Fraternity's brand standards
- ▶ Communicate with your chapter about important news, updates or upcoming deadlines
- ▶ Take photos of events and other chapter activities
- ▶ Work directly with local and campus news outlets, university administrators and Administrative Office staff to share your chapter's positive stories
- ▶ Create and distribute monthly or quarterly newsletters to key constituencies
- ▶ Assist in running effective chapter meetings
- ▶ Maintain chapter archives

AUDIENCES

Your responsibility as vice president of communication extends far beyond your chapter. There are a number of different constituencies with a vested interest in the chapter's operations and programming. In your role, you are beholden to all of them. To prepare for this responsibility, it is important first to understand these various audiences and how they are connected to your chapter's communications.

THE CHAPTER

Not surprisingly, the majority of your time will be spent communicating to the chapter – informing them of upcoming events, deadlines, opportunities and protocols.

COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

As a manager, you must organize your committee and manage projects through group and one-on-one meetings. Each committee member will require different communication approaches and frequencies.

ALUMNI

Chapter alumni want to be informed of chapter and alumni programming, but also are interested in knowing that their chapter is in good hands. Believe it or not, "Chapter Reports" is one of the most frequently read sections of The Beta Theta Pi magazine. While communicating with young and old alumni requires different strategies, all alumni share at least this one trait: they want to be in the know.

Many chapters make use of an Alumni Relations Committee (ARC), generally represented by a cross-generational group of chapter alumni. While the VP communication and his committee are not responsible for events coordinated by this committee, they should be prepared to provide active support.

POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS

Online communications make it easier than ever for potential new members to shop around campus fraternities before ever stepping foot in a chapter facility. Your website and social media channels, in particular, will be pivotal to providing basic information to these recruits. And you'll work very closely with

the vice president of recruitment throughout the year to ensure your communications are attracting the right men.

CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Your campus community will bring various degrees of curiosity and acceptance to Beta on your campus. This audience certainly requires a “you can’t win them all” mentality, but through press releases, social media and unique on-campus messaging opportunities, you can share your chapter’s story and win over the public.

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS

Beta Theta Pi appreciates (and prioritizes) strong partnerships between its chapters and university officials. The Fraternity is a guest on your campus, and administrators – from the fraternity/sorority life advisor up to the university president – have a keen interest in the activities of your chapter and brothers. Proactively building strong connections with them will create a smooth and supportive relationship.

PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Perhaps no one is as invested in the health of your chapter as members’ parents. You can make a huge impact by simply communicating to them what your chapter is doing. They may even choose to become chapter volunteers or donors!

LOCAL COMMUNITY

You may have opportunities to communicate with your city media outlets about your chapter’s activities. Sometimes this opportunity presents itself because you’ve done something great that you want to share. Other times, it’s because something negative has happened, which you will have to answer for. Either way, maintaining a good relationship with your community news outlets can be critical to your chapter’s success.

THE GENERAL FRATERNITY

Your chapter is part of a much larger organization. As vice president of communication, you also have an opportunity to share your chapter’s successes and meaningful stories with the General Fraternity and Administrative Office. Doing so not only gives your chapter positive attention, but it also helps inspire other chapters who can follow your example.



COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

The communication committee seeks to promote the activities and efforts of the chapter both on campus and within the community. One of the pathways to brand success is brand consistency. The communication committee ensures that the chapter is represented in a manner that is consistent with Beta Theta Pi's brand standards and reputation for developing exceptional men of principle.

Other suggested responsibilities of the communication committee include:

- ▶ Creating promotional materials, such as informational brochures, handouts, and T-shirts for chapter events and initiatives.
- ▶ Managing the chapter's website and social media accounts.
- ▶ Creating and circulating press releases and media advisories for news and events.
- ▶ Enhancing the chapter's archives and securing the history of your chapter of Beta Theta Pi.
- ▶ Capturing high-quality photography and creating high-quality designs and graphics to be used in marketing and advertising materials.
- ▶ Inform various constituencies of chapter news, events and accolades.
- ▶ Promote the Beta Theta Pi brand and protect the Fraternity's reputation on your campus.
- ▶ Support the Alumni Relations Committee and ARC-sponsored events, as needed.

STRUCTURE

As VP of communication, you are responsible for leading the chapter's communication strategies and overseeing the execution of communication-related tasks. Just as important, however, you are also a member of the executive committee and a leading mind and voice on chapter operations and culture overall. Therefore, a VP of communication can be absolutely sure that he will not be capable of executing all facets of his role alone, underscoring the need for an effective, efficient and enthusiastic team that involves and engages the brotherhood in helping to manage the chapter's public relations efforts.

Beta Theta Pi does not have standard communication committee positions. However, below are a number of positions to consider forming within the committee, but which may be altered year-to-year based on the chapter's priorities and needs:

- ▶ Advertising Manager
- ▶ Alumni and Parent Communication Manager
- ▶ Chapter Archivist/Historian
- ▶ Chapter Designer
- ▶ Chapter Photographer
- ▶ Community Communication Manager
- ▶ Marketing Manager
- ▶ Media Relations Manager
- ▶ Member and Campus Communication Manager
- ▶ Social Media Manager
- ▶ Website Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

MEETINGS

It is recommended that a vice president of communication hold a monthly communication committee meeting, which would include reports from all appointed chairmen. Additionally, the officer should schedule biweekly 1-on-1 appointments with each chairman to track their progress on assigned tasks, answer questions, provide feedback and gauge the committee's progress.

**“PUBLICITY IS
ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL.
A GOOD PR STORY
IS INFINITELY
MORE EFFECTIVE
THAN A FRONT
PAGE AD.”**

*– Richard Branson
Founder, Virgin Group*

PUBLIC RELATIONS

WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Advertising Manager
- ▶ Alumni and Parent Communication Manager
- ▶ Chapter Designer
- ▶ Chapter Photographer
- ▶ Community Communication Manager
- ▶ Marketing Manager
- ▶ Media Relations Manager
- ▶ Member and Campus Communication Manager
- ▶ Social Media Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

WHAT

Public relations (PR) is essentially how you tell your chapter's Beta Theta Pi story. Of course, few things in life are actually that simple. PR is similar to advertising and marketing, and is divided into two concentrations: proactive and reactive. Reactive (a.k.a. crisis) PR is the not-so-fun, what to do when something goes wrong kind of communications – an important topic that will be covered in another section of this manual. This section, though, will focus on proactive (a.k.a. positive) PR.

Before jumping into the details, an editorial note. You're not a miracle worker. Public relations truly IS telling the public your chapter's Beta story. However, while a skilled VP of communication (and/or committee chairman) may be capable of making a good chapter look great, no one can make a bad chapter look like rock stars. The best way for your chapter to garner positive public relations is if it can show before it tells. If the chapter, through its daily activities, can convince its constituents to trust that it will do the right thing, the positive sentiments (and hopefully the positive press) will follow. Executing positive PR strategies for a fraternity is inherently challenging given the media climate in which we exist. Your job is to help show that your men are defying the stereotype each day.

WHEN

Inherently, being proactive about your public relations requires you to stay ahead of the game. Within weeks of beginning your term as VP of communication, you are encouraged to complete and consider a number of planning items that will help make your job easier.

Prepare a content calendar. Take a look at the entire year ahead, and note any date that could be used as a promotional opportunity for your chapter. This should almost certainly include dates for your major philanthropy and intramural events, among others, but also add:

- ▶ Your chapter's founding date
- ▶ Founding days for Beta and other fraternities/sororities on your campus
- ▶ National and/or state holidays
 - ★ Add major days like Thanksgiving, but also playful ones like National Dog Day
- ▶ Important days for your campus
 - ★ First day of school, homecoming, campus-wide service day, etc.
- ▶ Twice-annual due dates for "Chapter Reports" in The Beta Pi magazine.
 - ★ Did you know that "Chapter Reports," despite their brevity, are consistently some of the most read pages in the entire magazine? Be sure that your content is rich, thorough and well-written, as your alumni and supporters are reading.

Once created, this calendar should be able to live on year-to-year with minimal updates. Now, when planning promotional opportunities, you have a full list of significant dates in front of you and your committee at all times.

WHERE

Proactive, positive public relations isn't only found in the media (although it frequently is). Opportunities to enhance your chapter's reputation occur at Beta booths near the student center, in personal gestures made toward other student organizations and campus administrators, at alumni tailgates and events, and more. Truthfully, each time your brothers gather outside of a chapter meeting stands to become a positive public relations event.

