

All Hands on Deck at Rutgers: Skilled Team Needed to Manage PR and Legal Fallout

[By Donald Scarinci](#)

Rutgers has hired a crisis management group to handle their public relations, but this is just the beginning. They will also need a law firm with a crisis management group to represent them and manage the legal fallout of their hiring decisions.

While Rutgers has already cleaned house by firing men's basketball coach Mike Rice and athletic director Tim Perneti, it still has a lot of work to do to rebuild its tarnished image. It also has a lot of questions to answer, most importantly: Why wasn't Mike Rice immediately fired after footage surfaced of him berating and physically assaulting his players? And are they going down the same road with new AD Julie Hermann, who faces her own allegations of player abuse?

In tackling these issues, lawyers can bring a lot to the table. [Crisis management groups in law firms](#) are equipped to handle all aspects of a problem, including both the court of law and the court of public opinion. Even when an outside PR firm is retained to assist, the crisis management practice of a law firm coordinates with the communications team to ensure a coordinated and cohesive response.

Unlike traditional public relations professionals, [experienced lawyers](#) can also perform liability assessment, evidence preservation, litigation, and government investigations. Communications are also largely protected by attorney-client privilege.

As the Rutgers' crisis has made clear, the initial decisions in a crisis can haunt an organization for years to come. Crisis management practices in law firms also make sure organizations are prepared to respond to a crisis or emergency by assessing potential threats and making recommendations for the best ways to avoid them. Following the old Boy Scout motto of "Be Prepared" can prevent many potential problems from escalating into a full-blown legal and public relations crisis.

Donald Scarinci is a managing partner at Lyndhurst, N.J. based law firm [Scarinci Hollenbeck](#). He is also the editor of the [Constitutional Law Reporter](#) and [Government and Law](#) blogs.

Read more at <http://www.politickernj.com/dscarinci/66371/all-hands-deck-rutgers-skilled-team-needed-manage-pr-and-legal-fallout#ixzz2W6fQvtMi>
or sign up for a free trial of State Street Wire at <http://www.politickernj.com/freetrial>