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Crisis management – Guidance and good practice

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 May 2014. It was prepared by Technical Committee SSM/1, *Societal security management*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Supersession

This British Standard is based on PAS 200:2011, which is withdrawn.

Use of this document

As a guide, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification or a code of practice and claims of compliance cannot be made to it.

Presentational conventions

The guidance in this standard is presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Any recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Introduction

This British Standard sets out the principles and good practice for the provision of a crisis management response, delivered by the top management of any organization of any size in the public or private sector. The intention of the standard is to aid the design and/or ongoing development of an organization's crisis management capability.

The standard is intended for:

- a) top management with strategic responsibilities for the delivery of a crisis management capability; and
- b) those responsible for implementing the crisis plans and structures and for maintaining and testing the procedures associated with the capability, who operate under the direction of, and within policy guidelines, of top management.

The standard provides guidance for:

- 1) understanding the context and challenges of crisis management;
- 2) developing the organization's crisis management capability through planning and training;
- 3) recognizing the complexities facing a crisis team in action; and
- 4) communicating successfully during a crisis.

The standard has close links with other standards and documents, published and in preparation, including those on:

- i) business continuity (BS ISO 22301);
- ii) resilience (BS 65000);
- iii) information security (BS ISO/IEC 27001, BS ISO/IEC 27002 and BS ISO/IEC 27032);
- iv) exercising and testing (PD 25666).

The standard is not set out as a specification, recognizing that crisis management varies from organization to organization and sector to sector. The standard is concerned chiefly with the principles behind crisis management and the development of the necessary capabilities that are applicable to any size of organization.

A capability to manage crises is one aspect of a more resilient organization, where resilience is the ability of the organization to endure and continue through all manner of disruptive challenges, and to adapt as required to a changing operating environment. Resilience requires effective crisis management, which needs to be understood, developed, applied and validated in the context of the range of other relevant disciplines that include, amongst others, risk management, business continuity management and security management.

The capability to manage crises cannot simply be deferred until an organization is hit by a crisis, in the hope that it will never happen. It requires a forward-looking, systematic approach that creates a structure and processes, trains people to work within them, and is evaluated and developed in a continuous, purposeful and rigorous way. The development of a crisis management capability needs to be a regular activity that is proportionate to an organization's size and capacity.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives guidance on crisis management to help the top management of an organization to plan, establish, operate, maintain and improve a crisis management capability. It is intended for any organization regardless of location, size, type, industry or sector.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 business continuity

capability of the organization to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following disruptive incident

[SOURCE: BS ISO 22301:2012, 3.3]

2.2 business continuity management

holistic management process that identifies potential threats to an organization and the impacts to business operations those threats, if realized, might cause, and which provides a framework for building organizational resilience with the capability of an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value-creating activities

[SOURCE: BS ISO 22301:2012, 3.4]

2.3 media communications management

pro-active engagement with the media to ensure that:

- a) accurate information is provided;
- b) coverage in the media, including social media, is monitored to assess positive and negative stories; and
- c) action is taken to provide accurate counterbalancing information where the organization's reputation is being damaged

2.4 crisis

abnormal and unstable situation that threatens the organization's strategic objectives, reputation or viability

2.5 crisis management

development and application of the organizational capability to deal with crises

NOTE See Figure 1 for a general framework for crisis management.

2.6 incident

adverse event that might cause disruption, loss or emergency, but which does not meet the organization's criteria for, or definition of, a crisis

2.7 interested party

person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activity

[SOURCE: BS EN ISO 9000:2005, 3.3.7]

NOTE Often referred to as "stakeholder".

2.8 risk management

coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to risk

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 73:2009, 2.1]

- 2.9 situation report**
summary, either verbal or written, produced by an officer or body, outlining the current state and potential development of an incident or crisis and the response to it
- 2.10 situational awareness**
state of individual and/or collective knowledge relating to past and current events, their implications and potential future development
- 2.11 top management**
person or group of people who directs and controls an organization at the highest level
[SOURCE: BS EN ISO 9000:2005, 3.2.7]

3 Crisis management: core concepts, principles and developing a capability

3.1 Understanding crises and how best to manage them

The definition in 2.4 captures the essence of crises, notably their extraordinary nature and strategic implications for an organization. An organization might have established processes for managing routine disruptions. However, crises can be dynamic and unpredictable, and become difficult to manage. Crises challenge organizations, their people, functions and processes unusually, and require dedicated and dynamic management and response.

Crisis management is the developed capability of an organization to prepare for, anticipate, respond to and recover from crises. This capability is not normally part of routine organizational management, and should be consciously and deliberately built and sustained through capital, resource and time investment throughout the organization.