WHY

Proactive public relations refers to your chapter's ability to take control of the reputation and message that is being relayed to the general public. Here's why it's important as an advertising tool:

- ▶ **Credibility.** Consider this example: A restaurant is featured on two pages of a newspaper. The first page is a purchased ad where the eatery claims to bake the freshest bread in all of Ohio. The second is an article written by the paper's food reviewer, and a sandwich at that same restaurant was just given two-out-of-five stars. Chances are, you're not choosing that restaurant for lunch. Why is that? Because people are inherently skeptical of self-promotion, but trust the reviews of others (especially experts). Long story short – if you're able to get a reporter (or another third-party validator) to write a positive story about your chapter, that goes a long way in strengthening your group's reputation within the community.
- ▶ **Low costs.** Unlike most other advertising and marketing strategies, public relations doesn't require a budget. If you can score the coverage, it comes without a cost.
- ▶ **Strengthen your image.** Public relations is more than newspaper articles. It's the little things you do for your constituents to show that you care. If you care about them, they'll care about you.

HOW

Public Relations Planning

Get to know the local media. Research how your campus and local media outlets have covered Beta Theta Pi and other campus Greek in recent years. How are they talking about Greek organizations? What has it taken to land a positive story in the past? What have been their biggest criticisms of the community? Answering these questions and taking note of the reporters most active in covering your university will help you know who to approach when you're pitching your stories. Tip: If you're having trouble building your media list, go to your campus communication department. They would likely give you theirs, or at least help point you in the right direction.

Meet with your Greek advisor. You may be an expert on what's happening within Beta on your campus, but a campus professional will have a better pulse on what issues are pressing within your community right now. Are there service opportunities that no one is promoting, for example? Knowing this could help you find a gap that your chapter could fill, and gain positive attention and press in the process.

Train your chapter. Or at least the officers. Your members are your very best brand ambassadors, and they need to know how to talk about your chapter to the public. Hold a chapter workshop where you teach your brothers a chapter elevator pitch, and have them practice with one another.

Review your publications and digital media channels. This should be done almost monthly. There is nothing more JV than out-of-date chapter information. If your website still features the president from two years ago, it's time for an overhaul. Or if your social media channels list old contact information or features inappropriate comments/posts (real or perceived), this is your time to fix it – proactively, before it becomes an issue.

Get your brothers on board. To be good at this job, you CANNOT do it alone. Not only do you need a full committee, but you need each and every member to step up and actively promote Beta on your campus. Make simple requests, like asking every man to join another club or requesting they invite their Facebook friends to like the chapter's page. And be prepared to reward or at least recognize those publicly who do this the best.

Public Relations Practices

Consider the constituencies you learned about in the introduction of this manual. These individuals come from different generations, live in different places and have stakes in your chapter's success for a variety of reasons.

Therefore, the best ways to increase motivation and reach through public relations is not universal, but should instead be approached group-by-group.

Members. Your members should be a primary focus since they are the walking embodiment of your chapter and our Fraternity on your campus. It is of the utmost importance that they are informed of Beta Theta Pi events, ongoing and policies so they can be the best brand ambassadors possible.

To improve relations with **members**:

- ▶ **Keep a high morale.** Stay positive, it's contagious. Actively promote a fun and developmental environment for your members.
- ▶ **Memorize and rehearse rituals.** It may seem small and silly, but these details say a lot to your members about their expected commitment to the chapter, and the chapter's commitment to its values.
- ▶ **Clean the house.** See above.
- ▶ **Actively engage all members.** Some men will seek you out, but most won't. That doesn't mean they don't want to be a part of the fun.
- ▶ **Show appreciation for member efforts.** Help your executive committee

see the value in rewarding and appreciating members who make your chapter look great. to the outside world.

- ▶ *Create a chapter newsletter.* This shouldn't only be sent to undergraduates, but keep them in mind when you're creating content.
- ▶ *Communicate often, formally and informally.* Use any and all mediums to stay in contact with your members. Today's students most prefer text messages or app-based communications. Meet them where they're at.
 - ★ *Note:* Proactive PR includes monitoring your chapter's use of these services. No one thinks an inappropriate GroupMe thread will leak to the media, but it happens all the time.
- ▶ *Make use of the chapter facility.* Inboxes become inundated with junk these days. There is power in printed materials being readily available for members at your chapter meetings, sitting in lounge areas, etc.

Alumni and parents. Communicating with alumni and parents are quite similar. Above all else, these constituencies want to remain informed and be given the opportunity to stay involved. Another reason to pay close attention to these groups? They're the most likely to support the chapter financially.

To improve relations with **alumni and parents:**

- ▶ *Keep the house clean.* You never know when an alumnus or parent will drop in, and their impression of the chapter's operations will be formulated in those first moments when they open the door.
- ▶ *Create a chapter newsletter.* These should be the primary constituencies you consider when creating content for your newsletter.
- ▶ *Write hand-written letters.* This is a classic touch that won't go unnoticed. Some examples include: writing congratulatory letters to parents when their son has been initiated; sending Mother's Day cards to all of the members' moms (or birthday [post]cards to alumni); taking photos of brothers using the newly renovated game room, and including them in thank you letters to alumni donors who made it possible.
- ▶ *Sponsor appreciation weekends.* More commonly known as alumni or parents weekends, dedicate chapter resources to welcoming and showing your appreciation for their support.
- ▶ *Expand your media base.* If you create a news release for a brother's accomplishment, consider sending to his hometown newspaper. His parents will get a kick out of it, and potential recruits will have early exposure to your chapter.

University administration. Beta Theta Pi considers itself a guest on your campus. In fact, a strong campus partnership is one of the most valuable relationships our Fraternity can have. Therefore, it is imperative that administration and faculty hold your chapter in their good favor. Showing

interest in working with faculty reflects an admiration and respect for their work. Administrators want to see that you bring value to the campus beyond social activities.

To improve relations with **university officials**:

- ▶ **Meet with the Greek advisor.** Maybe not you as the VP of communication (although you should meet with them at least once), but certainly your president. While a chapter president may only be required to meet with the Greek advisor once each term per university policy, he should schedule monthly check-ins.
- ▶ **Include them in chapter events.** Hold events with the members that place value on your relationship with faculty/administration. Inviting them to meet and greets, chapter dinners, guest lectures, awards presentations, etc.
- ▶ **Recognize those who help the most.** Create a faculty appreciation award, or nominate outstanding faculty/administration for established awards from your campus, your IFC or from organizations like the NIC or Beta Theta Pi General Fraternity.
- ▶ **Behave.** Your chapter shouldn't become the center of attention during campus-wide events. Don't be a negative spectacle during homecoming festivities, public demonstrations, etc. Think of your chapter like a company – if Apple would come under fire for saying X or doing Y, your chapter will, too. Be good citizens.

Greek community. Your fellow Greeks stand to be your most ardent supporters in a time of crisis, so it's a good investment of time and resources to ensure that your chapter is well known (and liked) throughout the Greek community. Your campus should have three (or more) established governing bodies to help in this pursuit: the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, and Multicultural Greek Council.

To improve relations with the **Greek community**:

- ▶ **Participate.** Participate in events hosted by Greek organizations, even those by other fraternities. In fact, don't just be participants – be co-sponsors.
- ▶ **Elevate the IFC.** Encourage your members to be actively engaged in your campus IFC, up to and including running for officer positions.
- ▶ **Be a good neighbor.** If you have a chapter facility, keep the exterior clean and in good repair. For many in the community, their only exposure to Greek organizations is the appearance of the homes. If

yours looks bad, it reflects poorly on the community as a whole.

- ▶ **Sing.** Organize serenades and/or send flowers to sororities on campus in recognition of their Founding Days.
- ▶ **Celebrate community achievements.** Use your social media channels to promote “big wins” from other Greek organizations. When your chapter is the one making news across campus, you’d want them to do the same.

Non-Greeks, prospective members and the local community.

Collectively, these groups are massive, and yet they are also the most likely to be ignorant about your chapter and the good it does. It’s best to divide these larger groups into three sub-groups: the pro-Greek, the anti-Greek and the undecided. As VP of communication, your job is to evaluate how much public relations effort should be expended on these groups. Hint: Probably not much on the pro-Greeks, since they are already aware of the benefits of your organization. And probably not much on the staunch anti-Greeks, since they’re unlikely to be persuaded of your value. Your efforts are probably best spent appealing to the undecided, persuadable public.

