

# **God Save The British Monarchy's Brand**

---

## **MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

---

---

The authors prepared this case solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. Although based on real events and despite occasional references to actual companies, this case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

## Reactions and Decisions

“Discussions with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex are at an early stage. We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through.” Buckingham Palace official statement, **8th of January**

Within hours of the Sussexes' announcement on the 8th of January, Buckingham Palace promptly released the short official statement above. Its brevity served to fuel the media storm, implying that the Royal Family had not expected Harry's and Meghan's announcement. To add another layer of complexity, Kate Middleton celebrated her birthday on **9th of January**, calling into question the timing of the Sussexes' announcement and sparking rumors of the media threatening to leak the decision early and intentional perpetuation of familial strife between the Sussexes and Cambridges. The next day, Meghan departed the United Kingdom for Canada, leaving Harry in England to continue negotiations with the Crown.

On the **11th of January**, unofficial sources reported that The Queen asked royal courtiers “to turn a crisis into an opportunity” and devise an action plan in case future generations of royals decide to step down as senior royals.

On the **12th of January**, amidst continuing rumors that the Sussexes' announcement was fast-tracked due to The Sun's threat to leak the story, The Queen scheduled a summit at Sandringham with Harry, William, Charles, and Meghan (joining via phone from Canada), in order to reach a suitable and amicable resolution as quickly as possible.

The following day, on the **13th of January**, members of the Royal Family released two personal, family-focused statements addressing the crisis. Harry and William released a joint statement via Buckingham Palace, stating, “Despite clear denials, a false story ran in a UK newspaper today speculating about the relationship between The Duke of Sussex and The Duke of Cambridge. For brothers who care so deeply about the issues surrounding mental health, the use of inflammatory language in this way is offensive and potentially harmful.” While not clearly refuting claims of internal familial strife, the statement served to align and unite the brothers in the public eye.

The Queen released her first personal statement **the same day**, recapping the summit at Sandringham by saying, “Today my family had very constructive discussions on the future of my grandson and his family. My family and I are entirely supportive of Harry's and Meghan's desire to create a new life as a young family. Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working members of the Royal Family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family. Harry and Meghan have made clear that they do not want to be reliant on public funds in their new lives. It has

therefore been agreed that there will be a period of transition in which the Sussexes will spend time in Canada and the UK. These are complex matters for my family to resolve, and there is some more work to be done, but I have asked for final decisions to be reached in the coming days." In addition to publicly confirming her individual blessing for Harry's and Meghan's intentions, she clarified some of the Crown's management decisions: that Harry and Meghan would indeed pursue financial independence from the Monarchy, that the couple would split their time between continents, and that the family and Crown would take additional time to finalize the details of the shift in responsibilities.

One day later on **14th of January**, Buckingham Palace addressed reports that Meghan—despite original intentions to be a part of the Sandringham summit via phone—was blocked from participating in the meeting. An official statement confirmed, "It wasn't necessary for Meghan to join the call."

Later that week, on the **18th of January**, The Queen and Buckingham Palace each released final statements addressing Harry's and Meghan's departure, with The Queen assuming a more personal, familial tone and Buckingham Palace utilizing a more formal tone to clearly delineate official decisions related to royal military appointments, public funds, representation, and titles.

"Following many months of conversations and more recent discussions, I am pleased that together we have found a constructive and supportive way forward for my grandson and his family. Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved members of my family. I recognize the challenges they have experienced as a result of intense scrutiny over the last two years and support their wish for a more independent life. I want to thank them for all their dedicated work across this country, the Commonwealth and beyond, and am particularly proud of how Meghan has so quickly become one of the family. It is my whole family's hope that today's agreement allows them to start building a happy and peaceful new life." Queen Elizabeth II official statement, **18th of January**

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are grateful to Her Majesty and the Royal Family for their ongoing support as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. As agreed in this new agreement, they understand that they are required to step back from royal duties, including official military appointments. They will no longer receive public funds for royal duties. With The Queen's blessing, the Sussexes will continue to maintain their private patronages and associations. While they can no longer formally represent The Queen, the Sussexes have made clear that everything they do will continue to uphold the values of Her Majesty. The Sussexes will not use their HRH titles as they are no longer working members of the Royal Family. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have shared their wish to repay Sovereign Grant expenditure for the refurbishment of Frogmore Cottage, which will remain their UK family home. Buckingham Palace does not comment on the details of security

arrangements. There are well established independent processes to determine the need for publicly funded security. This new model will take effect in the Spring of 2020.” Buckingham Palace official statement, **18th of January**

Disappointed by this final decision, Harry responded on the **19th of January**: “Our hope was to continue serving The Queen, the Commonwealth, and my military associations, but without public funding. Unfortunately, that wasn’t possible.”

During the week of the **17th of February**, Harry’s and Meghan’s website, [sussexroyal.com](http://sussexroyal.com), was updated to reflect the newly agreed upon decisions. First, the website confirmed that the couple’s official split from the Royal Family would occur on the 31st of March 2020. The [sussexroyal.com](http://sussexroyal.com) updates also noted that the Monarchy would undertake a year-long review of Harry’s and Meghan’s revised roles, enabling a reevaluation in 2021 and allowing for adjustments to the arrangement if needed. Second, the [sussexroyal.com](http://sussexroyal.com) updates confirmed that, in accordance with Buckingham Palace’s decision, Harry and Meghan would relinquish their use of royal titles and their “Sussex Royal” affiliations at the end of March. To this end, the trademark for the Sussex Royal brand, requested in 2019, was withdrawn and the Institutional Office of the Sussex Royal brand would close. Third, the [sussexroyal.com](http://sussexroyal.com) updates reiterated the couple’s plans to become financially independent and permitted to own their own income and pursue their own charitable interests. Finally, [sussexroyal.com](http://sussexroyal.com) clarified that the order of monarchical precedents would remain unchanged and that, despite losing his HRH title and stepping down as a senior member of the Royal Family, Harry would still be sixth in line to the throne.

While multiple media outlets reported on the update, notably, [royal.uk](http://royal.uk)—the official website of the British Monarchy—has not undertaken noticeable content updates related to the decision.

In aggregating and analyzing these decisions and the social, familial, and media environments in which they occurred, it is clear that the Crown upheld a brand orientation in this crisis, choosing to reinforce its traditional and formal identity. In other words, the Crown was not willing to broadly adapt to unprecedented roles and lifestyles of Royal Family members and behaved in a rigid, precedent-reliant manner intended to distance threats or challenges to the traditional conception of the monarchical brand. In terms of communication style, the Crown—personified as Buckingham Palace in press statements—maintained a formal and consistent approach to tone and content, while Queen Elizabeth allowed a more personal and emotional tone to underscore her individual statements. Even though all parties involved agreed to the final decision, Harry—a key stakeholder—stated that he and Meghan would have preferred a slightly different outcome with regards to royal titles and military associations. As such, a final question to reflect on is: what if the Monarchy had allowed for more flexibility in both their organizational culture and their final decision regarding Harry and Meghan?