

# Problem Brands

*Brands in crisis may get a second chance, if they are proactive and accountable.*

— A conversation with **Dipayan Biswas**, Assistant Professor of Marketing, Bentley University



We have seen some of the world's most respected names become the subject of recalls and ridicule in just a few short months. Whether it is cars, financial giants, oil companies or celebrity athletes, one serious misstep can quickly undo a long legacy. Can these brands get a second chance? Marketing expert Dipayan Biswas studies brands in crisis and offers this advice to those seeking to salvage their reputations.

**In your experience, where do brands go wrong when faced with a crisis?** The most common mistake is not being upfront and honest about what's going on. Brands in trouble—including brand-name celebrities—often suffer from their reluctance to own up to a failure.

**Nip it in the bud?** Exactly. Dell did this very well in 2006 when a few of their Sony-supplied laptop batteries began bursting into flames. Instead of waiting to see how widespread the problem was, they issued an immediate recall, replacing millions of batteries. They were proactive and successfully controlled the narrative of the event.

**Can the narrative really be "controlled" in the age of YouTube and 24-hour news?**

Not entirely, but you have to take a leading role in your own story. Social media is used by politicians, celebrities and consumer brands to engage their audiences in a positive way. But it only works if you are relating to consumers on a personal level, about what excites or interests them.

**How do you regain trust?** First acknowledge the problem. Don't confuse people with new explanations month after month. Be consistent, be sincere, and then do something that's powerful enough to change the public's negative associations with your brand.

**Do brands get second chances?** Audi and Tylenol have faced crises and survived. If you have strong brand equity, if you hold yourself accountable, if you quickly refocus attention on what you want to be known for, most consumers around the world are willing to grant you a second chance.

*To learn more about education, research and the development of accountable leadership at Bentley University, please visit our website.*

**MORE** Professor Biswas discusses his work at [Bentley.edu/research](http://Bentley.edu/research)



# Problem Solvers

They have founded nonprofits to benefit children in Africa, Haiti, China, India and Mexico. They are engaged in feeding the hungry, reducing teen suicide and helping the homeless. They work for Mid-East peace... and fight against malaria, AIDS and diabetes. When you learn about the achievements of these high-school juniors, the future looks very bright indeed. Join us in honoring these young leaders, selected through an international competition — the **Bentley Tomorrow25, Class of 2010**.

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