To improve relations with these groups:

- ▶ **Make a name for yourself.** Get your letters and logo out in public wherever possible. Set up a table near the student center with games, promo materials, etc. so the community becomes familiar with your chapter. Other examples include T-shirts, branded tailgating/tabling tents and other promotional items.
- ▶ **Take out an ad.** The mantra holds true that people’s opinions are most swayed by third-party validators; however, taking an ad out in the campus paper once each year to build brand awareness isn’t a bad idea.
- ▶ **Host on-campus functions.** Especially if those functions are held to educate community members on pressing issues of the time (i.e. a lecture series on sexual assault). The more these events can signal that you’re defying the fraternity stereotype, the better.
- ▶ **Update and promote your website.** This is the first stop for many individuals who want to learn more about your organization. Make sure all of the information is current, and consider taking out promotional ads on social media, aimed at those on your campus.
- ▶ **Help with campus needs.** Your chapter might not struggle with finances; however, many smaller campus organizations with noble aims do. What can your chapter do to help them? How can you bring them into the mainstream?
- ▶ **Think outside the box.** Unique public relations tactics receive considerable attention. Could you hand out branded bottled water

during hot football tailgates, for instance? Participants need water, your logo will be floating around the entire tailgate area and people will be drawn to your tailgate space.

- ▶ **Distribute scholarships.** The Men of Principle Scholarship is designed for non-Greek members of the community, so make sure your chapter applies for the grant each year. Your chapter could consider doubling the scholarship amount, or offer scholarships for veterans, student leaders, etc. If you do, make sure to promote this to the media.

Media. Because Greeks are often unfairly covered in the media, it's easy to think that the relationship between your chapter and a journalist would be inherently combative. But that's not necessarily the case. Journalists want to cover stories that elicit emotions and responses from their audience, which often include Greek-sponsored events (for better and for worse). While pitching your stories to an outlet may feel uncomfortable at first, providing insight to journalists on the good things your chapter is doing may help to provide cover if a future misstep warrants negative media attention.

To improve relations with the media:

- ▶ **Compile a media list.** Make a list of all campus and local community media outlets, including newspapers, TV and radio stations, and blogs. Then, research which reporters have written or are likely to write about higher education and note their contact information. Your campus communication office might already have this list compiled.
- ▶ **Send releases.** Write and send press releases and media advisories to all local media outlets. Even if they don't cover your story, it will be seen by reporters and editors. Don't overburden them with useless information. Ask yourself, "Is this event newsworthy?" If yes, send a release. These might be related to events, but could also be about a brother's individual achievements. Remember to also consider sending these to brothers' hometown news outlets, where applicable, or to parents and alumni via email.
- ▶ **Involve the media in your events.** The media has an interest in promoting their brand, too. Consider allowing them to co-sponsor an event with you. It will almost certainly earn media coverage and help to build relationships with local reporters.
- ▶ **Consider writing op-eds or letters to the editor.** Even if the media won't cover your events, opinion editorials and letters to the editor are two sections of the paper where you can still gain coverage. Choose your battles carefully, but use this tool to raise brand awareness by taking a stand on something happening in your community.

Resources:

- ▶ The following websites provide additional insight on how to properly write, format and distribute a news (press) release or a media alert.
 - ★ How to Write a Press Release, With Examples (CBS News)
 - ★ 8 Tips for Writing a Great Press Release (Huffington Post)
 - ★ How to Write a Press Release [Includes Template] (HubSpot)
 - ★ 5 Examples of Successful Press Release Boilerplates (Cision)
 - ★ The Lost Art of the Media Alert (Journalistics)

- ▶ The following guides will help you become more familiar with the concept of pitching your story to journalists.
 - ★ 13 Do's and Don'ts When Pitching to the Media (Forbes)
 - ★ 7 Tips to (Almost) Guarantee a Successful Media Pitch (PR News)
 - ★ 17 PR Professionals Share Their Best Pitching Tips (BuzzStream)

Closing

Proactive public relations requires planning and persistence. However, the payoffs are plenty – from heightened status on your campus, to an increased number of interested PNMs, to boosting chapter morale because members feel like they're a part of something great.

Of course, don't forget to also promote yourself to the General Fraternity. Making the Administrative Office aware of your events and activities may also garner coverage in The Beta Theta Pi magazine or on the Fraternity's social media platforms. The General Fraternity continues to receive traditional mail from chapters (annual holiday cards are a nice touch), but more commonly receives chapter events and activities via social media when accounts use #betathetapi or #gobeta.

**“WE DON’T HAVE A
CHOICE ON WHETHER
WE DO SOCIAL MEDIA,
THE QUESTION IS
HOW WELL WE DO IT”**

*– Erik Qualman
Author, Socialnomics*

SOCIAL MEDIA



WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Advertising Manager
- ▶ Chapter Designer
- ▶ Chapter Photographer
- ▶ Marketing Manager
- ▶ Social Media Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

WHAT

For today's chapters, social media may be the most powerful of all tools for sharing information with various constituencies. Of course, with great power comes great responsibility. While posting on social media channels is a simple task in and of itself, as a medium social media is "always on," and requires strategic thought, close monitoring and quick reactions.

WHEN

Because social media is live 24/7, your chapter's online presence must be monitored and tended to at all times. When your followers choose to interact with your pages, timely responses are necessary. But when is the ideal time to post your own content? Everything you need to know can be found in the sections below.

WHERE

The social media landscape is vast and includes some of the most recognizable names in the tech industry, as well as some lesser known niche brands. However, the Fraternity recommends your chapter focus on three platforms – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – as they are the sites most easily controlled and monitored by page administrators. If additional platforms achieve this benchmark in the future, this manual will be updated accordingly.

WHY

When managed correctly, social media provides opportunities to increase awareness about your chapter and to help others understand the ideals that make Beta Theta Pi a thriving fraternity – locally and internationally.

HOW

General Guidelines

As you consider how your chapter will approach social media during your tenure as VP communication, keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Privacy on social media is low; non-members can and do have access to many of our chapter's existing pages and accounts. Ensure that your content (posts and content) is appropriate, contains only public information about the Fraternity, and portrays Beta in a positive light.
- ▶ Social media should be a fun way to share and promote the identity of your chapter. Your first priority is to promote a positive image of Beta, and your content should reflect positively on the organization's environment (university, college, city, state).
- ▶ We are proud to be men of principle. Be sure that your content does not contradict our values. When posting pictures on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. remember the impact your photograph may have on the chapter and the General Fraternity. Social media is a very public world, and the chapter should be sure that content found on its pages or accounts does not violate any university or Beta Theta Pi policies.
- ▶ Administrative Office staff does not proactively search for posts or photographs violating Beta policies, but if alerted to inappropriate pictures or statements, we are legally obligated to investigate the content.

Rules of the Road

In a moment, we will cover tips and tricks related to specific social media platforms; however, there are a number of universal truths in this digital space that, when followed, can increase engagement whether on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or beyond.

- ▶ *Content is king.* Audiences become bored, confused and disengaged when posts are made without a clear connection to your brand. Don't post just for the sake of posting.
- ▶ *Voice matters, and boring is bo-ring.* Most social media users ascribe a persona to the brands they follow on social media. For those constituents who don't have daily contact with the chapter, your pages/handles are how you're perceived by the world – so have some fun with it!
- ▶ *Keep it simple.* Take a Goldilocks approach to social media – don't be exhaustive and don't be vague. Somewhere in the middle is just right.
- ▶ *Images are your hook and help your body copy tell the story.* Every post should have an image attached to it – platforms like Instagram rely on it while others like Facebook will give your post higher priority for

having one. The image you select matters. When you're posting about your pie-in-the-face philanthropy, for instance, resist the urge to settle for a group photo; instead, have your chapter photographer shoot a candid action shot.