Understanding the conceptual and practical relationship between incidents and crises is important, and Table 1 summarizes the key distinctions.

Table 1 Distinctions between incidents and crises

Characteristics	Incidents	Crises
Predictability	Incidents are generally foreseeable and amenable to pre-planned response measures, although their specific timing, nature and spread of implications is variable and therefore unpredictable in detail.	Crises are unique, rare, unforeseen or poorly managed events, or combinations of such events, that can create exceptional challenges for an organization and are not well served by prescriptive, pre-planned responses.
Onset	Incidents can be no-notice or short notice disruptive events, or they can emerge through a gradual failure or loss of control of some type. Recognizing the warning signs of potential, actual or impending problems is a critical element of incident management.	Crises can be sudden onset or no-notice, or emerge from an incident that has not been contained or has escalated with immediate strategic implications, or arise when latent problems within an organization are exposed, with profound reputational consequences.
Urgency and pressure	Incident response usually spans a short time frame of activity and is resolved before exposure to longer-term or permanent significant impacts on the organization.	Crises have a higher sense of urgency and might require the response to run over longer periods of time to ensure that impacts are minimized.
Impacts	Incidents are adverse events that are reasonably well understood and are therefore amenable to a predefined response. Their impacts are potentially widespread.	Due to their strategic nature, crises can disrupt or affect the entire organization, and transcend organizational, geographical and sectoral boundaries. Because crises tend to be complex and inherently uncertain, e.g. because a decision needs to be made with incomplete, ambiguous information, the spread of impacts is difficult to assess and appreciate.
Media scrutiny	Effective incident management attracts little, but positive, media attention where adverse events are intercepted, impacts rapidly mitigated and business-as-usual quickly restored. However, this is not always the case and negative media attention, even when the incident response is effective and within agreed parameters, has the potential to escalate an incident into a crisis.	Crises are events that cause significant public and media interest, with the potential to negatively affect an organization's reputation. Coverage in the media and on social networks might be inaccurate in damaging ways, with the potential to rapidly and unnecessarily escalate a crisis.
Manageability through established plans and procedures	Incidents can be resolved by applying appropriate, predefined procedures and plans to intercept adverse events, mitigate their impacts and recover to normal operations. Incident responses are likely to have available adequate resources as planned.	Crises, through a combination of their novelty, inherent uncertainty and potential scale and duration of impact, are rarely resolvable through the application of predefined procedures and plans. They demand a flexible, creative, strategic and sustained response that is rooted in the values of the organization and sound crisis management structures and planning.

3.2 The potential origins of crises

It is important for people at all levels of an organization to recognize the warning signs and understand that crises can be initiated in a number of different ways, summarized in the following three groups.

- a) **Extreme disruptive incidents that have immediately obvious strategic implications.** These can arise from serious acts of malice, misconduct or negligence, or a failure (perceived or actual) to deliver products or services that meet the expected standards of quality or safety.
- b) **Those stemming from poorly-managed incidents and business fluctuations that are allowed to escalate to the point at which they create a crisis.**
- c) **The emergence of latent problems with serious consequences for trust in an organization's brand and reputation.** Such problems can "incubate" over time, typically as a result of:
 - 1) a lack of governance allowing gradual and incremental slippages in quality, safety or management control standards to go unchecked and become accepted as a normal way of working;
 - 2) convenient, but unofficial, "workaround" strategies becoming the normal routine due, for example, to overcomplicated processes, unrealistic schedules, chronic personnel shortages and lax supervision;
 - 3) flaws in supervision and process monitoring, which promote an expectation of "getting away with" undesirable behaviours or being able to survive minor failures without reporting them, or over-reliance on controls to catch all errors, rather than an expectation of quality checks that catch only occasional problems;
 - 4) blame cultures that encourage risk and issue cover-ups and the lack of a shared sense of mission and purpose, which generate a defensive (if not actually hostile) "them and us" attitude between staff and management, between different parts of the organization and between the organization and external interested parties; and
 - 5) poor training and development of staff and managers, or incremental loss of skills and knowledge.

Many crises have characteristics of more than one type. For example, an extreme disruptive event might appear to have a relatively simple immediate cause, but further enquiries might expose systemic weaknesses in how the organization is managed, for example, relating to health and safety, exacerbating the initial crisis and further damaging the organization's reputation. Alternatively, attempting to manage an extreme disruptive event as an incident rather than a crisis can introduce a delay before the crisis is given meaningful strategic attention.

Crisis management strategies and actions should reflect the organization's objectives and values. The organization's failure to adhere to its core values (for example, a commitment to workforce and product safety) or meet the expectations of interested parties could make the situation worse.

