



WORTHINGTON HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

Opening day at this Central Ohio country club is always greeted with enthusiasm, and this year was no exception. A warm, late May day brought many to the club's pool, but the day turned tragic when a 6-year-old drowned.

The club's management quickly recognized their need for professional guidance to sensitively communicate with their members, the media and the public at large in the aftermath of the accident.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

A workplace tragedy such as this can rapidly become a potential liability on many fronts. Club management was dealing with members who were emotionally distraught and concerned about safety at their facility. Local law enforcement was sharing its findings with the media and coverage was intense. Legal liability was a real concern as well. And of course, sympathy, concern and respect for the victim's family was foremost on management's mind. Team Fleisher was retained to help manage communication with each of these stakeholder groups.

TEAM FLEISHER COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Team Fleisher recommended open and honest communication with all audiences. This included e-communications with membership, establishing a dialogue with law enforcement and media covering the story and an action plan that addressed steps being taken to enhance safety at the pool and how to effectively communicate these steps to membership. In addition, Team Fleisher helped club management with some key messaging that helped keep everyone on the same page and focused on what aspects of the accident to communicate and prioritize. This approach helped create communication that was more straightforward and consistent across the board.



TEAM FLEISHER COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 1. Membership:** Weekly e-communication at onset to detail current status of the accident investigation and steps being taken to ensure the safest of environments. The tone of these communications was critical. It was important for management to convey its sympathy, concern and respect for the family while ensuring its membership that it was being proactive as possible. At the same time, it was essential from a legal standpoint that the club be careful in regards to conveying responsibility for the incident. Club attorneys were tasked with reviewing all communication before it was distributed.
- 2. Law Enforcement:** The local township police department were investigating the accident. In the first 24 hours following the tragedy, rumors were rampant and information was being shared with the media from multiple sources. Reinforcing the lines of communication between the club and law enforcement meant information was less likely to be leaked and the club would have greater control over how to share the findings with its members.
- 3. Media:** Team Fleisher became the point of contact for reporters covering the story. This minimized the reporting of inaccurate information and freed up club management to deal with other issues.

RESULTS

While there was no way to minimize an accident such as this, **Team Fleisher's guidance and assistance resulted in clearer communication with all stakeholders and far less potential fall out.** Management kept Team Fleisher engaged through the duration of the legal investigation to ensure their communication remained as effective and consistent as possible.