- ▶ *Presence on social media.* If you want your followers to throw “likes” and comments your way, you should send them back.
- ▶ *Response time matters.* Social media can't be a medium that's checked twice each day. Instead, have several periods throughout the day when content is moderated. A chapter takes control of its message when it posts, but it loses it if detractor criticisms go unchecked or message go unanswered.
- ▶ *Spread the wealth.* Keep in mind the various constituencies your chapter answers to. Posts should not only be about undergraduate brothers. Alumni are also interested in news pertaining to other graduates. Fellow Greeks want to see you supporting campus causes. The list goes on.
- ▶ *Informed members are supportive members.* This is how you play a role in alumni relations, but also how you help your chapter battle apathetic members.
- ▶ *Data is gold.* Men like numbers, particularly when their numbers are better than everyone else's. A win is a win, on the field and on social media. So flaunt your top-notch GPA, intramurals records, service hours and the like.
- ▶ *Everyone loves a good story.* They especially love it when males defy stereotypes. Showing that your brothers are more than typical frat guys helps influence your reputation.
- ▶ *Spreadsheets and social media go hand-in-hand.* There will be days when you have to really search for content, but there are also important events each year that you can rely on for good content. Make a digital calendar of chapter anniversaries, elections, major campus events, national holidays, etc. that you can refer to each year for post options.
- ▶ *You're the face of the chapter.* This is a statement that's often said about the president or recruitment chairman. But consider that how you choose to manage social media probably makes you the most visible, loud and far-reaching voice of the chapter.

FACEBOOK 

Best Practice	Words of Wisdom
<p>Creating your page</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Create a “Page,” not a group or a profile that requires adding friends. ▶ Invite your chapter brothers and friends to “Like” the Page. Invite anyone who likes or comments on your posts to Like your Page. Once per year, consider giving administration rights to others in your chapter so they can invite their friends. ▶ Beta’s brand standards require chapters to name their page using the following format: “Beta Theta Pi – School Name” (i.e. Beta Theta Pi – Ohio State University) ▶ The Administrative Office provides profile photos for use by chapters and colonies (chapter photos include Greek designation). Contact the Administrative Office if you need yours resent. ▶ Refer to the General Fraternity’s Facebook Page for inspiration on how to build the Page around the Fraternity’s brand (i.e. mission, vision, core values). ▶ Cover photos may be customized by chapter. If you’d like a standard Beta Theta Pi image, some options can be found under the “Resources” section at beta.org.
<p>Optimal posting guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recent studies suggest posting 1-2 times per day maximum; additional content may be viewed by followers as spam. ▶ Data points to Sundays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays as the best days to post; and 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. being times with high user engagement. ▶ Use the free Facebook Insights tool to determine when your followers are most online.
<p>What to post</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Member and/or community encouragement ▶ Member spotlights (only if there’s a good story behind it) ▶ Recruitment videos ▶ Promotion of events ▶ Stories from your newsletters, or from Beta’s newsletters or social media accounts

Best Practice	Words of Wisdom
<p>What not to post</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Anything you wouldn't want your parents, advisors, campus professionals, fellow Greeks or PNMs to see. ▶ Perception is reality. Only make posts that give followers an unmistakably positive impression of your chapter. ▶ Photos that include alcohol, even if the event has been approved by the university or Fraternity/Sorority Life office.
<p>Monitor content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ "Hide" followers' posts on your Page if they are spamming, incriminating or otherwise not consistent with Beta's values. ▶ Don't over-moderate. Allow your followers some time to "self-police" on your behalf if someone is out of line. ▶ Try to Like or otherwise engage with comments as quickly as possible.
<p>Create events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A great way to engage alumni, even if you don't have their physical address. ▶ Publicize events using "@ mentions." Do this by typing the "@" symbol followed by the name of the event.
<p>Share with the General Fraternity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The General Fraternity is always looking for quality content to share with the Beta family. Tag using "@ mentions" or message the Fraternity for possible coverage on social media or in print publications.

Best Practice	Words of Wisdom
<p>Creating your page</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Beta’s brand standards require chapters to create handles using the following format: “@beta_shortschoolname” (i.e. @beta_ohiostate) ▶ Unlike Facebook, Twitter and Instagram do not allow you to invite followers. You may consider cross-platform posts to draw followers to your pages. However, in many cases you will receive followers by following them first. Follow undergraduates, alumni, university officials, Greek and student organizations, other Beta chapters, etc. ▶ Bio copy on these platforms should be especially short and simple. For example, the General Fraternity’s (@betathetapi) reads: “Founded August 8, 1839, at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Our mission: To develop men of principle for a principled life.” ▶ The Administrative Office provides profile photos for use by chapters and colonies (chapter photos include Greek designation). Contact the Administrative Office if you need yours resent. ▶ Cover photos (Twitter) may be customized by chapter. If you’d like a standard Beta Theta Pi image, some options can be found under the “Resources” section of beta.org.
<p>Optimal posting guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recent studies suggest posting on Instagram 1-2 times per day maximum; additional content may be viewed by followers as spam. Because Twitter feeds are less formulaic, additional tweets may be tolerated by followers. ▶ For Instagram, data suggests Mondays and Thursdays are the best days to post; with prime user engagement happening at 2 a.m., 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Use Instagram Insights to determine when your followers are most online. ▶ For Twitter, Wednesday is the best day of the week to post; and users are checking Twitter most at 12 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. The rule of thumb is that people are primarily using Twitter at lunch and on their weekday commutes. ▶ Tweets have a very short lifespan. A Twitter user can receive hundreds of new tweets in a matter of minutes. Therefore, consider recycling your tweets – posting content one day and then reposting the exact same content three days later is more acceptable on the Twitter platform.

Best Practice	Words of Wisdom
<p>Copy length is key</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The amount of time a user commits to any one post on Instagram or Twitter is much less than on Facebook. Twitter has a self-imposed, 280-character limit. Consider keeping Instagram captions at roughly 140 characters, when possible.
<p>Account linking is a no go</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Users digest messaging across platforms in different ways. We do not recommend linking accounts so that your tweets automatically post to Facebook, etc. ▶ Take the time to learn the nuances of each platform in order to be most effective.
<p>Speaking the language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Twitter has a lingo of its own. The “@” and “#” symbols drive Twitter content and engagement. Don’t use hashtags unnecessarily. Use short hashtags when possible. ▶ Instagram encourages a more casual, low-key user environment. It’s perhaps easiest to strike a fun tone in this setting. Consider the occasional use of (appropriate) slang, or increasing your use of emojis to lighten up your page.
<p>Tag appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When pages tag others on Instagram and Twitter, this activity is public in one way or another. So tag responsibly. For example, tagging TFM is not an account you should be engaging with if you’re trying to protect your reputation within the Greek community.
<p>Share with the General Fraternity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The General Fraternity is always looking for quality content to share with its thousands of followers. ▶ On Instagram, tag the General Fraternity in relevant photos using the @betathetapi handle; or use #betathetapi in your photo caption. ▶ On Twitter, share content by mentioning @BetaThetaPi in your tweets.

LINKEDIN

The General Fraternity manages a LinkedIn group with more than 11,000 members (and counting), which can be found by visiting beta.org/linkedin.

The group serves as a forum for alumni and initiated undergraduate members of Beta Theta Pi to share ideas and create valuable professional and personal networking opportunities. By joining the group, brothers can connect with fellow Betas by geographical location, professional field and a variety of other criteria.

The Fraternity does not post regularly on this platform; therefore, open communication is vital to the group's success. When you request to join the group, leave all the boxes checked when choosing your communication preferences (you can change these at any time). It will be valuable to be kept in the loop about the discussions happening in this group, as you could miss out on an event in your area or a Beta brother joining your industry if you choose to not receive updates via email.

Finally, have fun with it! Through LinkedIn, Betas have an amazing opportunity to connect with and help one another, and the General Fraternity hopes you'll take the time to get to know your brothers, young and old alike.

Note: *This group is private and exclusive to initiated members of the Fraternity. In order to join, the page administrator must verify your membership status. To expedite that process, please ensure that your contact information is current using MyBeta.*

CONCLUSION

As Betas, we have a responsibility to show the world what we actually stand for. The following should not be posted by the chapter's social media accounts (and should be discouraged on individual members' accounts):

- ▶ Any writing, photos or videos that include or reference alcohol or drugs, including paraphernalia, or anything that would be in violation of Beta's Risk Management Policy.
- ▶ Anything associated with the private ceremonies within the Ritual of Beta Theta Pi or related materials.
- ▶ References to hazing. Violation will result in disciplinary action from the Administrative Office.
- ▶ Any postings to or from Totalfratmove.com (TFM) or similar accounts. While TFM may appear to be entertaining, its content goes against our core values and the philosophy of the Men of Principle initiative.

Any questions related to social media usage or branding guidelines can be directed to the Communication Department at the Administrative Office.

