

Cheryl Broom [00:00:08]:

Hi, I'm Cheryl Broom, CEO of GradComm and host of Higher Ed Conversations. This month, I had the pleasure to speak with Stephanie Craig, who is president of KIF, which is a crisis communications firm. Stephanie has built her reputation as a crisis expert by guiding some of the world's most prominent people and organizations through their most trying moments. Stephanie talks all things crisis to me, and we had such a fun conversation, which is funny because it's not really fun to talk about crisis, but it was a great conversation. And I left really inspired, actually, to take some of the things that I learned and apply them to Gradcom so that we, too, can be prepared for anything that comes our way, from risk analyses or gap analyses to oh, crap talks, which I wonderful things for you to bring to Cabinet every month. To the essential role that a professional communicator plays on a college's leadership team. Stephanie gives tips and tricks and insights that are going to help you not only prepare your college for crises, but also position yourself as a leader on campus. This was a fantastic discussion, and I know that you're going to take away from it and be inspired, just like I was.

Cheryl Broom [00:01:26]:

Well, Stephanie, I'm so happy to have you here on the podcast today. Thank you so much for joining me, Cheryl.

Stephanie Craig [00:01:32]:

It is my absolute pleasure. I'm really looking forward to our conversation.

Cheryl Broom [00:01:36]:

Well, I want to go back in time a little bit because you have such an interesting origin story of how you started the company and your passion for communications and, in particular, crisis communications. So when we had first talked, you told me a story about being at the center of a crisis firsthand as a college student. So tell us a little bit about that and how it's shaped your business.

Stephanie Craig [00:02:01]:

Well, it's really interesting because way back, my mom used to say that I was. I'd been part of every natural disaster but a tsunami. And I really don't want to nix that one off the list. But I graduated from college with one of my sorority sisters shaking my foot, saying, hey, staff, wake up. Grand Forks is flooded, university is canceled, and congratulations, you just graduated. This was about six weeks before we were supposed to actually graduate. And it was actually prior to Hurricane Katrina. The 1997 flood in Grand Forks, North Dakota, was the largest evacuation since the Civil War.

Cheryl Broom [00:02:44]:

Wow.

Stephanie Craig [00:02:45]:

And so it is really. It is a really interesting kind of approach to all of this that you find yourself in these moments where you either rise and you know this is your place, or it's something that just

you don't feel comfortable in. And I think that's something that, over the years, I have really refined. It's an odd feeling when you're 20, 21 years old and you've just been shaken up and said, you know, okay, this is where we're going from here. And it's a flood. And it's a flood that literally followed me north. I. As I mentioned to you when we talked last time, I grew up in Canada.

Stephanie Craig [00:03:28]:

And when I was in college, my parents lit. My parents lived about two and a half hours north of Grand Forks, North Dakota. And so the river that was flooding North Dakota had destroyed Grand Forks was actually flowing north towards where my parents lived in Canada. And so it was like the flood was following me. And it was actually how I ended up going into a career of politics, because my mom had about enough of me after, I'd say, three days, and she's like, there's a federal election going on. Figure out which party you belong to and go do something. And so get out of the house. Yeah, just get out of my hair, whatever you do, and just get out of here.

Stephanie Craig [00:04:13]:

And so that's Mom. Exactly. And so it just was. It really became this interesting series of events that led me to. From knocking doors, like what is what you normally do at the lowest totem pole of a campaign, to being able to really move forward and see that this was something that I really loved. And as my career built, you become known to being able to handle crisis and how you. You rise to the occasion and what you need to do and how you help other people maintain their calm in the middle of crisis. But the thing that I've always found incredibly interesting is where you can mitigate the crisis, the steps you can take before you end up in a crisis.

Cheryl Broom [00:04:59]:

Right.

Stephanie Craig [00:05:00]:

And so as I've moved along in my career, I've really been thinking of a lot more things like that, so. But I can really pinpoint to one moment in my college career when the whole town was flooded and actually the downtown had caught on fire, in addition to being flooded, where I made a decision to go to do A as opposed to B. And it set my. My life on a totally different course.

