Professor’s note: This is an interesting proposal with some professor comments. This proposal also shows common mistakes that are made. Areas that could be strengthened are more incorporation of specific communication theories that inform the work. (The Griffin text from 508 is always a good place to start, but reading and citing the original work is also necessary as the thesis/project process progresses.)

Areas in which this proposal could be strengthened:
1) APA formatting mistakes in the text and reference section.
2) More specific incorporation of theory
3) More specific discussion of potential method and approach.

(The good news is that this project turned out very well at the end and provided a valuable service to the community.)
Project Proposal Introduction

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Greensboro, NC is making a comeback. Less than five years ago, the organization was rocked by an embezzlement scandal. As a result, the organization’s reputation, contributions and volunteer support were all hampered. The scandal was handled as well as possible for a high-profile community non-profit, but the response certainly could have benefited from an existing crisis communications plan.

Large for-profit organizations and corporations pay many thousands of dollars to communications professionals who assess their vulnerabilities and prepare a crisis plan specifically tailored to that group’s individual circumstances. (Massey, 2006) The plan is meant to be readily at hand and easily used to help executives and spokespeople gather information, make decisions and face the media in the event of a crisis. (Bergman, 1994)

This project will begin with an assessment of the Greensboro Habitat chapter’s crisis vulnerabilities based not only on the recent embezzlement scandal but also incidents that have struck Habitat chapters around the country. It will include policy recommendations to address the vulnerabilities and provide a “to do” checklist of sorts designed to help organization staffers make good decisions in the early moments of various situations while executives and spokespeople are notified and gathered in order to make joint decisions. (Dyer, 1995)

Project Importance

Hundreds of people were affected by the scandal that struck the Greensboro Habitat for Humanity chapter. The people responsible were fired and prosecuted, but the chapter still suffered financially afterward. Contributions dropped immediately. As a result, some of the
families depending on Habitat to help them escape stressed living environments were informed construction was being put on hold.

Habitat made appropriate changes, and never again expects to face a similar financial scandal, but other crises are certainly possible. Since it is accepted that speed is critical when it comes to executing crisis communications, the chapter stands to benefit from a turnkey plan designed to get as much information as possible to executives and spokespeople, and in turn, the media. The sooner a negative story is resolved and makes it way out of the news cycle, the better. (Dyer, 1995) Conventional wisdom indicates that a quick resolution lessens the potential for a negative impact on the contributions that make Habitat’s mission possible.

Project Exploration

This project will be explored by researching various crisis communications plans established by other organizations and making use of their applicable principles. To make the plan more usable for Greensboro’s Habitat executives and staff, this project will be supplemented with crisis case histories from other Habitat chapters and will then apply the lessons learned. (Massey, 2006) Interviews will be conducted with local Habitat executives to gather their opinions on vulnerabilities and apply action recommendations accordingly. A series of interviews is expected as questions arise during plan preparation.