3.3 Implications of the nature of crises

Crises are associated with highly complex problems, the full implications and nature of which might be unclear at the time. Possible solutions can have severe negative consequences, and decision makers at all levels might have to choose the "least bad" solution (see 6.4) and resolve (or at least recognize and accept) fundamental strategic dilemmas. These might mean that every choice comes with a penalty of some kind and there is no ideal solution.

Crises do not always involve direct threats to life or tangible assets, such as property. However, they frequently challenge organizations' intangible assets, for example, reputation, image and brand, so strategic leadership is particularly important during a crisis. The inherent uncertainty of crisis situations demands that the expectations of staff at all levels are made clear, and actions clearly and authoritatively directed. These should demonstrate a clear relationship to the core values of the organization (which define what the organization exists for and how others expect it to behave), give clear direction on how to make difficult decisions and emphasize the importance of clear and coherent communications during the crisis.

A crisis can force an organization to review, adjust or defend its choices, policies, culture and strategies, possibly under public and media scrutiny. However, it can bring new opportunities and benefits to the organization if handled successfully. Even if an organization is perceived to be at fault or blameworthy, the demonstration of integrity and compassion can offset, to some extent, the damage to its reputation and standing, particularly when the expectations of interested parties are not met. A well-managed crisis can demonstrate the positive qualities of an organization and enhance its general reputation.

A timely response to a crisis is critical. The organization should consider how it might mobilize its crisis arrangements at an early stage as a precautionary measure. Conversely, denial and complacency or delay amongst top management can increase the organization's vulnerability, hamper its response and degrade its capacity to recover from a crisis.

Successful crisis management requires flexibility and creativity, and might involve stepping outside the normal "rules" of the organization or its business environment and being prepared to defend or justify this. For the organization's leaders this requires clarity of thought, strategic vision, decisiveness and the ability to act in ways that reflect the core values of the organization. In particular, leaders should behave with compassion toward those affected by the crisis, and expect and encourage the same across the organization as a whole. Crises can be so extraordinarily demanding that no assumptions should be made about the ability of staff (of any seniority, grade or experience) to manage them and steer the organization out of crisis.

3.4 Recovering from a crisis: an integral part of crisis management

Managing a crisis typically requires sustained effort, and a failure to give the recovery effort adequate strategic attention can mean that good work during the response is undone, critical relationships with interested parties are neglected and potential opportunities are not grasped. Such lost opportunities might, for instance, include a failure to regenerate the organization, cease problematic activities or bring forward long-term development plans.

The implications of this are clear. Recovery should:

- a) start as early as possible;
- b) have a strategic direction from the outset; and
- c) create strategic opportunities.

3.5 Principles for crisis management

The organization's preparation for, response to and recovery from a crisis should always be consistent with the following overarching principles:

- a) achieve control as soon as possible;
- b) communicate effectively, both internally and externally;

- c) be prepared with clear, universally understood structures, roles and responsibilities;
- d) build situational awareness by good information management, challenge and collective working;
- e) have a clear and well-rehearsed decision-making and action driving process;
- f) effective leadership at all levels of the organization;
- g) ensure people with specific crisis management roles are competent through appropriate training, exercising and evaluation of their knowledge, skills and experience;
- h) maintain a comprehensive record and policy log of all decisions taken, including the facts known at the time and any assumptions made; and
- i) learn from mistakes and make changes to prevent their reoccurrence.

4 Building a crisis management capability

4.1 Introduction

Even a well-prepared organization can find crises challenging. Although successful outcomes can never be guaranteed, having a well-developed and embedded crisis management capability enables the organization to avert crises where possible, respond to crises that do occur in a manner that protects its assets, and learn from experience to improve practices through time.

4.2 Setting the crisis management framework

The development of a crisis management capability needs to be strategically directed from the top of an organization and implemented through a crisis management framework. One aspect of this is that top management should establish, define and document a policy for crisis management that:

- a) clearly and concisely outlines their objectives in managing a crisis;
- b) describes in broad terms how they intend to realize these; and
- c) makes plain their commitment to high standards in crisis management.

The policy should serve as the basis and business case for the further activities related to the planning and implementation of crisis management procedures.

The policy statement should identify those responsible for its different elements, overall coordination and embedding crisis management as a mainstream activity. It should also establish priorities, and timelines and standards for the delivery of key elements of the organization's crisis management capability, as well as resources as appropriate. Mechanisms of review should be included, to ensure that the policy continues to be supported and remains consistent with the overall strategic objectives of the organization, and that progress is monitored and evaluated against the agreed deliverables.

Roles and responsibilities required to implement all crisis management capabilities should be identified, documented and communicated. Consideration should be given to people's knowledge, skills and experience. The organization should consider the resources needed for each element of the capability and the associated requirements for training. It should also appoint a person(s) with appropriate authority to be accountable for the development and implementation of crisis management capability, and its ongoing maintenance and management, across the whole organization.