Cheryl Broom [00:05:27]:

Isn't that interesting? Those little moments that change us. And it was funny you brought up 1997, because we here in California had floods in 1997. And I was at college, but our college closed down as well. But I lived in a surf town, so people took their, like, huge. Their huge vans and their big trucks, and they were towing surfers and boogie boarders down the street and we all sat out drinking coffee in the morning, like, watching people like, like surf and boogie, board behind trucks down the street. So not as serious as a crisis.

Stephanie Craig [00:06:03]:

I was gonna say. That sounds like a lot more fun than what we ended up doing.

Cheryl Broom [00:06:06]:

It was a lot of fun message board on Facebook with people who went to college during that time. And everybody has the same memories, which is fun to look back.

Stephanie Craig [00:06:15]:

That's amazing.

Cheryl Broom [00:06:16]:

Never know where it's gonna lead you.

Stephanie Craig [00:06:18]:

Absolutely not.

Cheryl Broom [00:06:20]:

So you, you talk a little. You've talked about mitigating crises. And something I found really interesting when you and I were talking earlier was this difference between managing a crisis, like crisis management and crisis communication. And I'm wondering if you can explain your philosophy behind the difference between those two.

Stephanie Craig [00:06:42]:

Well, don't get me wrong, crisis communication is incredibly important, and it's important on very many levels. But the, the idea of saying crisis communication seems to mean the responsibility lies with just one part of an organization or one part of a university or college in this case. And that's not the case. There are so many contributing factors to managing a crisis that don't just lie. With communicators, it's important to have an entire leadership team be invested, engaged, awareness of what the plans are, the preparation for it, the response to it, which will really elevate an organization's crisis response. If it's not just the responsibility of crisis communicators to manage a crisis.

Cheryl Broom [00:07:39]:

Right. Talk about mitigating, too. I mean, anything that you manage, it's. You have to have done the work in order to manage it. Like, you can't just think, you know, you can't not prepare. If you want to be able to successfully manage something, it takes a lot of preparation to get there. And I think that's the true, that's true in crises more than anything. Right.

Cheryl Broom [00:08:00]:

It's not just like sitting around waiting for something bad to happen. You need to be prepared for it.

Stephanie Craig [00:08:06]:

Absolutely. And this is a change of thinking for a lot of organizations that you can prepare for it and you can mitigate it and you can actually spot a car crisis before it really gets bad. If aliens

are landing in the middle of your university, that's going to be pretty hard to prepare for, but almost, you know, your organization, you know, your key stakeholders, and I use that term intentionally. I don't say students, I don't say faculty, because most education institutions have varying degrees and varying widespread idea of who their stakeholders are. So once you understand who you are, who your stakeholders are, you can start spotting a Crisis, you can say, okay, oh, look, that's happening. And because you've done the mitigation work that you know you were mentioning, you can head it off and make it less impactful. Instead of having a really bad, no good day, you can have a not so bad day because you've taken the time to work out your chain of command. Who is responsible for approving communication expenditures in a crisis? Who is the person that has to get the message out to students, faculty? Those types of questions are important to understand a chain of command.

Stephanie Craig [00:09:30]:

So you're not asking in the middle of a crisis, okay, who's sending the email to students? Those questions can be answered. What are our core values? Because core values, as you know, as an expert communicator, core values drive so much of what you do. It drives your brand, it drives your message, it drives how you hire, how you recruit. It drives so many things that you better understand what it is before you get there. Before you're in the middle of a crisis and you're having to decide if your response matches your values, you have to understand that there's so many contributing factors to preparing. We've narrowed it down to about 15 that we deem are really important, and they fall under three main categories. Ask any crisis expert, communicator manager, crisis expert. The differentiator in responding to crisis is speed.