**“YOUR BRAND
IS WHAT PEOPLE SAY
ABOUT YOU WHEN YOU
LEAVE THE ROOM.”**

*– Jeff Bezos
CEO and Founder, Amazon*



DIGITAL MEDIA

WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Chapter Archivist/Historian
- ▶ Chapter Photographer
- ▶ Social Media Manager

WHAT

The prevalence of digital media in our everyday lives has changed dramatically in recent years. Gone are the days where professional photos are taken almost exclusively in a studio and home videos are relegated to family holidays. Once a formal and scheduled affair showcasing posed, somber faces has now given way to spontaneous, impulsive and informal photo and video shoots.

Digital media used to be an expensive hobby (and it still can be), but with the advent of smartphones, people everywhere now feel empowered to take a crack at shooting images. Great digital media, however, requires a creative eye and technical prowess. Indeed, securing (and encouraging) the right people to lead the chapter's efforts in this space is just as important as securing the right equipment. People with a passion for this space generally take great pride in their work, and will likely produce engaging imagery that the chapter can use well into the future.

WHEN

Opportunities for digital media are all around you. The best chapter photographers and videographers are always considering how to best document chapter events and the Beta activities of a member's everyday life. Thanks to smartphones, any brother now has the necessary tool to capture these moments readily available in his pocket.

WHERE

Everywhere. Recruitment, service and brotherhood events; homecoming weekend; bid day; weekend trips and retreats; alumni gatherings; awards banquets. The list goes on.

WHY

With social media and the increasingly digital world in which we live, photography is more important than ever. In addition to providing opportunities for engagement with your constituents through social media, newsletters, email blasts and the like, photos and videos provide a historical archive of your chapter through the years. It's important, therefore, to invest time and money into your chapter's digital media efforts.

Videography is also an increasingly important talent, given that social media channels often give preference to posts that feature video. To be sure, it's a skill that takes practice (and patience) to develop, but by following a few simple guidelines, you too can create clips with a clean, professional look.

HOW

Invest in Photography

A few ways you can invest in your chapter photography include:

- ▶ Purchase a DSLR camera with 1-2 lenses. Many starter cameras come with a 24-55mm kit lens. By purchasing a 55-200mm lens, you'll cover a nice range for most photography needs. Kits including all of the above are relatively inexpensive, and a cheap long-term investment.
- ▶ DSLR cameras provide more control than traditional point-and-shoot or camera phones. Spend time reading articles or watching tutorial videos to learn how to control their basic functions.
- ▶ A handheld light or more powerful external flash for a camera can be very useful in giving photos a more professional look.

Lighting is Key

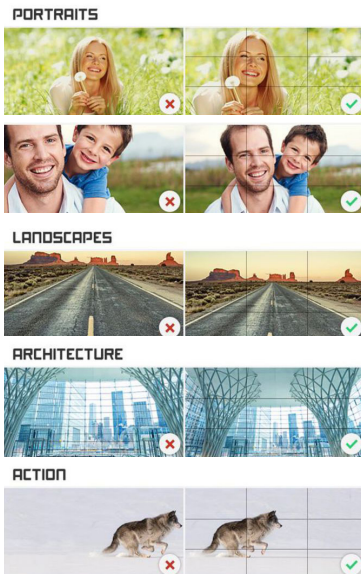
Lighting is of the utmost importance to good photography. When working in poor light or indoors, light sources must be considered to get a good shot. Follow these tips to get the best light possible:

- ▶ The first few hours of the day and the last few in the evening are typically the best times to capture photos with natural light. Take advantage of these times when your subject matter is not dependent on a campus event or a mid-day occurrence.
- ▶ Don't shoot directly into sunlight, when possible. Without supplemental light sources, this will yield dark shadows or silhouetted subject matter.
- ▶ Take advantage of cloudy days. Clouds diffuse light evenly and softly, making for great natural lighting conditions.
- ▶ Consider investing in and using an external flash. They pay dividends when shooting events both outdoors or indoors. The camera-mounted flash often isn't strong enough to properly light a subject from more than a few feet away. A less expensive option is a handheld LED light.

iPhone Camera Shooting Tips

<http://christinagreve.com/how-to-make-your-iphone-photos-bright-sharp/>

Rule of Thirds Examples



Use the Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds is one of the most basic elements of composition that every photographer should become familiar with. Essentially, if the frame is divided into thirds (horizontally and vertically), the rule says that strong elements in the photograph should be on the dividing lines and intersections of those lines. It takes a little bit of practice, but routinely using this rule will significantly improve photo composition.

Depth is Your Friend

One way to give a photo a more polished look is to take advantage of depth in the frame. There's nothing less exciting than a photo of someone standing directly in front of a wall. Instead, try

introducing subtle background elements at varying distances behind the subject. Considering carefully what is in the foreground, middle ground and background, in conjunction with the Rule of Thirds and other composition techniques, will yield much more interesting photos.

Candid Moments Are Invaluable

Some of the best images from events aren't planned or staged at all. Try to look for opportunities to showcase your brothers and your chapter enjoying the event or engaging with recruits in conversation. It's easy to take a large group photo at the end of an event, but it's much more unique, interesting and telling of your story to show the event unfolding. These photos are also much more useful for social media posts, newsletters or websites. One final tip: Try to insert Beta clothing, letters, flags or other items into your digital media as often as possible.

Preserve Your Images

It's easy to post photos to Instagram, Facebook or Twitter and forget about them, but it's important to also keep high-resolution files for future use. Social media sites automatically compress and degrade the quality of your images, leaving the chapter with a low-resolution version that appears grainy in high-quality publications. Instead, consider uploading copies of full-resolution files to a cloud server. Google Drive, iCloud and Dropbox all offer space for free, but it may be worth investing chapter funds to purchase additional space as photos accumulate. A couple of gigabytes should do. Be sure to share access with at least a few reliable alumni or advisors for continuity as officers change positions or graduate.

Share Your Photos

As the VP of communication (or communication committee member), you control what the rest of the world sees of your chapter, and great images don't do anyone any good sitting on a hard drive. Share them! Tag the General Fraternity on social media accounts (using "@ mentions" or #betathetapi) and put your best work out there frequently and across various mediums. Imagery provides alumni and constituents with insight on the chapter's operations, and your work could be featured on the General Fraternity's social media accounts or in The Beta Theta Pi magazine.

VIDEOGRAPHY

Framing, Lighting and Composition

Shooting a good video starts with careful consideration of many of the same factors of a good photograph. If you haven't already, read the photography section above and become familiar with tips concerning lighting, composition and depth.

Choosing the Best Location

There are many factors at play when selecting a location for interviews or other staged shots. A few best practices to consider:

- ▶ Select a location that is quiet, with ambient sound kept to a minimum. (It is recommended that interviews be recorded indoors in most cases.)
- ▶ Be cautious of noise made in adjacent rooms, the hum of A/C units, etc.
- ▶ Consider what will be in the frame while recording. A simple and minimal background, free of clutter, is generally the easiest way to make a shot look nice without going to too much trouble. That said, a subject against a plain white wall is likely to appear boring.

Equipment

As recommended in the photography section, investing in a DSLR is a reasonably priced and high-quality way to ensure good imagery.

Stabilization

Stabilization is incredibly important to creating a polished look, as there's nothing worse than shaky footage. Be sure the chapter has a basic tripod for a stable shot. If recording an event or content where a tripod isn't a viable option, mounting the camera to the tripod and holding the tripod can provide a more stable shot than a handheld effort. If you must go handheld, be as steady as possible with camera movements. Because the slightest shakiness appears much more jostling on screen, it's not recommended that videos are recorded on phones.

Audio

A severely underappreciated and under-produced component of videography is audio. Most cameras have built-in microphones that are ineffective in creating high-quality videos. If the pursuing videography, it's worthwhile to invest in a small shotgun microphone and lavalier microphones. Companies

like Rode make several affordable options (see the Rode smartLav+) that plug into a smartphone and are app-controlled. The Rode Videomic Go is another option, and can be mounted onto and plugged into the camera directly. Both cost less than \$100 each and significantly improve audio quality.

Editing

Editing is incredibly complex, but there are a few tried and true rules to keep in mind as you create your masterpiece:

- ▶ Keep videos short – under three minutes is the target for most videos. Anything on social media should be shorter, particularly since Instagram currently imposes a 1-minute maximum running time. One minute is still enough for short clips, and traditionally provides the highest engagement.
- ▶ Consider your format. Most videos are recorded and exported in widescreen (1920x1080), but a square format (1080x1080) performs best on social media (particularly Instagram).
- ▶ When cutting between shots, most editing software has a default transition effect that can smooth harsh cuts of audio. Use this whenever possible. If using music underneath your video, watch audio levels as it can overpower primary audio. As a rule of thumb, audio should be recorded no higher than -6db. Primary audio should hit between -6db and -12db with secondary (background) audio like music ranging in the -18db to -24db range.