This crisis management policy is not an “off the shelf” or “cut and paste” document: the vision and scope of the organization’s intentions should be appropriate to its size, business activities and overall strategic objectives, maintaining consistency with the legal or regulatory environment within which it operates.

4.3 General framework

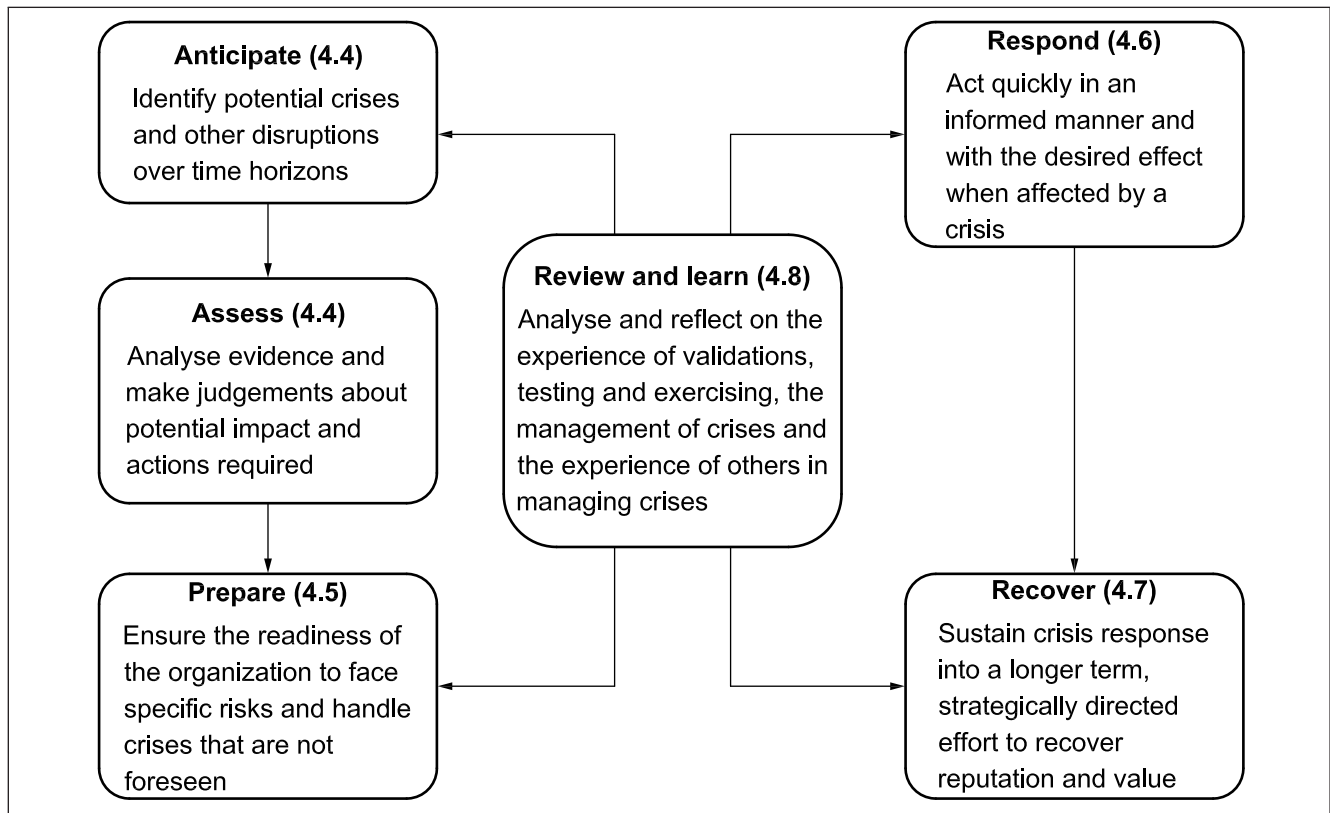
In general terms, an organization requires the following for an effective crisis management capability:

- a) people who are able to quickly analyse situations, set strategy, determine options, make decisions and evaluate their impact;
- b) a common understanding of the concepts that underpin crisis management;
- c) structures and business processes to translate decisions into actions, evaluate those actions and follow them up;
- d) staff who are able to share, support and implement top management’s vision, intentions and policies; and
- e) the ability to support solutions by applying the right resources in the right place, at the right time.

Different organizations meet these requirements in different ways. Notably, size and resource availability shapes how capability can be developed. For example, in a small organization, a number of roles and requirements are likely to be met by just one or two people in a crisis, whereas a larger organization with geographical diversity and greater numbers of available staff is likely to structure and resource itself in a different way.