Stephanie Craig [00:10:33]:

You gotta be. You gotta be speedy. Except, as we say, you can't be speedy for speed's sake. You have to be strategically fast. And where we've broken it down is that there is clarity plus trust equals speed. Clarity of who you are, what you stand for, who matters to you, the stakeholders again. And then plus trust plus you trust the people, the processes, and the procedures that you have in place because you've tested them, you've put them through their paces. In simulations, in tabletops, you know that when the time comes and something is wrong, the person that you need to call will answer the phone.

Stephanie Craig [00:11:23]:

Because you've tested it, you've put everything through its paces. So clarity on who you stand for, who matters to you, trust in the people, procedures, and policies that are going to get you through equals strategic speed.

Cheryl Broom [00:11:38]:

I love that. I think that speed is such. So critical. And I remember the first time at the college I dealt with a crisis. It was. I think it was a flood. Talking about flooding. We had a flood.

Stephanie Craig [00:11:51]:

We're flood people.

Cheryl Broom [00:11:53]:

Yes, we flood. And we had to. We had a flood and a power outage. And this is so long ago. I'm trying to remember what exactly happened. And so we had done all these, we had done like some testing. And we knew like, Cheryl's going to send the message out. We all have to go down to the police station.

Cheryl Broom [00:12:09]:

So we like, I get my little binder and I'm like running to the police station. And I was responsible for sending the message out over the loudspeakers. What happened was so many people wanted to write my message. I had like five people behind me writing my message as I'm trying to type it. It took like 15 minutes. And in the meantime, all of our classrooms were dark and nobody knew what was happening. And the police station was getting inundated with calls from faculty being like, our lights don't work, our lights don't work right. And I finally was like, you guys have to stop.

Cheryl Broom [00:12:40]:

Like, I need to get this message out. Like, you cannot wordsmith this message. Like people are sitting in the dark. So even like 15 minutes doesn't sound long, but that's a long time to sit in the dark when you've got like pipes bursting and no power. And we hadn't practiced, you know, we had been like, Cheryl does this and this person does this and this. And so it was a really eye opening moment that we needed to like actually see how long things take and give people trust, going back to trust to do their job so well.

Stephanie Craig [00:13:13]:

And it's, you know, you know this. As an expert communicator, you can get a message 85% of the way there before it happened, before anything happens. And so when you have people leaning over your shoulder trying to wordsmith you. And the funny thing is, Cheryl, I just had a conversation with a client of ours that she had the exact same thing happen to her. And this was like two months ago. So it's not that technology has changed the situation at all. Like she had literally people standing behind, but also people staring at her on zoom while she wrote this message. And so it's not something that has really gone away.

Stephanie Craig [00:13:53]:

But if people, you say, okay, hey guys, here's an 85% big statement. We're going to insert crisis here, insert responsibility here. Everybody make your edits today. Clear sky, sunny. Everyone's happy. We're going to approve this today. So that 15 minutes when people are sitting in the dark, when people are panicking, it's not 15 minutes, it's 15 seconds exactly.

Cheryl Broom [00:14:20]:

Yeah, and I loved, we had talked about what you call your oh crap discussions. We had done like some, after this happened, we did some tabletops and then that was it. I mean still, like, our little crisis communications plan was in the binder in everybody's office. And once a year we got together and we had our little vests. And that's funny, I'm wearing a vest today. We had our little

vest and we did a tabletop and then that was it. And we didn't do anything else. Yeah, I love this idea of this oh, crap.

Cheryl Broom [00:14:51]:

Like, tell us what that was and how it helps.

Stephanie Craig [00:14:54]:

Well, it's funny, my mom would be really angry at me right now for saying oh crap on a recorded podcast.

Cheryl Broom [00:14:59]:

But you could say, since you're Canadian, you could say, oh, sorry.

Stephanie Craig [00:15:03]:

Oh, darn. But it's so funny because one of the things that we preach is that it can be ongoing. We really do believe in doing. And this is what we work a lot with clients with like full scale simulations and tabletops. But that's once or twice a year you have a semi monthly, a monthly staff meeting, weekly staff meeting. Hold up the Chronicle of Higher Education and say, what would we do if this happened to us? That's what we mean by an oh crap moment. It doesn't have to be a grand scale of simulation preparation, practicing again. We absolutely think you should do that.

