



## Case Study: Tiger Woods's Scandal

## 1. STATUS

Back in 2009 the №1 Golf player Tiger Woods shocked his fans and the whole world when he publicly admitting to cheating on his wife – the Swedish top model Elin Nordegren. Nine months before Woods and Nordegren divorced, a dozen women came forward, showing messages and voice mails full of threats sent by the golfer. After a \$10 million divorce and \$22 million in endorsements, Woods is now again on top of his game, dating one of America's best ski racers – Lindsey Vonn.

## 2. ISSUES

Tiger Woods didn't have a good crisis management strategy in place. If we put aside his private life and his personal choices and decisions, Tiger's PR team left a gap of silence between his official statement and the time everything was on the table. In that gap the media got the chance to post any information or picture that would sell well.

Due to the scandal Woods was dropped by some of his biggest sponsors – Gillette, Accenture and Gatorade, as he was no longer representing the values of these organizations.

## 3. ACTIONS

The first report on November 25, 2009, messing with Wood's clear public image, was from the National Inquirer. No actions were undertaken from the golfer's PR team. 48 hours later news spread that he was in a car crash near his home supposedly after a fight with his wife regarding his infidelity. The situation turned into a crisis short after this as dozen of women were coming forward providing proof of their sexual affair with the famous golfer.

Another wrong move from his PR team was his official statement in regards to the car crash on his personal website. There he informed everyone about his condition after the car crash. He took full responsibility for the car crash, saying that "he is not perfect" and he is "only human".

On the February 19, 2010, three months after initial news of the infidelities hit the press. Woods came out with an official statement:

*I have let my family down and I regret those transgressions with all of my heart. I have not been true to my values and the behavior my family deserves. I am not without faults and I am far short of perfect. I am dealing with my behavior and personal failings behind closed doors with my family. Those feelings should be shared by us alone.*

*Although I am a well-known person and have made my career as a professional athlete, I have been dismayed to realize the full extent of what tabloid scrutiny really means. For the last week, my family and I have been hounded to expose intimate details of our personal lives. The stories in particular that physical violence played any role in the car accident were utterly false and malicious. Elin has always done more to support our family and shown more grace than anyone could possibly expect.*

This statement brought the end of the crisis's peak. Tiger Woods started appearing in the news mostly if not exclusively to talk about his professional career as a golfer.

In March he appeared in the press telling everyone he has been in therapy and he is soon returning to golf.

#### 4. LESSONS LEARNED

Whether you are a celebrity or simply a normal person trying to maintain a positive and healthy image online, there are several lessons that all of us could take from the Tiger Woods's case.

✓ **Be honest**

Hiding the truth and letting a time gap of silence to fill the space, where you could have given the only true information about the situation, almost completely destroyed Tiger Woods' reputation.

✓ **React quickly**

Leaving some questions without answers won't help you resolve a similar crisis situation. Don't let somebody else answer people's questions instead of you, as you might not be happy with the answers they give.

✓ **Take full responsibility**

Taking full responsibility for the situation was part of the crisis management strategy of Tiger Woods' PR team that helped him save his reputation.

Let BEYOO ONLINE help you in preparing for and reacting to a crisis. We can:

- create, develop and maintain a suitable online crisis management strategy;
- write and submit press releases, as well as articles;
- social media crisis planning and prevention;
- implement SEO techniques to push back information regarding the scandal on search engines

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