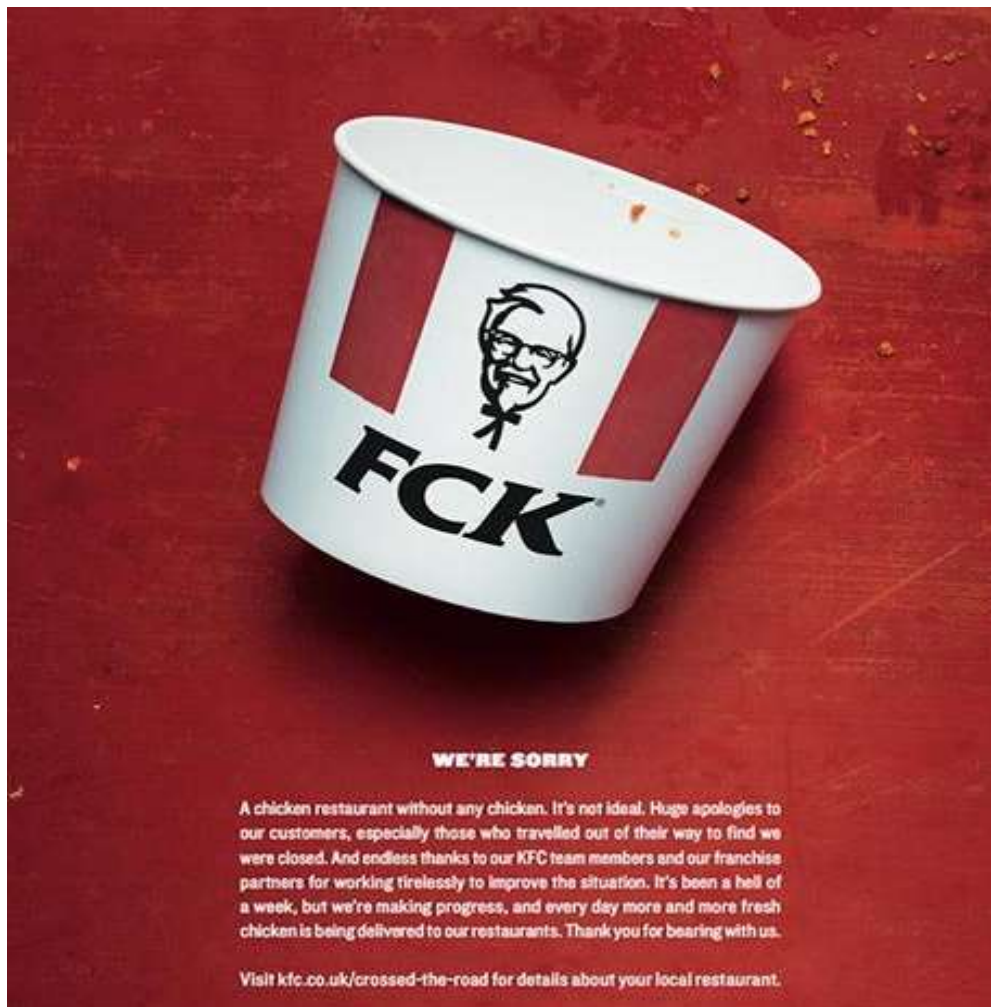


KFC

In Feb 2018, KFC encountered a potentially disastrous dilemma when a chicken shortage forced the restaurant chain to close more than 600 stores across the UK. Social and mainstream media enjoyed the irony of a chicken shop without any chicken and went to town on the story. Logistical problems caused by a change in suppliers caused the disruption.

The closures ruffled feathers to say the least. Closed restaurants angered customers, especially those who traveled out of their way. Some desperate customers resorted to calling the police. Many restaurants started to reopen although with limited menus and hours.

KFC, once known as Kentucky Fried Chicken, responded with full-page newspaper advertisements that showed a chicken bucket with its KFC label changed to "FCK." Those who wonder what that stands for can consider adding a vowel. A brief apology followed the straightforward headline "We're Sorry."



It read: "A chicken restaurant without any chicken. It's not ideal. Huge apologies to our customers, especially those who traveled out of their way to find we were closed. An endless thanks to our KFC team members and our franchise partners for working tirelessly to improve the situation. It's been a hell of a

week, but we're making progress, and every day more and more fresh chicken is being delivered to our restaurants. Thank you for bearing with us."

The response won praise from both customers and PR and marketing professionals in the UK and US. KFC probably won more customers and increased brand awareness through the incident.

Was the Chicken Shortage a PR Stunt?

The ad was so effective that Steve Richardson, executive creative director of creative agency Mr B & Friends, wonders if the chicken shortage might have been a calculated PR stunt. It wouldn't be the first time manipulative marketers made up a story to promote sales.

"Currently KFC is benefitting from a PR boom. The whole situation has certainly got people talking and they've built on the confident brand personality," Richardson told the [Bristol Post](#). "KFC came across as human and humorous, and the event has probably increased brand awareness and won some new fans along the way."

If the incident wasn't staged, then its communications response probably saved the company, he says. The chicken episode, he says, offers another lesson: Hire a reliable supplier. Then you won't need to write apologies.

Bottom Line: KFC's PR crisis response to a chicken shortage that shut down hundreds of restaurants won accolades from consumers and PR and marketing professionals. Its full-page newspaper ads illustrate how an apology and the appropriate use of humor can save a company's reputation and increase brand awareness and sales.

Questions:

- 1) Comment on the communication strategy followed by KFC during the time of crisis.**
- 2) What are the key lessons to be learnt from the company's response? How can a company limit its financial and reputational damage in the event of a crisis?**