Stephanie Craig [00:15:47]:

But there are opportunities just to see if people can come up with some answers. You don't have to run them through. They don't need a vest. They don't need a vest at their staff meeting. Just a really simple way to keep being crisis prepared at the forefront of your mind. And one of the things I think you and I talked about as well was that the way university administration and college administration promotes is a lot of folks come out of the academic side, out of the deep expertise in subjects, subject matter expertise. And so some of that, that management skills need to be refined, need to be elevated. And this is a really easy way for leadership teams to help those folks that are coming, not out of a management side, not at a business side, just understand a little bit more about the threats and the responses you can have.

Stephanie Craig [00:16:43]:

And to ease that along, this is where the oh crap comes from. We've actually developed a little free substack that we send out every month. And all it is is a really simple scenario and four questions. What would you, you know, what would you do Kind of more in depth for one particular subject versus another and helps people guide the discussions. We link to a few things if people are interested in going a little bit further, but it just arrives without thinking about it first thing of the month. And then people use it at their staff meetings. And we have communicators on our list, we have CEOs on our list, we have other consultants on our list. It's just a free little service we like to do for people because we at the end of the day are evangelists about crisis preparation.

Stephanie Craig [00:17:35]:

So if folks it's that they want to email me, it's scragif co. We can get you signed up for Crisis of the Month, which incidentally, I was on a podcast for public information officers, for police departments, a few, and I called it oh crap in the middle of the podcast. And I think that's what drew a whole bunch of the PIOs to come and subscribe. And so like I said, it's free. It's just a little public service we like to do for people that are interested.

Cheryl Broom [00:18:06]:

I think that's absolutely brilliant. And I hope some of the. Because there's PIOs at colleges all over, you know, all over the U.S. i think this is a, a great opportunity to have discussions monthly at Cabinet that are meaningful, especially when you're working in higher education. A lot of the administrators have been faculty, and so faculty's role is to question and to think and to think and to discuss and to question. And that can't happen when you're in the middle of a crisis.

Stephanie Craig [00:18:33]:

Right.

Cheryl Broom [00:18:34]:

So it's what a great opportunity to use maybe 15 minutes once a month in Cabinet to come up with a scenario and to get everybody on the same page. How would we answer this? And I guarantee everybody that comes with the scenario is going to leave with like 4,000 questions they have to answer. But get them out.

Stephanie Craig [00:18:52]:

Yeah, get them out. As you just said, get them out now. Let's have that discussion now. And one of the other things that we, that we counsel our higher education clients around, and this is really important for higher education because of that, that nature of Cabinet of the question and the, you know, the very nature of what a lot of folks do. You have to figure out who your core crisis team is and you have. And the way we really talk about this is that you have to have members of this core crisis team that have decision making authority or subject matter matter expertise. Best case scenario is they have both. I have never seen one of these core crisis teams that didn't have legal and communications on it.

Stephanie Craig [00:19:41]:

And this is going to be something that's a little different for a lot of people to think about. You have to have a discussion with your president or your chancellor about if they need to be in the room, because there are some folks that are so Outsized in their influence that there will not be a robust frank discussion in front of them. And so some places, what they do is they say, okay, as a group, they come up with option B and option C because option A was awful. So if it's B or C, choose between B or C. There's some folks that are the leaders that want to be sitting in those meetings and have that discussion. That's something you have to deal with within your own culture.

Cheryl Broom [00:20:28]:

Yes, yeah.

Stephanie Craig [00:20:30]:

But we actually really recommend that if you can make sure they're not there, it's not a bad thing.

