

Bouncing back after a 29 point drop in our brand trust index

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Canada's National Capital Region experienced a

Derecho-

a line of intense, widespread, windstorms associated with a fast-moving group of severe thunderstorms that produced hurricane winds, heavy rain and flash flooding.

In the span of 15 minutes

Winds of up to **190 km per hour** toppled transmission towers, damaged more than **500 hydro poles** and downed miles of power lines.



The aftermath:

1,000 simultaneous power outages
180,000 customers without power



Crisis Communications Team Activation

We start with a crystal-clear plan and a mandate- protect, preserve and promote the brand.

Crisis Communications Team was activated at 5 p.m. on May 21, 2022 and stood down at 4 p.m. on June 3, 2022.



Stakeholder communications

- Daily public service announcements
- Daily updates to our shareholder - City Council
- Proactive and reactive media interviews
- Email communications to community associations
- Social media and web updates leveraging infographics, images and videos of restoration efforts
- Website updates

Estimated times of restoration

We were not able to communicate estimated times of restoration (ETRs) and neighborhood specific information.

After the fourth day of the outage, we saw a significant negative impact to our public sentiment metrics and brand trust.



Outage map

With the absence of accurate information from our OMS we opted to **remove the outage map** from our website.



Multi-day event

Our assessment time took longer than our customers were accustomed to.

Response Timeline

May 21- The storm hit Ottawa

May 22- Communicated this would be a multi-day event

May 23- Power was restored to 50% of affected customers

May 28- Most large repairs were completed, restoring power to 90% of affected customers

June 1- Power was restored to all customers except for those with outstanding property/customer-owned equipment damage

June 5- Power was restored to the remaining customers

Media coverage

Ongoing monitoring of media landscape.

Sentiment remained **negative to neutral** throughout the event.

Tone of coverage shaped the information being shared.



Social media sentiment

Social media sentiment had a predominantly negative trend line throughout the event.

From May 21 to June 5, sentiment reached an unprecedented low average of 77% (reaching 69% at its lowest) and was monitored hourly throughout the event.



Rebuilding Trust campaign

To address this drop in sentiment and its potential impact on our social license, we developed a **Rebuilding Trust campaign**, a stakeholder communication and public relations strategy to rebuild community confidence, trust in Hydro Ottawa post-derecho storm.

Focus on emergency preparedness, storm response, and resiliency efforts – at home and at the utility level.

Phased approach since August 2022.



Action #1

We took a step back to **identify gaps and opportunities** for improvement.

We sought both shareholder and stakeholder **feedback**.

For **validation** we incorporated outage communications and emergency preparedness questions into our annual customer satisfaction survey.

Action #2

Developed a content strategy focused on educating key stakeholders on **emergency and storm preparedness.**

Products have been customized for media, residential customers, commercial customers, community associations, elected officials, general population and applied on **all platforms.**



Action #3

Introduced weather alert
and customer update **emails**

Significant **positive response**
(60% open rate)





Action #4

Developed new **community outreach program** “Keeping Ottawa Connected”, which address the topics of emergency preparedness, outage causes, Hydro Ottawa’s restoration process, tree trimming and safety.

These presentations are delivered **in-person or virtually** depending on the request of the association.

Action #5

We implemented an editorial strategy, leveraging **full-page advertorials**, promoting storm preparedness, setting outage priorities, mitigation measures and our restoration process for both printed and online versions.

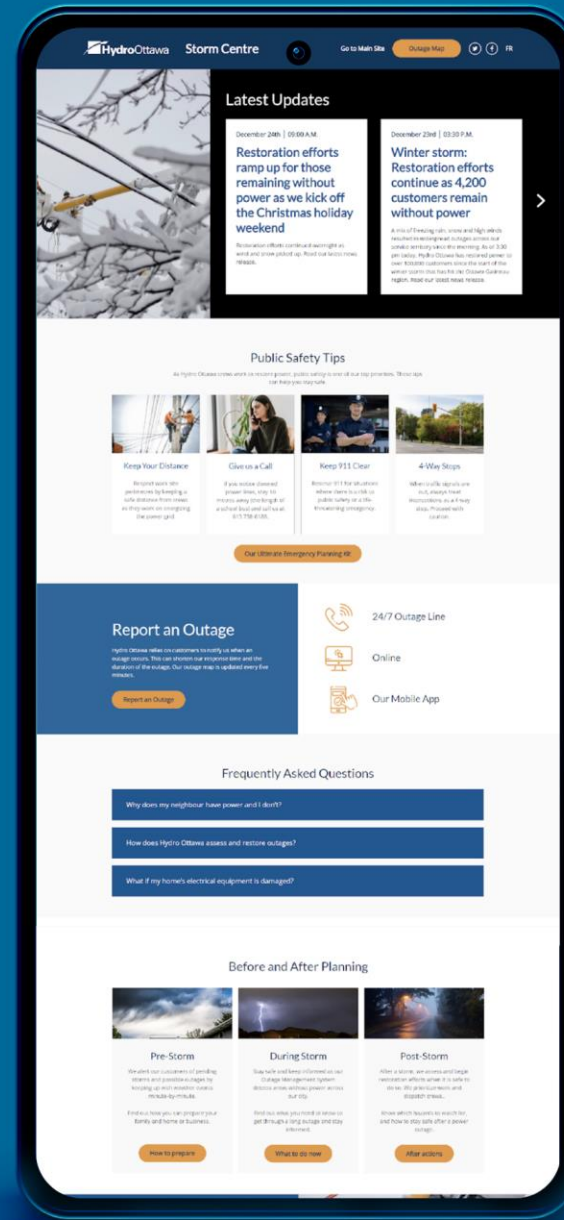
Digital literacy can still be a barrier for an older cohort, so traditional printed media does provide a great alternative, even with its short shelf life.



