

# JIFSAN Symposium Communication Scenario

April 5, 2016

All names, events and details in this scenario are fictional.  
Any similarities to real events are coincidental.

## The Company:

- Family-owned and operated, private company, located in Yuma, AZ
- Company buys romaine lettuce from domestic growers
- Cleans, cuts and packs raw product in the company facility
- Sell two different products: bagged RetailerA private-label chopped romaine lettuce, and bagged Company1-labelled salad mix that includes romaine lettuce, carrots and red cabbage.
- Have a good food safety plan
- Have a very active social media sales and marketing team
- Have a Website; Facebook page is Company1; Twitter account is @Company1; Instagram and YouTube
- Daily, online search terms: Company1; RetailerA; romaine lettuce;
- Sell both products to RetailerA's distribution centers in AZ, CA and ID, which together supply RetailerA stores in 11 western states
- Single supplier of these products to RetailerA at this time of year
- Adheres to all OSHA, EPA and FDA guidelines and regulations.
- Requires your suppliers (growers) to be members of the Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement, a leafy green food safety organization that sets growing standards

## Your role:

- You work for Company1
- You are the Vice President of Communication at Company1
- The Sales & Marketing Department at Company1 includes a Digital Communities Manager and reports to the VP of Sales
- All Vice Presidents at Company1 serve on both the Crisis Management Team and the Recall Response Team
- The Digital Communities Manager is on the Recall Response Team, but not on the Crisis Management Team

# Day 1, afternoon

- The Company1 Crisis Management Team Lead calls the team into the conference room and explains:

RetailerA called today to inform the company about a recent visitor post on its Facebook Page:



**Martha M.**

5 hours ago · Phoenix, AZ

 Like Page

Bought several bags of your chopped romaine lettuce at my Phoenix, AZ RetailerA store about a week ago. I loved it – I ate a salad every night! I made a wonderful Cesar salad over the weekend, and then barfed it back up...for two days! It was terrible! I left a message for the store manager, but no one has returned my call. Wish I had kept the bag. Please take this product off the shelf so others do not succumb to the same fate!

- RetailerA provided the Facebook Friend with Company1's website address and the phone number listed on the website.
- The rest of the team investigates the situation (reviewing food safety records, conducting product traceback and traceforward, health hazard analysis, etc.).
- **Identify 3 different audiences with whom the company may have to communicate and draft 3 talking points for each.**

# Summary of Audiences from Day 1

## **Talk to NOW**

- External Audience: Facebook friend (consumer) – In this case RetailerA requires Company to respond w/in 24 hours.
- Internal Audiences: Receptionist, Sales rep for RetailerA (maybe other sales reps), Senior leadership,

## **Prepare to talk to...just in case**

- Media: Holding or Reactive statement
- Health Depts.
- Regulators
- Broad customer group (other retailers)
- Industry trade associations

**Don't have enough information. Need to investigate.**

# Summary of Talking Points from Day 1

- FB Friend (consumer):
  - We are taking this seriously
  - Help us gather more info (understand)
  - Use prepared template of questions to ask in case of adverse events (input from ins. co/legal)
  - If still feel ill, consult a medical physician as you normally would
- Employees
  - A situation has been brought to our attention
  - May receive inquiries about possible illnesses. Company is looking into it.
  - Be responsive; instruct how to handle inquiries
  - Use the routing protocols in the crisis communication/social media triage plans
  - Don't apologize in a way that implies wrong-doing (not enough info)

**Uncertainty is always a factor, but must take all consumer claims seriously until known otherwise. Show respect. Consumers are understanding as long as they feel they are being heard/taken seriously**

# Day 2, morning

- RetailerA tells Company1 that a consumer called late yesterday saying that his wife and four friends who had dinner at their house had become ill a few days after all eating a salad she made with RetailerA brand bagged, Chopped Romaine Lettuce purchased at a RetailerA store in Phoenix, AZ. The husband did not eat the salad.
- RetailerA is removing all the private-label Chopped Romaine Lettuce produced by Company1 from its shelves until the issue has been cleared up
- Your Digital Communities Manager has just sent you this email...

# Day 2, morning

Just saw this on our Facebook page. How should I respond?

Thnx, Zee



Martha M.

