

Organization Nominated: Mayo Clinic

The Issue: Responding to Current Events in a Highly Charged Climate: A Social Unrest Scorecard

1. Description of the Issue:

Like many organizations across the country, Mayo Clinic has found itself grappling with how to respond to an influx of national and international social and political events that affect Mayo Clinic's patients, staff and communities. Attacks on people based on their race, gender or religion; constitutional and legal rights discussions; and controversial scientific debates spark high emotions and uncertainty about when we, as a leading healthcare organization, should or should not respond. This new, highly-charged, external climate demands a fact-based decision-making process to support staff at Mayo Clinic, who must make judgment calls and communications recommendations to leadership.

In late 2016, Mayo Clinic Public Affairs developed a Social Unrest Scorecard to help determine when Mayo Clinic should address current events. The scorecard accounts for global issues Mayo Clinic may respond to, such as:

- Attacks on specific classes of people
- Mistreatment of a race, gender, lifestyle
- Constitutional and legal rights, including gun access and privacy issues
- Controversial scientific debates, such as vaccinations, GMO, climate change
- Religious freedom/expression, including holiday displays, prayer groups, clothing
- Political/geopolitical, like immigration and the Affordable Care Act

Mayo Clinic's assessment accounts for considerations across key areas, such as:

- Who are the stakeholder groups that are involved? Does this event affect our patients? Staff?
- Does our mission obligate us to respond? Is this issue directly connected to our organizational values?
- Are we a credible authority? Is it related to our strategic objectives? Are there people within Mayo who are experts in this area or who could champion the cause?
- Is a response timely? Are we going to add to the conversation in a meaningful way? If we don't respond will our absence be noticed?

The ratings provide directional guidance on if we should or should not respond, and if so, how. The score supplements the expertise and judgement of our Public Affairs staff and the instincts and preferences of Mayo Clinic leaders. The scorecard also allows us to offer specific recommendations based on communications objectives (provide comfort, show solidarity, change policy, etc.).

2. Why is the Issue important to the organization?

For many years, when an external situation occurred, Mayo Clinic Public Affairs relied on an internal policy for guidance. The policy, which is limited in scope, indicated that colored spotlighting of Mayo Clinic buildings may be used to join in the observance of major holidays reinforcing dedication to the soldiers of the U.S. military; to further Mayo Clinic's mission by enhancing public awareness of medical conditions and diseases; or to acknowledge days of official public mourning. Beyond the building lighting policy, Mayo Clinic Public Affairs staff worked with little formal guidance.

With so many incidents in close succession in 2016—Brussels Airport explosions, the shooting at a nightclub in Orlando, police shootings (including the nearby Twin Cities), violence in France and Germany, and more—Mayo Clinic Public Affairs wanted a tool to make more objective decisions.

As you'll see in the examples provided throughout this application, the Social Unrest Scorecard gives Mayo Clinic Public Affairs confidence in pursuing possible recommendations and helps staff know where to focus their effort. The tool helps staff remain focused on our mission, values and strategic priorities. In addition, the scorecard has helped staff articulate solid reasons for determining when not to respond to a social issue.

3. At what level of the organization was the issue managed?

Mayo Clinic Public Affairs involved its agency partner, Padilla, to develop scorecard recommendations and vetted the scorecard through a large group of colleagues from internal communications, leadership, social media and media teams. Input from an external summit of senior communication professionals was also gathered to identify best practices in corporate response to social issues.

When an issue arises, the scorecard gives Mayo Clinic Public Affairs staff a quantifiable number, which provides response recommendation guidance. Public Affairs staff provide leaders with the scorecard result and a professional assessment, along with other components like an environmental or political scan, for review and decision-making. For example, last year, a Mayo Clinic physician requested that Mayo Clinic make a statement about climate change. By using the scorecard, Public Affairs staff had a basis for not responding: Mayo Clinic does not have an official policy or position on climate change and isn't viewed as an authority on the subject. Another example in 2018 included the issue of families being separated at the border due to immigration enforcements. Mayo Clinic's CEO felt very strongly about getting involved and making a strong statement, but the scorecard guidelines suggested that Mayo Clinic would not add value to the narrative. Public Affairs staff opted for a hybrid approach, with a heartfelt message sent to targeted employee resource groups.

4. Which internal and/or external constituent groups were affected?

Mayo Clinic Public Affairs has used the Social Unrest Scorecard to assess incidents or concerns affecting all Mayo Clinic staff, segments of our staff, communities Mayo Clinic serves, elected officials and policy makers, etc. The tool is used collaboratively, among a crisis team to make quick decisions; individually, by a Public Affairs professional or leader, to offer initial recommendations; and with clients/partner groups like community engagement, government relations or client partners (Human Resources, Diversity & Inclusion, etc.) to mutually craft a recommendation.

5. How are constituent concerns considered and acted upon?

Initial use of the Social Unrest Scorecard included times when Mayo Clinic leaders or staff raised concerns, through established channels and relationships, about external events or issues that are deeply personal or concerning to them and our patients.