Action #6

Hydro Ottawa created a new, **Storm Centre webpage** activated during large scale events.

With 80% of affected customers relying on their smartphones to get updates during outages, the Storm Centre was also designed to be mobile friendly.



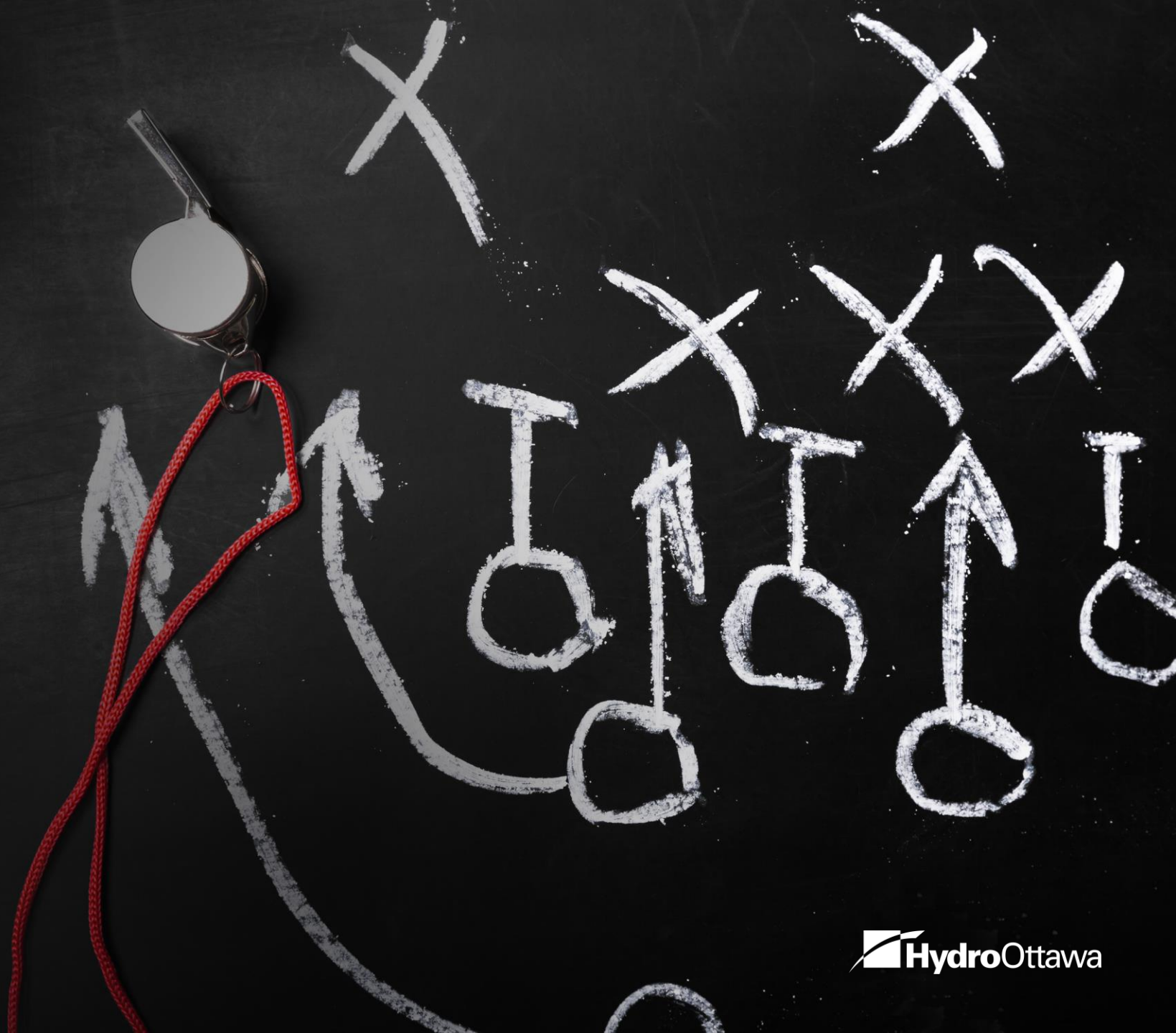
Action #7

We unveiled our **internal media room** which can deliver virtual community roadshow presentations, provide virtual interviews and outage updates during major events.



Action #8

To further enhance our preparedness and strengthen our response capabilities for future events we are developing a **playbook for large scale events**



Results

Results since we implemented the Rebuilding Trust campaign:

- Our average daily sentiment has rebounded to 98 %.
- Our shareholder is better informed and highly appreciative of our outreach efforts.
- We've seen significant uptake to community roadshow presentations.
- The new "Storm Centre" continues to generate great traction.
- Customer outage emails continue to garner positive comments and the open rate is always above industry benchmarks.

Key Takeaways

- Ottawa is now the weather-alert Capital of Canada
- Resiliency begins at home - residents need to be ready to manage and respond for a minimum of 72 hours, if not more
- Social media becomes largely an irrelevant distraction after 24 hours
- We communicate what we know and when we know it – and just because you don't like the answer, does not mean that we are not communicating
- Our approach is simple - make safe; prioritize critical infrastructure followed by larger outages
- Large-scale outages are dynamic events making estimated times of restoration (ETR) difficult to predict

Conclusion

Be **comfortable with chaos**.

A crisis can be a great **opportunity to improve and build**.