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The Doyenne of ‘Courage’ in Crisis

Contributed by Bridget Paverd, Partner, GillespieHall
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Davia Temin has shaped, and continues to define, contemporary crisis communication.



(Bridget Paverd (left) and Davia Temin, at the New York offices of Temin and Company)

I spent a morning in New York City with Davia Temin last week.

While respectful of the knowledge of others, and always open to learning, there are just so many accomplished professionals that I am seldom blown away meeting a specialized superstar.

Davia is an exception. I admit, I was a little star-struck.

Her splendid office in the clouds of Manhattan is elegant and welcoming. Wall-to-wall books and gorgeous art are interrupted by a Davia Temin lookalike Barbie still in the box. That is an entirely different story.

Davia and I discussed crisis as we see it now, in 2019.... A world of ‘alternative facts’ and the MeToo movement. We shared war stories. I wanted to write down every word she said – she was so generous with advice. We talked about the value of the truth. And of listening. Of “hearing” both clients and audiences and moving our clients into recovery as quickly as possible.

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Davia Temin has shaped, and continues to define, contemporary crisis communication. All of us who work in reputation management have been influenced by her leadership. Even those who don't know her name follow her best practices. Barely a month goes by that she is not quoted in major media.

Through her boutique management consultancy, Temin and Company, and her thought leadership (such as her [Reputation Matters](#) column for Forbes), Davia has been at the forefront of seismic shifts in crisis response and recovery: the public's loss of trust in conventional institutions and their leaders; the impact of digital and social media and the emergence of instantaneous, always-on news.

Davia has been so influential in large part because of what she is not; she is not the usual kind of "fixer." "Delay, deny, deflect" are rarely in her tool box. Instead, she speaks of responsibility, leadership and *courage*. From that perspective, she, like me, sees crisis as opportunity.

Those of us who have worked in reputation management know a crisis can define an organization's soul and test its mettle. Writing in Forbes in 2013, Davia points out:

Organizations can use crisis to reaffirm who they are, and what they stand for...in deed and word. They can embody the solution, and become a beacon for others. They can become stronger, finer, more tested, and more positively well known. But it is real commitment, engagement, and courageous action that are needed to attain such a best result. It does not, usually, handle itself.

Facebook's ongoing stumbles gave Davia the opportunity to remind us that "[crisis demands the ability to see clearly, the humility to admit mistakes readily, and the courage to do whatever it takes to fix those mistakes immediately.](#)"

Recently, she has written on a reputation risk unique to our time: the bully. Sadly, it's become an expected part of politics, and is spreading. Whatever one calls it – counter-punching, telling it like it is – it is verbal violence used not to forward discourse but to inflict damage. The weapon can be an individual social media account or a national media forum. Writing in Leadership Strategy ([How to Bring Down A Bully or Extortionist – Lesson from Jeff Bezos, Nancy Pelosi and More](#)), Davia reminds us that protecting reputation requires courage:

"Care about your legacy more than your short-term reputation.

"Have principles you are simply no longer willing to breach."

"Be prepared to be unstoppable; indefatigable."

Thank you for your influence and thought leadership Davia and reminding us that It takes courage to face a crisis head on and rise above it.

And that courage can prevent a crisis from occurring in the first place.