Titles and Graphics

Think of each frame with titles or graphics as its own layout. Follow good composition technique (Rule of Thirds, balance, etc.) and consider legibility with text. When lower thirds or title bars are needed for interviews or to introduce people, take time to consider how these will appear. There are many lower thirds templates available online, and a well-designed one is well worth the minimal cost. If opting for simple text on a background, consider using a drop shadow to improve legibility and set apart text from the background or footage.

CONCLUSION

Given today's always-connected world, capturing, posting and archiving your chapter's operations is more important than ever. All constituencies, whether located on campus, around the corner or across the country, now expect to see how your chapter and its members are performing as representatives of Beta Theta Pi. Thankfully, the ability to record these moments is also now easier than ever. The best Beta chapters have a lot to be proud of, so start experimenting with photos and videos and show the rest of the world what a true fraternity experience looks like.

**“THE SECRET TO
CRISIS MANAGEMENT IS
NOT GOOD VS. BAD,
IT’S PREVENTING THE BAD
FROM GETTING WORSE.”**

*– Andy Gilman
President, CEO and Founder, CommCore*

CRISIS

MANAGEMENT

WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Alumni and Parent Communication Manager
- ▶ Community Communication Manager
- ▶ Media Relations Manager
- ▶ Member and Campus Communication Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

WHAT

Beta Theta Pi is not immune to the tragedies and crises that have struck the college fraternity population with alarming frequency over the past decade. While your chapter president and volunteer(s) will take the lead in a time of crisis, you must also be prepared to meet the communication needs of the chapter during a tumultuous time. While the health and safety of your brothers is top priority, the VP of communication has an incredibly important role to play when something goes awry in your chapter or on your campus.

WHEN

A crisis is considered any incident in which a serious accident or death occurs, or if the situation is of a public relations nature. The following guidelines may help to more clearly establish when a crisis has occurred, although the list is not definitive. Therefore, good judgment on the part of the chapter's leadership is paramount in determining when to implement crisis protocol. If the chapter experiences an issue that has at least one of the following characteristics, it is a potential crisis:

- ▶ Incident that may publicly affect the reputation of Beta Theta Pi
- ▶ May generate a public response from the campus community, university leadership, legislators or higher education influencers
- ▶ Chapter faces closure and/or serious sanctions by the university
- ▶ Incident that originates on social media
- ▶ Media coverage is anticipated

Examples of a crisis might include

- ▶ Major injury or death of a member
- ▶ Violence (including sexual assault)
- ▶ Severe hazing complaint or allegations filed against the chapter
- ▶ Intolerance-related incident (i.e. racism, anti-LGBT, misogyny, etc.)
- ▶ Lawsuit filed against the chapter
- ▶ Any direct request from the media for comment, statement, interviews, etc.

WHERE

Crisis communications may appear across several mediums and be aimed at multiple audiences. It is not uncommon for a chapter's statement during a moment of crisis to be written in several forms, aimed uniquely to members, parents, alumni, the campus community, the media, etc.

WHY

When the chapter suffers a crisis, the objective of the vice president of communication turns to protecting the reputation of the organization. Your ability in these moments to mitigate negative messaging directed at the chapter is key, and will not only help to keep morale high within the chapter, but also allow the chapter to resume normal operations as quickly as possible.

HOW

The General Fraternity has created the Crisis Response and Media Support protocol guidelines for your use (see end of section). Within, you'll learn what constitutes a crisis, basic media protocol and receive a temporary media statement.

While the document should be thoroughly reviewed by the VP of communication, his executive committee and his communication committee, this manual emphasizes the following points for dealing with the media:

- ▶ If contacted, only the chapter president or chapter counselor should speak for the chapter.
- ▶ Avoid "no comment" as it leads to speculation. Instead, make a simple statement: "We are aware that an incident occurred and are cooperating fully with the police and university officials who are investigating."
- ▶ If further pursued by the media, the chapter spokesman should continue repeating the above statement. Do not give in because you are asked the same question several different ways.

- ▶ Never release names or admit liability.
- ▶ Depending on the circumstances, the Administrative Office may take over any direct contact with the media, including the issuance of a press statement.
- ▶ As soon as possible after the incident, file an incident report so Administrative Office staff can begin working through matters on your behalf (see following pages).

CONCLUSION

When a crisis hits, the chapter will no doubt experience moments of stress and chaos. As vice president of communication, your job is to act as the right-hand man to the chapter president during this time, helping to ensure that chapter and media protocols are properly followed. During this time, it is best to recall the old adage, “This too shall pass.” In your actions, focus on the end goal: Minimizing damage to the chapter’s reputation while remaining truthful and transparent in your words and actions.



My BETA

Chapters

Welcome : **Guest**

Incident Report Form

Crisis Guidelines and Resources

[Crisis Communications Protocol](#)


Claimant Information

Your Chapter	<input type="text"/>
Your Full Name*	<input type="text"/>
Your Phone Number*	<input type="text"/>
Your Email Address*	<input type="text"/>
Your Chapter Position	<input type="text"/>

Subject Information

His/Her Full Name*	<input type="text"/>
His/Her Phone Number*	<input type="text"/>
His/Her Email Address*	<input type="text"/>
His/Her Affiliation*	<input type="text"/>

Incident Details/Narrative

Incident Type*	<input type="text"/>
Incident Date*	<input type="text"/> 
Approximate Incident Time*	<input type="text"/>
AM/PM*	<input type="text"/>
Incident Details*	<input type="text"/>
Incident Location*	<input type="text"/>
Was the subject injured?*	<input type="text"/>

If yes, what's the nature of the injury?

First Aid Administered?

Who administered first aid?

Notification of Officials

Type of Official	Who did you notify	Notification Date	Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Beta Staff:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Beta Volunteer:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Greek Life Official:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> University Official:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Campus Police:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> City Police:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Department:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

Additional Information

Was the Media Involved?*

What actions has the chapter taken thus far?

Witness Contact Information

Witness Name
Witness Phone Number
Witness Email Address

CRISIS RESPONSE AND MEDIA SUPPORT

IS THIS A CRISIS?

Beta Theta Pi is committed to responsible member development and holds a low incident rate within the fraternal world. However, no fraternity is exempt from the reality that accidents happen and poor choices are inevitable both in and out of the chapter house, on the intramural field, at social events or elsewhere.

Even in the midst of a crisis, the Fraternity has a host of obligations to our members and chapters, their legal rights and considerations such as Title IX compliance. While daunting, chapter leaders and volunteers should be prepared to effectively engage all constituencies in a time of crisis. This guide serves to assist in communicating with one of those groups — the media.

A crisis is considered **any incident in which a serious accident or death occurs, or if the situation is of a public relations nature**. The following guidelines may help to more clearly establish when a crisis has occurred, although the list is not definitive. Therefore, good judgment on the part of the chapter's leadership is paramount in determining when to implement crisis protocol.

IF THE CHAPTER EXPERIENCES AN ISSUE THAT HAS AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS, IT IS A POTENTIAL CRISIS:

- ▶ Incident that may publicly affect the reputation of Beta Theta Pi
- ▶ May generate a public response from the campus community, university leadership, legislators or higher education influencers
- ▶ Chapter faces closure and/or serious sanctions by the university
- ▶ Incident that originates on social media
- ▶ Media coverage is anticipated.

EXAMPLES OF A CRISIS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- ▶ Major injury or death of a member
- ▶ Violence (including sexual assault)
- ▶ Severe hazing complaint or allegations filed against the chapter
- ▶ Intolerance-related incident (i.e. racism, anti-LGBT, misogyny, etc.)
- ▶ Lawsuit filed against the chapter
- ▶ Any direct request from the media for comment, statement, interviews, etc.

.....



INITIAL (TEMPORARY) MEDIA STATEMENT

Chapter leadership should be prepared in the event a reporter makes in-person contact before consulting with the Administrative Office. If this happens, a simple statement should be used: **"We are aware that an incident occurred and are fully cooperating with police, university officials and our General Fraternity to determine the facts and advance any necessary investigations."**

This initial statement should be used exclusively until local leaders can work with the Administrative Office to craft an official response. Spokesmen should not engage in an extensive discussion of what has occurred, or give in when reporters ask the same question in several different ways.