15 mins ago · Phoenix, AZ

 Like Page

I ate some of your chopped romaine lettuce and became violently ill. I missed a day of work and had to pay for a doctor's visit. Can you compensate me for any of my time or expenses?

**What do you tell Zee, the Digital Communities Manager?**

# Day 2, morning

Your Digital Communities Manager sends you a jpg of the following twitter post: **Now what?**

Twitter Post [@SusiQ](#)

Heard bags of RetailerA-brand Chopped romaine lettuce at store in Phoenix, AZ made people sick.  
#baggedromaine

Day 2, morning

If this were the post instead, would it change what you do?

Twitter Post [@PhoenixTimes](#)

Heard bags of RetailerA-brand Chopped romaine lettuce at store in Phoenix, AZ reportedly made people sick. #baggedromaine

# Crafting the Right Message

Laura

Amy

Donna

# Break

Day 2 10:30-10:45 a.m.

# Scenario Messages

- Review the messages that you've been using for the scenario
- Update them based on what you've heard this morning

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# Day 2, morning

- The Crisis Management Team assembles again. Based on the information available at this time, the team decides to issue a Class 1 recall. No pathogen has been found on the finished product, but internal testing indicates that one of the chlorine monitors for the wash water used on lines 1 and 2 on April 3 may not have been functioning properly on that one day.
- The team tells you the following details for the press release:
  - 20lb cases, 20 units, 16 oz. bags of RetailerA-brand Chopped Romaine Lettuce, production code: 201608501, BBD: April 13, 2016, shipped to RetailerA in Arizona
  - 15lb cases, 10 units, 24 oz. bags of Company1-brand fresh Garden Salad Mix, production code 201608502, BBD: April 13, 2016, shipped to retailers, wholesalers in California, Texas and Michigan

**COMPANY NAME RECALLS PRODUCT**

BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE HEALTH RISK

**Company Name** of **City, State** is recalling **Quantity and/or Type of Product** because **reason for recall**

**Product** was distributed **Listing of states and areas where the product was distributed and how it reached consumers (e.g., through retail stores, mail order, direct delivery).**

**Specific information on how the product can be identified (e.g., type of container [plastic/metal/glass], size or appearance of product, product brand name, flavor, codes, expiration dates, etc.).**

**Status of the number of and types of related illnesses that have been CONFIRMED to date (e.g., "No illnesses have been reported to date.")**

**Brief explanation about what is known about the problem, such as how it was revealed, and what is known about its source. An example of such a description -- "the recall was initiated after it was discovered..."**

**Information on what consumers should do with the product and where they can get additional information (e.g., "consumers who have purchased Brand X are urged to return it to the place of purchase for a full refund. Consumers with questions may contact the company at 1-800-XXX-XXXX.)**

**Not in FDA model but optional: Quote from company spokesperson or official.**

# Day 2, morning

While the press release is in review:

- Adapt the release for use on various platforms:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - YouTube

# Google Alert finds a law firm's website posting:

We are representing a woman in Texas who is suing RetailerA because contaminated romaine lettuce made her ill. She fell violently ill 10 days ago and went to doctor who diagnosed her with E. Coli. She then took several partially eaten items in her refrigerator to a lab to be tested and the romaine salad mix she purchased at RetailerA was positive for coliforms. #baggedromaine #foodpoisoning

# More Facebook postings

**Benji**



5 mins ago · Phoenix, AZ

Hey, I also ate lettuce at a RetailerA store and had terrible stomach cramping. How do I get my money back?  
#baggedromaine

**David S.**



12 mins ago · San Francisco, CA

Seems this is going around. I shop at a RetailerA store in San Francisco, and I ate the store brand of chopped romaine too. About three days later, I was so sick, I thought I was going to die. At first I thought it was the raw oysters I ate, but now I'm thinking it was the romaine. How do I find out? #baggedromaine

## Twitter Post [@SusiQ](#)

I ate RetailerA chopped romaine too. Son is still not better. Taking him to the dr today.  
#baggedromaine

# Fast Forward to Three Weeks Later

- What are some lessons learned?
- What were the most challenging aspects?
- What might have you done differently?
- What additional resources would you have needed?



# Lunch

Day 2