Cheryl Broom [00:20:36]:

So this is such a great thing coming from a communicator like you, because I love that word outsized. Oh, well, we had a very difficult, not a crisis project, but another project with a very outsized chancellor who always spoke first. And because this individual spoke first, the rest of the leadership team did not speak. And so we saw that firsthand. And making recommendations and trying to have a dialogue was when the chancellor was there, there was no conversation. Right.

Stephanie Craig [00:21:12]:

And if the conversation happened, it sounded. Remark. Every comment sounded remarkably like what the chancellor said.

Cheryl Broom [00:21:18]:

Exactly. Yeah. It actually put me in a weird spot because I had to disagree with the Chancellor.

Stephanie Craig [00:21:23]:

Right, right.

Cheryl Broom [00:21:24]:

No one else is going to disagree. You're paying me to disagree. I'll disagree with you.

Stephanie Craig [00:21:28]:

Absolutely. I think that's something that people don't about communicators and crisis people. We're paid to point out problems. So we're not a lot of fun. We stand in the corner at parties together and be like, oh, gosh, look at that. Yeah, that could be a problem. Like, we're not, you know, we're the ones that are like, in charge of making sure that we can protect ourselves. Because if you think about it, there are very few other people in, whether it be higher education, whether it be corporate America, whether it be some other type of organizations that have the responsibility of protecting the reputation.

Stephanie Craig [00:22:06]:

That is communicators sole job is to protect the reputation. And I am a big proponent of having a communicator sitting at your leadership table. I think that's critically important because they're the keeper of the brand. If you have a marketing department, they're the keeper of the marketing. Right. They have a goal. If you have hr, they have a goal. But the brand, the reputation for a better word, marketing's brand, comms reputation, the reputation has to permeate everything.

Stephanie Craig [00:22:46]:

How you hire, how you word your hiring. In hr, the policies that are reflected, are they matching your values? That's where communications comes in to look at the whole landscape and say, this isn't matching with our reputation and our values. We may want to rethink that.

Cheryl Broom [00:23:07]:

I agree 100%, and I can't tell you how shocked I am when I still find with some of the colleges we work with where their communications director is not at the leadership table, and then they don't have that view. They don't have the experience, external viewpoint that they need to have on every issue.

Stephanie Craig [00:23:25]:

Absolutely.

Cheryl Broom [00:23:26]:

They're so insular. They're focused on themselves. And I think that's where communicators bring so much value.

Stephanie Craig [00:23:33]:

Absolutely.

Cheryl Broom [00:23:34]:

I also want to talk to you about why crisis communication plans are not enough to prepare for a crisis. But first, let's hear a little bit from our sponsor.

Cheryl Broom [00:23:45]:

How do higher education decision makers find the right solution when technology evolves at light? Well, we usually start with our network. EdTechConnect is the network that's democratizing the higher ed technology conversation. EdTechConnect is free, so anyone with a edu email address can sign up and list the software and services they use in their role at their school.

Cheryl Broom [00:24:11]:

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Cheryl Broom [00:24:12]:

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Cheryl Broom [00:24:28]:

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Cheryl Broom [00:24:31]:

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Cheryl Broom [00:24:38]:

All right, we're back. So before the break, Stephanie was preaching to the choir about how communication professionals need to be at the leadership table. And what I want to talk about now is crisis communications plan. In fact, I had a podcast maybe two years ago where we just talked about plans, communication plans. And when you and I were talking about that, you had said, well, plan is not enough. That's not enough. And so I want to hear more about why that is and what is enough or is there ever enough? Maybe there never is enough when it comes to preparation.

Stephanie Craig [00:25:12]:

You said something when you were talking about your story, where they were. You had everybody involved in writing your statement.

Cheryl Broom [00:25:19]:

Right.

Stephanie Craig [00:25:20]:

You grabbed your binder.

Cheryl Broom [00:25:23]:

Yeah.

Stephanie Craig [00:25:24]:

That's the first time I have ever heard a communicator tell me they grabbed.

Cheryl Broom [00:25:29]:

The binder because I wrote the binder. That's why I'm like, everything's in my binder.