▶ MEDIA PROTOCOL

The Administrative Office is available to assist chapters with managing media requests in a responsible and timely way.

If a media inquiry is received, **don't panic**. The following steps will help to navigate the media engagement process for the chapter president:

STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGE THE REQUEST

Within minutes, acknowledge the reporter's request and thank them for their inquiry. Request time to gather your thoughts before making an official statement and determine the reporter's:

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Media outlet
- ▶ Contact information
- ▶ Deadline

Request to receive their questions in writing, if possible.

STEP 2: CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Immediately contact Communication Department staffer [Justin Warren](#) (214.909.4849) with details of the inquiry. He will promptly work with you to craft an official statement or interview response.

STEP 3: PLAY BY THE RULES

The Fraternity has one goal in media engagement: ensuring the safety of our members and protecting the operation and reputation of the chapter.

To do this, spokesmen should abide by the following rules of engagement:

- ▶ Be quick. Be helpful. Be honest.
- ▶ Decline on-camera, telephone or live interviews, unless approved by the Administrative Office.
- ▶ Never answer a question with "no comment." It's perfectly acceptable to say "I don't know" (if it's true).
- ▶ Do not draw conclusions, speculate, lay blame or admit liability.
- ▶ Avoid mentioning names.

NOTES

**“THERE ARE
THREE RESPONSES
TO A PIECE OF DESIGN —
YES, NO, AND WOW!
WOW IS THE ONE
TO AIM FOR.”**

*– Milton Glaser
Graphic Designer and Creator of I ♥ NY Logo*

WEBSITE

MANAGEMENT

WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Chapter Designer
- ▶ Website Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

WHAT

In the midst of the social media age, a website's purpose has evolved and adapted since the early 90s – though the strategy has changed, they still serve a purpose today. Every brand needs an official, informative website that appears in the top results of a Google search. Today, trends lean more toward a static website presence, while social media is where a brand truly comes alive and active.

WHEN

Consider establishing set points for website information reviews/updates and design overhauls. The former should be revisited once each semester, and the latter every 3-5 years.

WHERE

No surprise, your online presence exists on the internet. However, as you consider the look and feel of your website, keep in mind that users today access sites using various platforms, particularly using mobile devices like smartphone and tablets. In fact, 80 percent of the top websites are mobile-adaptive. Yours should be, too, so that anyone can reach your website at any time, from anywhere.

WHY

Think of your chapter as a brand – because, in many ways, it is. A well-designed website allows you to present valuable information about your chapter to your key target audiences: potential new members, alumni and parents. All of them will want access to your brand's basic information at various time, and they'll all be looking for something different.

HOW

Choose a Web Host (Take Advantage of the Free ChapterSpot Solution)

You don't need an expert knowledge of HTML to create a visually appealing website. Many options exist to create a simple website that is easy to set up and hand down year after year to a new webmaster. First and foremost, the General Fraternity's best practice is to use ChapterSpot – a free and ready-made solution for chapters.

The General Fraternity began offering access to ChapterSpot in August 2014 at no charge for all chapters, colonies, house corporations and chapter-specific alumni associations. ChapterSpot provides chapters with automated officer access to update simple and visually striking websites. The tool comes pre-loaded with Beta's approved heraldic imagery, allowing your chapter to adopt an authentic, Beta-designed website while maintaining the flexibility to customize various components for your chapter's needs.

For an example of a Beta-branded ChapterSpot website, visit miami.beta.org.

To learn more or to enroll in this free service, visit beta.org/chapterspot or contact Beta's Director of Business Operations Dan Fogle. Best of all? If you choose to use ChapterSpot, much of the rest of this section will be taken care of automatically.

Be Recognizable

Your website needs to speak to your members and alumni, but it's also important that audiences who aren't (yet) affiliated with your chapter can establish an understanding of who you are, too. Instead of labeling yourself as "The Alpha Chapter of Beta Theta Pi" or "Miami Betas" – maintain a presence that easily identifies you and the larger "Beta Theta Pi" brand to potential new members and parents: "Beta Theta Pi – Miami University" is a best practice example. Likewise, use colors that speak to Beta's brand – not your college/university's brand. For specific color combinations and approved fonts, refer to Beta's Graphic Standards Manual, which is updated annually.

Be Organized

Logical navigation is key. If users are to explore your website and find the information they're looking for, you must guide them along the way. Including contact information for your chapter officers and links to your social media accounts is a must. Above all, you'll want to organize the website in a way that speaks to alumni, potential new members and parents. If you're starting from scratch without using ChapterSpot, consider this menu navigation:

- ▶ **Home** – Include a basic introduction that represents Beta Theta Pi. Advertise Beta’s founding in 1839, the Men of Principle initiative, the Fraternity’s five core values and your chapter’s founding date on your campus. Don’t forget to link back to the General Fraternity’s website, which is a great resource for basic “About Beta” information.
- ▶ **Alumni** – Share information about prominent Betas, including alumni of your chapter. Promote upcoming alumni events through a calendar, your house corporation and volunteers, and more.
- ▶ **Join** – Think back to when you joined Beta. What was the essential information you wanted to know as a potential new member? A recruitment schedule of events, fees, contact information for chapter officers, a chapter house tour? Include all of that here.
- ▶ **Scholarships** – Consider a space somewhere on your website to promote your chapter’s Men of Principle Scholarship or others.
- ▶ **Parents** – What will parents want to know? Include information about your chapter’s parent club and how they can get involved with the chapter, as well as testimonials from current members’ parents that may be valuable to new parents.

Be Simple and Engaging

Think of websites you enjoy perusing. There’s a good chance all of them have simple web designs that intentionally enhance the user experience. It’s up to you to use the right visual design and colors to create a similar experience for your audiences. Most readers skim through content. If your visitor sees a giant paragraph of text or has to scroll to see the rest of your message, it’s too long. If you have a lot to share, a best practice would be to break up the text using bullet points or lists. Don’t forget to use engaging and appropriate imagery to promote your chapter. Share photos that convey positive and meaningful aspects of the Fraternity.

CONCLUSION

Whether you choose to use ChapterSpot, Squarespace, Weebly, Wordpress or another web platform, the objective remains the same: create an easy-to-maintain website that rarely (if ever) needs to be touched during your time as VP of communication. Include the basic information that alumni, potential new members and parents need to know, and redirect them to your Facebook, Twitter or Instagram accounts where they can learn more about the day-to-day happenings in your chapter.

**“MARKETING IS ABOUT
VALUES. IT’S A COMPLICATED
AND NOISY WORLD, AND
WE’RE NOT GOING TO GET A
CHANCE TO GET PEOPLE TO
REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT US...
SO WE HAVE TO BE REALLY
CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE WANT
THEM TO KNOW ABOUT US.”**

*– Steve Jobs
Co-Founder, Apple*

EMAIL

MARKETING

WHO

- ▶ VP of Communication
- ▶ Alumni and Parent Communication Manager
- ▶ Community Communication Manager
- ▶ Marketing Manager
- ▶ Member and Campus Communication Manager
- ▶ Writer and Copy Editor

WHAT

These days, there are a number of mediums at your fingertips to communicate with various Beta constituents, and mass email is often a go-to option. But shooting off a message over the Internet is more than just hitting send on a message you put together between classes. Sending an email is an art, and every decision you make – from ensuring your grammar and spelling is accurate, to sending an email on a Monday morning vs. a Saturday afternoon, to having a subject line greater than or less than 30 characters, and more – will influence whether that link directing to your chapter’s website or Facebook page is clicked.

WHEN

Try to maintain consistent scheduling patterns – do you send on the first day of the? The second Wednesday of the month? In the evenings or mornings? Current trends suggest sending emails in the evenings, around 8 p.m. EST, to achieve highest open rates (although consideration should be taken to whether you’re sending to a local audience or one spread out across great distances). Likewise, Sunday evenings seem to have the best open rates, while avoiding Fridays, Saturdays and holidays is recommended. Consider sending a content-rich email update to your alumni and parents on a quarterly, bi-monthly or monthly basis.

WHERE

This section of the manual will strictly speak to newsletters and digital communications distributed via e-mail. This does not imply that there is no place for physical mailings in your overall communication strategy. Refer to the manual’s section on proactive public relations to see how printed mail

still plays a role in communicating with alumni and other constituencies, especially those who may not be well-versed in the digital space.

