



WHITE PAPER

Before criticism becomes a crisis

How companies spot negative signals early, classify them correctly and react in time

livestep Brand Intelligence · October 2026

SUMMARY

The essentials in three paragraphs



The risk

Crises start small: a forum post, a review, an article. They usually only get noticed once they have spread.



The answer

Capture external signals continuously, rate them by sentiment and have notable developments reported immediately.



The gain

Time. Those who know early respond thoughtfully instead of improvising under pressure.

STARTING POINT

Crises almost always announce themselves

Before the headline there is usually a chain of small signals: a recurring accusation in a specialist forum, several negative reviews on the same topic, a critical podcast episode. Alone they seem harmless. Together they show a direction.

EXAMPLE

Three customers complain in forums about the delivery time of a product. Sales notices nothing until a trade outlet picks up the topic.

PROGRESSION

How a signal becomes a crisis



1 • Emergence

An accusation appears in a forum, a review or a post.



2 • Spread

Others pick up the topic, share it and add their own experiences.



3 • Attention

Press and industry media report on it. The topic reaches customers and applicants.



4 • Setting in

The image sticks, including in search results and AI answers.

THE PROBLEM

Why companies notice too late



Too many places

Forums, press, social media and podcasts cannot be watched manually on a permanent basis.



Too late in the numbers

Revenue and inquiries only show a problem once it has already had an effect.



No clear responsibility

Sales, marketing and customer service each see a slice. The overall picture is missing.

EARLY WARNING

Listen where criticism appears first



Communities and forums

Criticism often appears here first, unfiltered and in detail.



Press and news

Reports that lift a topic to a new level of reach.



Social Media

Reactions in real time, even to smaller occasions.



Podcasts

Mentions and criticism in the spoken word.

CLASSIFICATION

Not every piece of criticism is a crisis



Sentiment

Every signal is rated as positive, negative or neutral.

Positive

Negative

Neutral



Attribution

Does it concern the brand, a specific product or a competitor? The Knowledge Hub provides the frame for this.



Weight

How often does the topic appear, where, and how fast is it growing? That sets the priority.

NEW DIMENSION

Criticism lives on in AI answers

AI assistants summarize what the web says about a brand. An unresolved accusation can resurface there long after the issue is settled internally. That is why checking AI answers is part of crisis preparedness.

ChatGPT

Claude

Perplexity

Gemini

Grok

Llama

livestep checks these models.

RESPONSE

A simple process for when it counts

1 • Detect

An alert points to the notable development.

2 • Assess

How big, how fast, who is affected? The situation report sums it up.

3 • Decide

Recommended actions help with the choice: respond, fix, monitor.

4 • Act

The right person responds before the topic sets in.

AUTOMATION

Agents keep watch, even on weekends

Write your own task or start from a template. The alert goes straight to Slack, HubSpot, Asana or by email to the right person.



Crisis monitoring

Flags notable negative developments



Competitor watch

Tracks movements in the competitive landscape



Monday report

Delivers the situation at the start of the week

Agents are available from the Growth plan and are not included in the trial period.

GETTING STARTED

Four steps to early warning

- 1 · Set up brand, products and competitors
- 2 · Add audiences, markets and keywords in the Knowledge Hub
- 3 · Review the first analysis and situation report
- 4 · Set up crisis monitoring as an agent

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Agents from Growth

CONCLUSION

Those who know early stay in control

Crisis early warning does not replace good communication. It buys the time to use it with care.
Start with an analysis of your own brand.

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