Stephanie Craig [00:25:35]:

But even the people that write the binder don't know to grab the binder most of the time. And that's the reason why a plan is not enough. Because you write the plan, you put it on a shelf, it gathers dust. Maybe one or two people remember it's there in a crisis, maybe they remember to grab it. But if you have the plan and then you exercise the plan and then you have little drills here and there to make sure that this person knows what they do and this person knows what they do, and then you do things that are very preventative. As I just mentioned, HR having policies that reflect the brand that you were trying to put forward, that is not something that's going to come up in a crisis plan, but it is something that can contribute to a crisis. If you are saying that you stand for X, I don't want to get into a political discussion with anyone, so I'm not going to pick one. But if you say you stand for X and then you look at your trustees and your trustees and what you stand for don't match, that's a problem.

Stephanie Craig [00:26:48]:

If you say you stand for this and one of your suppliers is counter to that, that's a problem. And that is a crisis that can be fixed. Like I said, aliens landing in the middle of your campus pretty hard to prevent. Having a supplier that doesn't stand with your values, that is completely preventable. And a crisis, if someone gets involved with it. And I think one thing, one that still sticks with me, that and I call it the Hummus crisis. Do you remember this? Probably about like six or seven years ago, students at the University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, decided that they were upset that the campus was selling or they were providing, I guess, sabra hummus, because Sabra had taken a side in the Middle east. And not really.

Stephanie Craig [00:27:41]:

They just sold to one particular entity. And so all of a sudden there was a crisis because the university was serving Sabrahamas. And who would have thought that something you get in the grocery store would have created this international. And quite frankly, I didn't hear about it because I'm Canadian. I heard about it because I'm a crisis person. And so those are the types of things that you need to go into to prevent the crisis. There are other preparations that you need to take to make sure the plan is known by everybody. And you need to keep reinforcing that.

Stephanie Craig [00:28:21]:

So everybody's skills are sharp. Somebody new comes on. Why not brush up everybody's skills? Like, let's make sure everybody can fit in. And it's interesting. Not a higher Education vignette. But a friend of mine is the head of risk management for a global gaming company. Gambling company. So all of their crisis management, all their risk management, which, as you can imagine, with the global gambling company are quite extensive.

Stephanie Craig [00:28:49]:

They all beat up to the chief legal counsel Council, and the chief legal counsel gathers all of them from around the world. I think it's three times a year for a barbecue. Nothing else you can do. Whatever other business you need. Come for a barbecue. Because he wants each and every one of the members of his crisis team to be able to pick up the phone in the middle of the night and call the other person they need. And if you can't do that, if you are going to hesitate when you are in Las Vegas and something's going wrong in Macau, that's a problem that slows you down. That is a roadblock.

Stephanie Craig [00:29:31]:

So all of these preparation activities that you take in, all of these mitigation efforts you make contribute to that strategic speed. So, yeah, put together a plan. Don't just leave it on the shelf. Because I doubt everyone's like you, Cheryl, and going to grab it down. Actually, I shouldn't say I doubt it. I know they're not like you and they're not going to grab the plan. So make sure you practice it. Because plans are good.

Stephanie Craig [00:29:59]:

You have to write plans down. They're no good if nobody knows they're there.

Cheryl Broom [00:30:04]:

Yeah. And especially a lot of colleges that I know have hired people to help with plans because they're a huge undertaking.

Stephanie Craig [00:30:11]:

Absolutely.

Cheryl Broom [00:30:12]:

Because they've hired it and maybe not been involved in writing it like I was assigned to write it. That's why I grabbed the binary. I spent like six months on this thing, take it with me. But when you're not involved in it, and maybe you're even on the crisis team, but you haven't helped write the plan. You don't even think about it. You don't even know what's in there. I guarantee nobody else at my college knew it was in that plan. They're just like, good job, Cheryl.

Cheryl Broom [00:30:37]:

Yeah, you made a plan. We'll find herself.