WHY

While not everyone uses social media, almost everyone has an email address. As e-mail security has evolved, the prevalence of spam messaging has decreased. Therefore, choosing to engage constituents via e-mail is now both cost-effective and highly likely to reach its desired audience.

HOW

General Guidelines

When determining how you will lead your chapter's mass email strategy during your time as the VP of communication, take note of four guiding principles:

- ▶ Different audiences have different needs and wants, so be careful to identify **who** your audience is for a particular mailing and **what** you think they want to hear about.
- ▶ Professionalism and branding matter. Should you send through ChapterSpot or Mailchimp? Should you use your Gmail, Outlook or university email address? With ample options for email clients, you'll need to identify **where** you'll be sending emails from – be consistent.
- ▶ There's such a thing as "too much communication," so plan an annual email content calendar that intentionally identifies **why** and **when** your chapter should send an email.
- ▶ You'll win some, you'll lose some. Not every email you send will achieve the results you seek. Gather and analyze all the data you can, use A/B testing and monitor each mailing's open, click and unsubscribe rates to determine **how** to continue altering and evolving your chapter's mass email strategy.

Mass Email Tips

- ▶ **Call to Action:** Every message your organization sends should have a very clear, concise call to action. Your call to action should explicitly guide the reader to take the desired action, whether that's to register for an event, visit a landing page, make a purchase, donate, etc. Don't bury your call to action at the bottom of the email; the reality is, emails are generally skimmed, so you'll want to get to the point right from the start and include your call to action or link to more content right away in the introductory paragraph.

- ▶ **Purpose:** While the General Fraternity reaches out to members on at least a monthly basis through its monthly e-newsletter, studies show that alumni are most interested in communication about their own chapter, so keep that in mind when considering the value of sending emails from your chapter. Emails should be content-rich and include information about the current chapter (i.e. recruitment/academic results, coverage of alumni/intramural/philanthropic events, stories about alumni, volunteer or parent updates, advertisements for upcoming events, pictures of the active members or chapter house, etc.)
- ▶ **Mass Email Calendar:** Proactive planning helps create a focused and intentional communication strategy, so create a mass email content calendar that outlines your chapter's annual email strategy. At the General Fraternity level, all constituents receive Beta's e-newsletter around the 15th of each month, and the Beta Brief is distributed to all chapter officers and volunteers on the 8th of each month. Sprinkled among these two constants, emails are often plotted on the General Fraternity calendar for annual solicitations in support of the Beta Leadership Fund, requests for alumni support or attendance at area alumni events, event registration information, greetings on initiation anniversaries and more. Your chapter's content calendar likely won't be as full on a monthly basis, but it's good to recognize that your audience receives emails from the General Fraternity, too.
- ▶ **Contacts:** If your chapter chooses to utilize ChapterSpot to send mass emails, your contacts will automatically be in sync with the General Fraternity database, which means that any alumni who update their contact information with the Administrative Office will automatically have their updated information available for your use in ChapterSpot. If using a third-party platform to send your emails, you'll need to maintain a distribution list on your own, which can be counter-productive in ensuring that alumni are updated with both the General Fraternity and the chapter.
- ▶ **Format:** There are many ways you can distribute information, from quick messages to well-designed newsletters. If your chapter chooses to send a substantive email update, consider one of two approaches:
 1. **Short Teasers:** Throughout the year, your chapter may post chapter highlights on social media. When it's time to send out an email to your audience, you can draw on the work previously done to share some of these highlights with your email readers, too. Begin your email with an introductory paragraph that invites recipients to check out the top 3-10 highlights from Facebook since your last update. Outline a list of bulletpoints with a headline and teaser text for each update,

along with a link to the Facebook post with more information. Not only is this a quick way for alumni to get the facts they need, but it also creates traffic to your chapter's posts and may result in more engagement on social media.

2. **Newsletter:** Sometimes things are best done the old-fashioned way. Some chapters still send printed newsletters in the mail, but these days many chapters find this isn't the most cost-effective route to distribute information to alumni and parents. Instead, consider designing your newsletter in Microsoft Publisher or a similar program, and export your work to a PDF. You can then use a third-party platform such as ISSUU (issuu.com), which transforms your PDF into a user-friendly, digital publication. Once your PDF is hosted on ISSUU, copy the link and paste it into the body of your email along with some introductory text that outlines your e-newsletter.

Newsletter Tips

One of the most important responsibilities you have as vice president of communication is sharing stories and chapter updates with your key stakeholders. One of the most effective ways of doing so is by producing a high quality newsletter.

Identify your audience. Your audience for newsletters may include:

- ▶ Alumni and volunteers
- ▶ Potential new members
- ▶ Campus community
- ▶ University administrators
- ▶ Parents and families
- ▶ Local community
- ▶ General Fraternity

Here are examples of stories you could tell based on your audience:

- ▶ Your chapter completes a major service learning or community service project that benefits campus or the community.
- ▶ Your chapter hosts an event that's open to more than just Greeks.
- ▶ Your chapter wins a Knox Award or other prestigious award.
- ▶ A member of your chapter breaks an academic or athletic record or receives recognition for athletic or academic excellence.

The most important thing to remember when producing a newsletter is your audience. Tell them the stories they want to hear. You have the ability to make an impact on your chapter's key stakeholders when you produce a high-quality newsletter.

Create a structure. While every chapter's publications are different, you should keep this structure in mind as an idea of what can make a strong newsletter.

- ▶ **The Header.** Every newsletter needs a strong visual on the cover. Choose an image that is new and relevant to each edition of the newsletter. Choose a title. Be creative.
- ▶ **The Letters.** Most newsletters contain at least two letters: one from the chapter president and one from the house corporation president (if applicable). These two leaders are the faces of your chapter. Therefore, they should have a significant voice in the newsletter.
 - ★ Why? Your audience needs to put a face to the chapter and its leadership. They need to be bought into the Beta experience, and your chapter leaders are the ones who can sell them on it.
 - ★ The chapter president should report on what is happening on the undergraduate level and on campus. The house corporation president should report on the status of the chapter, the status of the house corporation and provide highlights as to why others should choose to be involved.
- ▶ **The Content.** Make sure you have balance in your content. Your content should be educational, relevant and timely.
 - ★ Undergraduate profile
 - ★ Alumnus profile
 - ★ Volunteer and/or donor profile
 - ★ Success story
 - ★ Recap of a General Fraternity event such as the Wooden Institute, CPLA, Keystone or the General Convention
 - ★ Obituaries
 - ★ Upcoming events
- ▶ **Contact Information.** Your newsletter is your way of getting the chapter's news out to your key stakeholders. Be sure to include ways they can contact you in case they want to learn more about the chapter, volunteering or donating. Here's the information you should have listed:
 - ★ Executive board officers (including individual email addresses)
 - ★ House corporation board (including individual email addresses)
 - ★ Chapter physical and email addresses
 - ★ Chapter social media profile links (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

- ▶ **The Call-to-action.** Each newsletter should have one central ask. It's not enough to only share your stories. Focus on your audience, share your story and give them an action to complete at the end of each newsletter. Examples include:

- ★ Update your contact information
- ★ Give to the chapter
- ★ Learn more about volunteer opportunities
- ★ RSVP for the chapter's annual banquet
(or other signature event)

Build a template. A high quality newsletter needs a strong template design. Once you've made it, try not to change too often so you can maintain your brand consistency for your audience. Here are some things to consider when designing a template:

- ▶ Use official Beta logos, fonts and colors from Beta's Graphic Standards Manual on beta.org
- ▶ Have a balance between text and photos
- ▶ Use titles and subheadings
- ▶ Find inspiration from other Beta chapters that produce high quality newsletters (or reference the General Fraternity's monthly e-newsletter)

CONCLUSION

Investing thought in your chapter's email marketing strategy is critical in order to meet your audience where they're at in a cost effective, efficient and professional manner. Keep in mind, your audience receives a lot of email on a daily basis, so it's easy to start tuning out the clutter. Before hitting send, make sure your email is content-rich, proofread and polished, and has a clear call-to-action for your recipients to engage with further.

NOTES

**“NEXT TO DOING
THE RIGHT THING,
THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING IS TO
LET PEOPLE KNOW
YOU ARE DOING
THE RIGHT THING.”**

*– John D. Rockefeller
Business Magnate and Philanthropist*

BETA THETA PI
— MEN OF PRINCIPLE —

BRENNAN HALL | 5134 BONHAM ROAD | OXFORD, OHIO 45056
800.800.BETA | BETA.ORG