Figure 1 sets out a general framework for crisis management, identifying the steps necessary to create a crisis management capability, organized around anticipation and assessment, preparation, response, recovery, and review and learning, which are discussed further in 4.4 to 4.8. Additional factors relevant to the response, in particular leadership, decision-making and crisis communications are detailed in Clause 5 to Clause 8.

Figure 1 A framework for crisis management



4.4 Anticipate and assess

Crisis management is inextricably related to the management of risks and issues (real or perceived) of potential significance to the organization. For example, the failure of an organization to respond to what ought to have been a foreseeable risk is likely to call into question its competence, with strong potential for a crisis to emerge.

An organization should have:

- a) systems to provide early warning of potential crises in the physical or virtual sphere;
- b) horizon scanning processes to identify potential crises that might emerge in both the medium to long term, and those which might emerge with very little warning;
- c) a well understood relationship between internal risk management activities, the management of issues, business continuity management, and communications and crisis management arrangements; and
- d) a recognition that crises can develop regardless of the effectiveness of existing controls and that the organization needs to be prepared to manage these effectively.

To achieve this the organization needs to consider not just the processes by which it will identify potential crises, escalate them to the appropriate level and inform the crisis response, but also how to foster the kinds of behaviours that enable effective individual and team working under conditions of uncertainty and intense pressure.

4.5 Prepare

4.5.1 General

The emphasis in preparing for crises should be on the development of the generic capabilities that will enable the organization to deliver an appropriate response in any situation.

Four specific elements are key to this:

- a) the crisis management plan;
- b) information management and situational awareness;
- c) structure, composition, authority and expectations of the crisis management team (CMT), with appropriate oversight and sense checking for the CMT activities and relevant checks and balances; and
- d) building resilience into the CMT structure [item c)] by appointing primary and alternate delegates for each CMT function and ensuring that all CMT members are suitably trained, competent and adequately resourced to perform their duties.

4.5.2 The crisis management plan

The crisis management plan (CMP) is a response document and may set out the following key information:

- a) who has authority and responsibility for key decisions and actions in a crisis;
- b) key contact details: how staff are to be contacted in the event of a crisis;
- c) crisis communications (internal and external);
- d) the activation mechanism for a crisis and how it works in practice;
- e) details of levels of response across the organization (i.e. who is to be contacted for what level of problem) and a flow chart showing the sequence of actions;
- f) the structure and role of the CMT and what is expected of it;
- g) where the CMT is to meet (with alternative locations) and what equipment and support are required;
- h) key templates (such as CMT meeting agenda and logbook);
- i) log-keeping guidance;
- j) a situation report template which is to be used across the organization.

The CMP should be as concise as possible to ensure that 1) it is read and exercised before it is needed, and 2) it can be understood and actually used when a crisis breaks. If required, the plan can be developed to set out the policy and more procedural elements about how the CMT works and the necessary training and evaluation arrangements, but this should not clutter the plan itself.

The CMP should be focused on the provision of a generic response capability. It should not be scenario-specific, as a plan for every possible contingency would be unwieldy, potentially suppress flexible thinking and action, and miss the point that many crises are essentially unforeseeable and impossible to plan for in precise detail.

The following tools and templates support the crisis management plan:

- 1) aides-memoire and checklists of key decision points and required actions;
- 2) defined roles and responsibilities;
- 3) draft holding statements;

- 4) guidance for call takers and switchboards;
- 5) up-to-date fact sheets and press kits;
- 6) a list of items necessary for a practical response;
- 7) tools and systems to help manage social media monitoring and engagement;
- 8) a list of interested parties and a management matrix;
- 9) 24/7 contact information for resources, including spokespeople; and
- 10) locations for press conferences.

4.5.3 Information management and situational awareness

4.5.3.1 Information management

Uncertainty is one of the defining features of a crisis, so finding out what is happening and understanding the implications are of paramount importance. It is necessary to accept and understand that information might be incomplete when decisions are taken and acted upon. This requires pre-planning and appropriate training.

An organization responding to a crisis therefore needs to be able to:

- a) gather relevant information on the crisis;
- b) evaluate that information in terms of quality and relevance to the crisis;
- c) filter, analyse and make sense of that information;
- d) communicate the information within the organization and externally as required; and
- e) present information to decision makers in an appropriate form.

4.5.3.2 Situational awareness

The term "situational awareness" is used in crisis management to describe a best available appreciation of:

- a) what is going on and what the impacts might be;
- b) the degree of uncertainty;
- c) the degree of containment;
- d) exacerbating issues; and
- e) what might happen in the future.

Together, this information, understanding and foresight can inform crisis decision-making (decision-making is discussed further in Clause 6).

