A Strategic Communications Plan for Apple’s August 2014 iCloud Hack
Hundreds of alleged celebrity nudes leak on the seediest corners of the Web

It’s been called “Celebgate.” It involves 4chan and a huge library of never-before-seen nude photos of Jennifer Lawrence, McKayla Maroney, and Krysten Ritter.

Sometime over the past 72 hours, a user of 4chan’s /b/ imageboard—where pornography, pranks, and vigilante justice rule supreme—offered up nudes of the world’s most recognizable celebrities in exchange for bitcoins.
A CRISIS EMERGES: THE SITUATION AT HAND

The Fappening
Celebgate

Situation: Crisis Management

+ A need to overcome security gap breach in Apple’s iCloud

+ iPhone 6 just about to be launched
MOVING FORWARD: COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

1. **Informational:** Reaffirm Apple’s value of privacy and security to publics and emphasize external controls, apart from Apple security, as cause of iCloud breaching.

2. **Motivational:** Ignite a call-to-action for publics to enhance security of their Apple products through password strengthening and a two-step verification process.

3. **Informational:** Intentionally communicate enhanced security changes to iOS 8 available for new iPhone 6 and future Apple products.

To deliver a key message → iCloud hack does not have anything to do with Apple’s internal security.
AUDIENCES AND PUBLICS

Internal Audiences
- Stakeholders
- Board Members
- Employees

Existing and Potential Customers
- The Victims
- Individual Buyers
- Businesses
- iCloud Users

Media
- National
- Local
- Industry
- Online
Reaffirm Apple’s value of privacy and security to publics and emphasize external controls, apart from Apple security, as cause of iCloud breaching.

**Strategy 1: Respond to crisis with an excuse**

**Tactics:**
1. **Denial (shifting the blame)** - Deny that the leak is due to a breach in any of Apple’s systems by sending out a press release and letting CEO Tim Cook speak to the media.
2. **Evade Responsibility (defeasibility)** - Apple were unable to avoid its actions

**Strategy 2: Reduce Offensiveness (Minimize negative feelings/loss of trust towards Apple’s brand)**

**Tactics:**
1. **Bolstering** - Refer to Apple’s clean record and good reputation, and how much Apple value privacy and security
2. **Collaboration** - Build relationship with the community and show goodwill by collaborating with law enforcement

**Strategy 3: Drive external awareness of hackers as threats to personal security**

**Tactics:**
1. **Emphasize The Threat Of Phishing** - Offer information on phishing and how to avoid being targeted
2. **Emphasize The Hackers As The Problem** - Apple were unable to avoid its actions
Ignite a call-to-action for publics to enhance security of their Apple products through password strengthening and two-step verification.

Corrective Action Through Safety Measures

**Strategy 1:** Emphasize a personal role in securing privacy of personal information.
- Tactic(1): How to create a strong password; 8 given password boosters.

**Strategy 2:** Reestablish and rebuild relationships with current Apple consumers.
- Tactic(2): Additional emails/text/notifications when personal information on My Apple ID has been changed/updated.
- *Statement from CEO Tim Cook:* “Cook told the Wall Street Journal in his first interview since the scandal broke that users will now be notified via email whenever someone tries to restore iCloud data to a new device, in addition to notifications when an account password is changed or an unknown device is used to log into an account”

**Strategy 3:** Recreate the image of Apple as a safe, secure and trustworthy network.
- Tactic(3): Two-Step Verification: an additional security measure that prevents users from accessing your account even if they know your password.
- Two-step verification sets up a verification code that automatically gets sent to your trusted Apple device (ex: cell phone) when logging into iCloud and all other Apple-related apps like iTunes and Passbooks. Essentially you would be putting in two passwords each time you log in.
Intentionally communicate enhanced security changes to iCloud as method of promoting new iPhone 6 release and the iOS 8 security update

Strategy 1: Drive external awareness of changes made with iCloud security

Tactics: Release media statement (Recovery Phase)
Capitalize on media coverage of breach to shift communication focus to iCloud changes

Strategy 2: Drive open communication between Apple and its publics

Tactics: Privacy Statement site launch: Open Communication
Reiterating Apple’s commitment to providing publics with power to secure their info

Strategy 3: Engage community with iPhone 6 release through media buzz on hackers

Tactics: Capitalize on current news to engage publics with thoughts of iPhone release
Emphasize differences found in iOS 8 security (Image Restoration)
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Aug 30**: iCloud hack of personal property was released and went viral.

- **Aug 30**: CEO Tim Cook released an official statement regarding iCloud hack and what Apple’s ongoing investigation.

- **September 2 (40 hours later)**: Apple released an official press release stating the hack had nothing to do with the security of Apple but instead was a personal attack against celebrities.

- **September 9**: A conference regarding new software of Apple pay, IOS 8 and the iPhone 6 launch took place.

- **September 17**: Apple’s new software iOS 8 was released and available to the public.

- **September 19**: Apples latest phones, iPhone 6 and iPhone plus, were released and available to purchase.

- **Ongoing**: New software/ iCloud updates for consumers to download, helping to fix minor issues and increase safety on personal devices.
BUDGET

- The media buzz and attention created from the icloud hack gave more attention to Apple and its products including the new iPhones.

- Therefore their budget in regards to the hack was nothing.

- All statements released were posted through Apple’s own website vs. them being released into an external company.
EVALUATION

- Crisis: There was time pressure, but Apple did a good job handling the crisis
- The recipients of the message seem to understand Apple’s explanation, since the leak did not affected sales of the new iPhones (but instead broke sales records - first week of sales top 10 millions)
- Apple’s stock **103.30** on Sep 2, down to **98.12** on Sep 4  
  Up to **101.00** on Sep 10, now fully recovered → As of today up to **118.63**
- 40 hours to come out with a statement (next time this should be done quicker)
- All of the desired organizational objectives were achieved
- In order to improve the success of image restoration, a constant emphasis on safety and better security should be included
- Emotional connection with publics
- None of the celebrities blamed Apple