Stephanie Craig [00:30:41]:

Well, and that's one of the other things, and I hope, if you don't mind and if I talk about this, is that we've developed some, like, a tool specifically for higher education because we know people's budgets are really under fire and everything's really tough. So we've created a platform, a technology platform where we run entire leadership teams through it, and then you get us on the other side because that really reinforces. You mentioned earlier, we do a lot of GAP reports for people. And the good thing we do about GAPS is we also provide you the roadmap on the way out. Some of the unspoken benefits, though, it really creates that understanding beyond the communicator. I haven't met a higher education communicator that doesn't know they need crisis help, they need crisis planning. There's not anybody, not a single one I've talked to said, yeah, no, we're good. We're totally good.

Stephanie Craig [00:31:40]:

It's convincing the rest of the folks. And so that's part of one of the intangible things that we're doing, which is trying to spread the message that this isn't just a communicator's responsibility. It starts at the president, chancellor level, runs through the cabinet, into the various departments. And the faster people realize this, the faster they'll invest in it. And it is an investment. It's a type of insurance for your reputation for higher education. Reputation, as you know, is just so key. Everything from recruitment to fundraising to academic journals.

Stephanie Craig [00:32:20]:

Like reputation matters.

Cheryl Broom [00:32:24]:

Yeah, for sure. And I'll tell you what, 50% of the time a crisis is going to happen when your PIO or your director is not there.

Stephanie Craig [00:32:35]:
It is Murphy's Law.

Cheryl Broom [00:32:37]:
It is Murphy's Law. I was on a cruise ship once, a cruise ship, and a huge crisis happened and I was like, I can't help you even if I wanted to. There's not any WI fi. We are out at sea. Like, I love this idea of a gap report and a recommendation. Can you give us some examples of what a gap report would find? What are you looking for when you do this exercise?

Stephanie Craig [00:33:03]:
The technology is underpinned by the 15 points I talked to you about. So leadership, adaptability, chain of command, all of those types of things. And what they really look for is places where you're doing well.

Cheryl Broom [00:33:16]:
Okay?

Stephanie Craig [00:33:17]:
And you need to keep it going. So here are some exercises and ways you can keep up the good work on that. Here are the places that you really need work. And so out of this, we take a good look at the results of a. It's a. It's a little daunting, but it's academia, so they're really good at this. It's like a 75 question questionnaire. We're not doing this on a, you know, hey, tell us five things about you and we'll tell you what's, you know, what color you should be wearing.

Stephanie Craig [00:33:45]:
This is an in depth quiz, for lack of a better word. And a diagnostic that gets to the heart of operations, gets to the heart of the way your departments work together, the priorities you put on different key functions, the awareness within the organization. And we take. With an organization, we take about 10 people. So it's not just comp. Could be CFO, could be head of legal, could be the chancellor, could be whomever. Take 10 executives, 10 key executives. We run them through this, we evaluate it, and then we'll do a debrief with folks which say, here are your strengths, here are your weaknesses.

Stephanie Craig [00:34:33]:
But that's not just it. Here's the roadmap to make get yourself better.

Cheryl Broom [00:34:37]:
Right.

Stephanie Craig [00:34:38]:
And that's something that. And we specifically designed this for higher education because there's a little bit of us that are, you know, pretty altruistic, which is we know that a lot of organizations in higher ed can't afford the massive simulations. So this is a really reasonably priced option that can get people in the mindset. And I think that that's really important. It's that

internal convincing that this needs to be done and it needs to be a priority because everyone's got priorities. Getting, getting students in class, making sure faculties are publishing, faculty is publishing, making sure the lawn is green. And nowhere does this become a priority. It's a priority for us every day.

Stephanie Craig [00:35:24]:
And we'll tell you how to make it one.

Cheryl Broom [00:35:26]:
Well, I love this idea of gap analysis because I even think of the college that I worked at and I haven't been there for eight or nine years. I don't even know how long, just how old is my son. It's been about nine years. And I know that my little binder crisis plan has not been updated. So you might invest at some point in having this fantastic plan. You might have a yearly simulation, but there are going to be massive gaps if you haven't actually done some work looking into how things have changed. People change, topics change, situations change, campuses change.

