

**The Royal Family,  
...and they lived NOT so happily ever after.**

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**MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

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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.

## *“Never Complain, Never Explain” - Queen Elizabeth II*

After the media issued a press release, implying that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle would conduct a tell-all interview with Oprah Winfrey, disclosing the real reason they left the royal family, The firm turned into almost radio silence, only expressing little concern ahead of the couples sit-down with the world's most known talk show host:

*“The Duke and Duchess are no longer working members of the royal family and therefore any decisions they take with regard to media commitments are matters for them [...] As non-working MRF they are under no obligation to inform the Royal Household of such plans.” -  
Buckingham Palace*

During the period leading up to the interview, it could be argued that the royal family utilized the so-called *silence strategy*. Even though The Firm most certainly realized the seriousness of what to come, standing by with a reaction was probably a wise decision due to them not knowing exactly what would be exposed by Prince Harry and Meghan. By choosing to be silent, not speculating, and acting on made-up scenarios, The firm bought themselves time, maybe with hopes to restrict the development of a possible scandal.

On Sunday, the 7th of March 2021, however, Harry and Meghan went out to the world with their story, and according to the biography *Battle of Brothers*, serialized in the U.K. newspaper *The Times*, Buckingham Palace went into a crisis mode. The following day, the three royal households representing Queen Elisabeth - Prince Charles and Prince William are said to have been locked in for discussions, lasting from dawn to dark. By the end of Monday, on the 8th of March, the united efforts of the royal households had hashed out a statement, and the media was gasping by the gates, waiting for the The firm's response, all to be able to broadcast it on the evening news.

However, Queen Elisabeth II wanted to wait before sharing their announcement as she would like to "sleep on it," thereby leaving the eager journalists by her doorstep. So, the silent strategy continued, and it wasn't until two days after the interview that Buckingham Palace posted a public response to the allegations made by Prince Harry and Meghan. Listed below is that specific response:



ROYAL COMMUNICATIONS

Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

**THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IS ISSUED BY BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
ON BEHALF OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN**

The whole family is saddened to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years have been for Harry and Meghan.

The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. While some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately.

Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members.

ENDS

The statement listed above consists of a short but informative response from the Family Head - her Majesty the Queen herself. Although the message is short, there are still components that may be broken out and analyzed. For instance, looking at the first sentence of the official statement, the emotional appeal is strong when stating: "*The whole family is saddened..*". The emotional appeal continues throughout the message, leaning up the statement that the newlyweds and their son always will be family members. If there is one prominent theme in this response, it is love. However, the Queen is known to live by the mantra: "*Never complain, never explain,*" a saying that arguably has influenced this particular statement.

Nevertheless, in the last part of the message, one could argue it contains traces of the *reasoning strategy* as the royal family presents a course of actions to address the situation. Here, we can only assume that the crucial stakeholders (in this case, family members, including Harry and Meghan) were invited to some form of discussion and that all people concerned attended. When thinking of the royal family as a firm, as well as a family, this strategy becomes extra interesting, as it encourages communication between all involved parties, either through online platforms or focus groups. As a firm, the world of course expects the royal family to address the allegations publicly, which they did. However, since they are also a family, the public does not have the right to demand the same transparency as from an ordinary corporation.

This message is skillfully produced because it acknowledges the allegations while simultaneously, and gracefully one might add, do not confess to anything. Furthermore, as the Queen herself might have liked, the message did not explain or take stands against the accusations. The response, however, did imply that there are disagreements about recollections of recent events. The phrase: "While some

recollections may vary..." namely, indicates dissimilar memories, which hints about the royal family members sharing different truths of the event taking place.

Furthermore, Prince William and Kate Middleton, Harrys' brother and sister-in-law, are said to be in total shock after the things expressed in the interview with Oprah. What seems to have devastated them the most was the suicidal thoughts of Meghan and her and Harrys' comments about a royal family member mentioning the skincolor of Archie, allegedly causing William to declare, "We're very much not a racist family " during a visit to a school in London. Once again, we see traces of the Queen's matra, considering that Prince William's short statement does not provide any explanation.

To conclude, other than the Queen's message and Prince William's statement, there has not been any further profound communication of the matter from the royal family. The silence might be a strategic action to ensure that the royal family does not contribute to upscale the situation, attempting not to feed the flame. On the other hand, one might argue that a lack of response is also a response. In the long dynasty of the British monarchy, this is not the first nor the last potential scandal to hit. The way the royal family has been quiet has potentially allowed this potential scandal to pass without a hard blow on their brand core or reputation. However, considering the seriousness of the allegations, it comes as quite a surprise that the aftermath was as calm as it was. Still, the somewhat mellow outcome may be a direct effect of the royal family's strong brand heritage and the significance of their reputation reservoir, demonstrating the shield it may provide a brand finding itself standing in a crisis.