Attaining situational awareness is inherently difficult in a crisis because so many things are going on, the rate of change is rapid, various interpretations of cause and effect might be plausible and the spread of impacts and potential impacts is unclear. Achieving a common appreciation of this – termed *shared* situational awareness – across the range of people involved in managing the crisis is harder still, as information might not move freely, technical knowledge or specialist skills might be required to interpret certain facts, terminology might not be commonly understood and certain pieces of information might deliberately be withheld from others on various grounds.

Effective information management involves collecting information from a set of sources and, if necessary, assessing source credibility whenever a new piece of information is received from unknown or unverified sources. It subsequently involves the systematic collation, assessment and analysis, and presentation of that information in a format that is appropriate to the situation, which may be termed a "situation report".

The ability to build shared situational awareness in a crisis cannot be assumed on the basis of normal operations. It requires effort to understand the requirements and develop the structures, ways of working and skills needed to meet them. The organization needs to have the following.

- 1) **Established channels to source relevant information in time of crisis.** These will not necessarily be equally trusted or reliable, but their relative reliability needs to be understood.
- 2) **Ways of working to find relevant information when there are no existing channels.** There is a common tendency to rely on the news media, but the timeliness and reliability of even the major news corporations cannot be taken for granted, especially at the early stage of a crisis.
- 3) **Structures and processes to assess and evaluate the quality and relevance of the information to the crisis situation.** Not all information circulating during a crisis is equally reliable, or equally unreliable, and having the skills and ways of working to make informed judgements about source reliability and relative accuracy, timeliness and relevance is vital.
- 4) **A capacity to analyse, interpret, understand and add value to raw information.** This might require specialist skills or specific technical, product or policy knowledge. An inventory of where such skills lie in the organization can enable their rapid recruitment to the crisis response. This capacity should be able to rigorously consider the meaning, implications and possible alternative interpretations of the available information. Decisions, and the rationales for these, should be recorded, thereby providing an auditable trail for potential post-incident review or investigations.
- 5) **The means to present information to decision makers in the most effective format possible.** The specifics of the crisis and the requirements and interests of the decision makers will determine what is appropriate, and those in a decision support role need to understand the specific concerns, background knowledge and other requirements of the decision makers.

4.5.3.3 Composition and expectations of the crisis management team

The CMT should generally be formed from the main board or operate with the authority of the board, as this provides strategic vision and the authority to make decisions in crisis situations and enact its leadership function. Individuals with the appropriate level of authority, experience and capabilities should be appointed to the CMT. Beneath the CMT should be a hierarchy of teams as appropriate, but good practice has established the norm as a strategic CMT, supported by a tactical team(s) and operational team(s). Some small organizations do not need this, but it allows the CMT to remain strategic in its thinking and approach, giving direction to the tactical team for the planning and then the operational team for active implementation.

The size of the CMT varies according to the size of an organization, but typically consists of representatives from top management and key business areas. In the event of an actual crisis, the team may be expanded to include other department heads from those areas more directly affected. Potential roles include the following.

- a) **Chair** – responsible for leading the CMT and acting as the primary contact for the operational elements of the crisis response. The chair should be a strong, authoritative, respected senior executive with a long-term

perspective, who is trusted and decisive without being impulsive. It is important to maintain a balance of top management within the CMT that does not leave the wider business without normal leadership whilst the crisis is resolved.

- b) **Human resources** – ensures that people issues are being addressed. This role-holder should have broad HR expertise or be able to contact an appropriate resource. They should be able to provide quick access to employee data, such as next of kin, and might need to address crisis counselling.
- c) **Operations** – ensures that delivery of the ongoing business priorities is maintained and coordination of this with the crisis response is managed. This function should be able to apply priorities across the organization as needed and allocate additional resources if required.
- d) **Legal** – provides legal counsel to the team and arranges for external legal support as necessary, participates in communication preparation, and advises on other crisis-specific issues, such as *ex gratia* payments.
- e) **Communications** – coordinates the media response and incorporates legal advice for all public communications. The communications lead is responsible for internal communications and developing press and other media releases, and has a key role in protecting the brand and reputation of the organization (see also 7.3).
- f) **Finance** – assesses the financial impact of the crisis and the organization's response, monitors developments, and advises on/authorizes contingency budgets and emergency spend.
- g) **Log keeper** – an essential part of the crisis team who maintains a log of all decisions and actions for later reference and use in insurance, liability issues or potential enquiries.
- h) **Business continuity representative** – advises on appropriate recovery or contingency plans and alternative resources.
- i) **Other business teams** – additional support for the core team is provided by internal specialist teams, such as facilities, security, information security and IT, which assess damage and advise on the appropriate recovery plans and available facilities.
- j) **Support team** – depending on the extent of the crisis, the chair and CMT could require administrative support, which might include record keeping, tracking documents, updating team members and monitoring information channels.