Stephanie Craig [00:36:02]:
Absolutely.

Cheryl Broom [00:36:03]:
So great opportunity to dive into where you might need to strengthen your processes and your team. Sounds like a really good investment.

Stephanie Craig [00:36:13]:
Well, absolutely. And if folks do nothing else, just email me and I'll put you on the old craft list.

Cheryl Broom [00:36:19]:
Yes, I know.

Stephanie Craig [00:36:22]:
Quite honestly, we have a lot of fun doing it because we get to pull out. I don't know if you remember this one last month, surrounded Chi Chi's restaurant. We don't just take the topic of the day. We try to really figure out, you know, what people are going to experience. And it's free. It will always be free.

Cheryl Broom [00:36:40]:
You know what else I like about these oh crap things. One thing that I remember in the crises that we worked on is how like into it people get like they just like they bring their full self. And so when you're done handling a crisis or even a tabletop, like you are really close with those people and I think these like, oh crap discussion points can really build trust because you get to hear, you get to problem solve together and you don't always get that, you know, like cross departmental work, you know, everything's so siloed. This problem brings forces people together to really strategically think about things. I think it's a really great team building exercise as well.

Stephanie Craig [00:37:27]:

Absolutely. Well, and it's. I am probably the least favorite facilitator of a lot of organizations because my favorite thing to do is bust up groups, take them, toss them together and then just pull out different people that will literally have maybe never even met their counterpart that is sitting with them. Because that, that breaking down of the silos, as you just said, so important.

Cheryl Broom [00:37:51]:

So important. Well, I have loved talking to you and as we've been talking, I'm like, I'm going to do an oh crap for my team because they're even in a agency. We've had some moments where we've all like, our hearts have stopped. Like we're not prepared for this. Yeah. You know, it might not be a natural disaster, but it's definitely something that can cost us money and reputation. So I, I think this is important no matter what industry you're in.

Stephanie Craig [00:38:17]:

Absolutely. And it was my pleasure to come on and chat with you. I'm sure we could have chatted for another hour, but I don't know if anyone would want to listen to us.

Cheryl Broom [00:38:25]:

Well, hopefully people are inspired now.

Stephanie Craig [00:38:27]:

They're like, absolutely.

Cheryl Broom [00:38:29]:

So how can they find you? How can they find kith? What's the best way for people to get a hold of you?

Stephanie Craig [00:38:35]:

Absolutely. So my email is essenceteponycraigith. There's no M and kith is in kith and kin. I'm also on LinkedIn. I'm a big poster on LinkedIn so people can find me. My. I'm the one that looks like. As I told the photographer, I want to look like an approachable ninja.

Cheryl Broom [00:38:54]:

So I love that.

Stephanie Craig [00:38:56]:

That is my picture on LinkedIn. Approachable ninja.

Cheryl Broom [00:38:59]:

That should be your Halloween costume. This year.

Stephanie Craig [00:39:04]:

I'm looking for interpretations of what an approachable ninja would look like.

Cheryl Broom [00:39:09]:

Well, Stephanie, it's been such a pleasure talking to you and I've learned so much and I really appreciate your time.

Stephanie Craig [00:39:15]:

Well, thanks for having me, Cheryl. This was a lot of fun.

Cheryl Broom [00:39:19]:

And that wraps up this episode of the Higher Education Conversations podcast. I'm host and Grandom CEO Cheryl Broom. A big thank you to our sponsor, EdTech Connect. EdTech Connect is free, so anyone with a EDU email address can sign up and list the software and services they use in their role at their school. So visit edtechconnect.com and set up your free profile to get a pulse for what's happening with higher ed technology today. And while you're online, take a few minutes to leave our podcast a five star review. It will help other colleges and universities find us and learn from the great experts we have on the show. That's it for now.

Cheryl Broom [00:39:59]:

Until next time.