When the scorecard numbers point toward responding to an issue, staff still consider nuances of other current events, the frequency of similar messaging to stakeholders, and the potential for losing impact of leader voice. For example, on March 14, 2019, mass shootings at two mosques in New Zealand claimed the lives of 50 people, with significant, longer-lasting media coverage. Four days later, Mayo Clinic shared an internal message

with all staff. The message included a statement from Mayo Clinic president and CEO, Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., and included resources available to staff. The number of article views and comments exceeded internal averages. Then, on April 22, within a day of attacks on Christians in Sri Lanka, Mayo Clinic shared an internal message with all staff. The message extended support for those who feel vulnerable because of their religious beliefs and reinforced Mayo's commitment to stand against discrimination and hostility. The article views and number of comments were considerably lower than the previous month's communication. With two incidents in close succession, had the second message been overlooked by staff? Was the second message less effective because it did not include a leadership quote? Was internal reaction affected by external coverage of the situations?

The Public Affairs team is assessing examples like these to help inform decisions in the future. While the assessment part of the scorecard remains the same, Public Affairs recently reviewed the process. Public Affairs will take a more formal, proactive, team-based approach to activate use of the tool and will also include broader stakeholder perspectives. Going forward, a team representing different functions in Public Affairs will convene to assess any given situation and will involve subject matter experts from across the organization, including those with expertise in diversity and inclusion and knowledge of Mayo's network of external affiliated organizations, both national and international. For further learnings, each completed scorecard and the resulting outcomes will be saved for after-action review. A more formal tracking process is also being developed to help identify trends and patterns.

6. What are the key objectives relative to the issue?

The creation and use of the Social Unrest Scorecard helps Mayo Clinic Public Affairs staff quantify and bring data-driven best practices to decision making; reduces the impact or bias of emotional influence on decisions during a social issue; provides a framework and organizationally tailored criteria for response assessment; and a way to communicate our recommendations.

When responding to an external event, Mayo Clinic's objectives may be to offer comfort and support, show solidarity, influence policy, and/or position Mayo Clinic as a leader in a difficult time or on a specific topic.

7. Does managing the issue make a direct contribution to the organization's profitability or reputation? If so, how?

External responses to social issues elevate Mayo Clinic's expertise and reinforce our values and strategic priorities among various stakeholders. For example, in 2017, President Trump issued an executive order banning travel to the US from seven specific countries. Mayo Clinic immediately heard from its staff, patients and members of the scientific community who expressed concern about what this decision would mean for them, and our patients who come from all over the world. Mayo Clinic leaders knew this would also affect business and operations as one of the largest employers in Minnesota, and in the healthcare industry nationwide, because of the highly-specialized backgrounds of our research, education and clinical staff.

The scorecard was used to determine that a response was appropriate: There was a direct impact on Mayo Clinic stakeholders, Mayo Clinic was an expert voice in terms of impact on global science, and responding would be in line with Mayo Clinic values and strategy.

Mayo Clinic's objectives were twofold: First, Mayo Clinic wanted its staff to feel supported. Secondly, Mayo Clinic wanted to influence policy. Complicating the strategy was the fact that Mayo Clinic's CEO would be visiting President Trump on another topic in the coming

days. So, Mayo Clinic shared a message from leaders internally only; Mayo Clinic held on any external statement or public stance in lieu of a private conversation with the White House about the impact of the travel restriction on Mayo Clinic's ability as an organization and a nation to advance global medicine. Public Affairs used Mayo Clinic's leader's voice sparingly, and additional efforts happened behind the scenes.

In this situation, the scorecard helped Mayo Clinic evaluate and navigate that issue strategically, and articulate strong, fact-based recommendations which were ultimately successful for our stakeholder audiences.

8. What are the results?

Mayo Clinic has shared its Social Unrest Scorecard broadly across industries as an emerging best practice. The tool has been well-received among communications professionals.

Within Mayo Clinic, the use of the scorecard creates efficiency, consistency and accord for recommendations. If Mayo Clinic Public Affairs staff complete the scorecard exercise and recommend not responding to a social issue, the metrics help add credibility and validity to the decision.

9. Please submit an illustration (diagram) of your organization's issue management process.

Nomination submitted by:

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External Issue Response Worksheet

What is the issue and why does it require careful consideration?

Rate the issue on each of the following criteria:



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Directly related to mission and strategic objectives										
The issue has a direct and substantive impact on our employees										
We can contribute meaningfully to the dialog (our expertise, perspective) and have a well-articulated point of view										
Important stakeholders expect us to be involved										
We can do so while being respectful to those with opposing views										
We have specific actions we are taking to accompany our communications sentiment										
Our participation will help change the status quo										
Our participation will lend comfort to those impacted										
We are filling a void not occupied by others with a more appropriate voice										
We can effectively delineate personal views from organizational views										
Our participation is in keeping with our company's culture										
Our involvement will not be perceived as opportunistic or self-serving										
Other well-respected organizations (peers, partners, others we admire) are participating										
This will remain an issue for an extended period										

Score: _____/140