4.6 Respond (the CMT in action)

Given the dynamic and complex nature of crises, it is difficult to predict exactly what actions will be required of the CMT. While certain generic actions will be required [see a) to k)], crisis management is not a linear activity. Activities might be concurrent, their relative importance can change with events and all should be subject to continuous and rigorous review.

- a) Achieving situational awareness, with the team confirming their (individual and shared) understanding of the situation and its dynamics, and continuously reviewing it.
- b) Defining (and continuously reviewing) the strategic direction of the response.
- c) Identifying issues, making decisions, assigning actions and confirming the implementation and results of actions.

- d) Setting an operating rhythm for the response, so that meetings, briefings, information dissemination, press releases, conferences, etc., can be arranged coherently.
- e) Managing meeting agendas and ensuring brevity.
- f) Confirming, monitoring and reviewing internal and external communications and strategy.
- g) Reviewing and monitoring the work of the crisis management organization as a whole, to ensure that priorities are understood clearly and that its performance, and the flow of information, are appropriate to the demands of the situation.
- h) Examining the impact and management of the crisis on business as normal.
- i) Carrying out a continuously reviewed analysis of interested parties, to ensure that the right people receive the right messages and information, and that their views, advice and assistance are actively sought.
- j) Monitoring and reviewing continuously the objectives and effectiveness of any teams managing incidents at other levels of the response, with particular focus on making sure that their activities are in harmony with the strategic crisis response and conflicts of interest or resource are managed.
- k) Ensuring that strategic planning for recovery starts as early as possible.

4.7 Recover

The recovery phase involves dealing with the long-term effects or impacts of a crisis and how to return to the new “normal”, or adapt to new circumstances, particularly if major change has taken place in the days, weeks and sometimes months following the crisis. This stage contains many risks and can even lead to another crisis if not well managed.

Plans and protocols should recognize the importance of a definitive transition and handover marking the progress from the response phase to the recovery phase of crisis management. Recovery planning could be directly affected by decisions made as part of the response, and longer-term recovery objectives and issues may inform response managers who are making decisions on immediate issues. The recovery team should be led by a member of the CMT and resourced adequately.

There are likely to be ongoing issues which can run for a considerable period of time, often characterized by reputational damage, investor concerns and ongoing legal and insurance challenges. The recovery needs to be funded and could affect earnings, cash flows and debt ratios. In parallel, the organization faces the potential for high-performing individuals leaving whilst at the same time it is trying to introduce changes or reaffirm its strategic direction. The recovery effort might be long term, and it should be expected to consume resources long after the response phase is over.

The social cost should not be ignored, with employees, customers and key stakeholders all affected. Apart from the physical rebuilding or replacement of infrastructure that might be necessary, the organization could be required to support investigations or enquiries by the police or regulatory authorities. The CMT should also be mindful of sensitivities attached to the natural processes of healing and grieving, where individuals and their families have been directly affected by the events.

Finally, recovery presents an opportunity to regenerate, restructure or realign an organization. The essence of recovery is not necessarily a return to previous normality. It might mean moving towards a model of business and organizational structures that represent a new normality, confronting harsh realities and realizing potential opportunities that might have been revealed by the crisis.

4.8 Review and learn

Crises serve as a major learning opportunity for both individuals and organizations as a whole. Therefore, the overall management process should include a review of the crisis and an evaluation of the response, the plans and procedures, and the tools and facilities, to identify areas for improvement.

Following the evaluation and the identification of lessons, recommendations should be made for change, and responsibilities and timelines assigned to drive that change forward and ensure it is carried out. Too often, lessons are identified but not actually addressed, so that mistakes are repeated in future events. Learning from a crisis should result in change for the organization, its people, plans and procedures that make it more resilient and better prepared for the future.

Capturing organizational learning from a crisis occurs by conducting thorough operational debriefs and extensive follow-up communication with all those individuals, teams and interested parties involved in the actual crisis. This might identify and mitigate any effects of the event on those individuals, personally and professionally.

Learning the lessons from a crisis or planned exercise is an essential element of crisis management (see Clause 8). It requires commitment of time, resources, attention and energy towards the end of a difficult and challenging experience. However, not reflecting and acting on lessons not only allows latent problems and vulnerabilities to remain in an organization, it also predisposes the organization to future crises if it emerges that no action, or insufficient action, was taken in response to such problems in the past.

5 Crisis leadership

5.1 How crisis management differs from normal business

The CMT (see Clause 4) has a leadership role in shaping, driving and communicating the response to a crisis. This clause does not focus on the activities of the CMT *per se*. Rather, it sets out good practice for crisis leaders, irrespective of their place in the organization. Leadership in a crisis is not intrinsically different to leadership in any other operational setting. The core skills are essentially the same, as are the qualities and behaviours that are generally associated with success. The differences between normal business leadership and crisis leadership are of context and amplification, rather than fundamental type. They include:

- a) the tempo of the crisis;
- b) the critical need for timely decisions;
- c) the complexity of the problems being faced;
- d) the severity of those problems; and
- e) a prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety.

5.2 Tempo

Tempo refers to the pace with which a crisis develops and the speed with which new and unforeseen issues confront those managing it.

Some organizations operate at a high tempo and need very quick decision-making as the norm. However, a crisis is likely to combine all of the characteristics in 5.1a) to e) to some extent. It is this context that makes leadership in a crisis different and a very significant challenge.

Crises can materialize very quickly, and even those that develop and form over a longer period of time can reach a high tempo very rapidly.

The effect of a sudden increase in tempo should be considered in combination with the other context factors (see 5.1). Increased tempo brings with it the need for quick decisions by leaders. This is felt most urgently in the earliest stages of a crisis, when information is likely to be in short supply and the demand for it far outstrips its availability. In this situation, leaders can find themselves tempted to delay important decisions until more information becomes available. This might appear to be appropriately cautious and risk-conscious, but it can lead to missed opportunities and interventions that come too late to have a decisive impact because they have been overtaken by events.

Striking the correct balance is critical. Generally, a workable solution delivered on time is more effective than a perfect solution delivered even a little too late.

5.3 Understanding the challenges of crisis leadership

Leaders need to be exposed to the challenges of crisis leadership during training and exercising, so that they are aware of the potential need to make decisions urgently and without “all the facts”.

This might be counter to the typical approach of an organization during business-as-usual, and therefore involve a change of culture. Changing the organization’s culture of working at times of stress and challenge can be exceptionally difficult. The only practical way of preparing leaders for this is rigorous, realistic and repeated training, which allows them to test all the implications of plausible (but challenging) “What if...?” scenarios.

The problems leaders, CMT members and others face might be extraordinarily complex and severe, with the people, reputation and assets (possibly even the continued existence) of the organization under serious threat. The implications are clear:

- a) leaders will be required to make decisions rapidly and without all the information and resources they would wish for;
- b) leaders will be dealing with issues that are difficult to understand and which threaten seriously the viability of the organization and (possibly) the safety and welfare of the people within it and around it;
- c) leaders will be working in an environment that is uncertain and possibly chaotic;
- d) leaders need to impose calmness, authority and confidence, backed up by decisiveness - they need to exert control and be seen to do so (in this sense, their leadership needs to be highly visible);
- e) leaders need to do all of this in circumstances they are unlikely to have experienced directly beforehand; and
- f) leaders need to do all this when they and those they rely on are under stress that affects information processing and communication.

What this means in practice is the delivery of a set of core leadership functions.

5.4 Core leadership functions

Leadership in a crisis is not a special art, but it might not be within the skill-set of all of the organization's senior leaders, even those who are highly successful in normal business. For this reason, crisis leaders should be carefully prepared and trained thoroughly. Fitness for high office in normal business should not be seen as an automatic qualification for leadership in a crisis.

The crisis leader(s) should:

- a) ensure that the teams are activated and operating;
- b) ensure that they, their teams and their interested parties share a common understanding of the situation, the issues involved, the implications and the potential outcomes;
- c) demonstrate that challenging the evidence and thinking in a crisis is both necessary and desirable (there are always multiple interpretations of reported information, premises and assumptions, the results of assessment and analysis, and interpretations and conclusions, and encouraging different ways of looking can help to improve crisis decision-making);
- d) when informed by that common understanding and insight, determine the strategy, set the strategic aim and identify objectives for the different teams and departments contributing to the response:
 - 1) strategy is a combination of ends, ways and means, conveying an understanding of what end-state the organization wishes to get to, what needs to be done to get there and what resources are needed to facilitate this;
 - 2) the strategic aim should be a brief statement of the desired end-state, sufficient to guide people as to the overall intention of the leadership team when they are faced with unforeseen events or choices - it should not be simply a list of generally desirable outcomes;
 - 3) departmental or team objectives should be SMART [specific, measurable, achievable, relevant (to the aim) and time-bound] and contribute to the aim directly;
- e) continuously review a) to d) and make changes as necessary, ensuring that departments, teams and agencies report regularly against their objectives and make appropriate progress;
- f) consult widely and, whenever possible, create a cross-organizational consensus indicating the reasons for overriding any advice or recommendation;
- g) understand that their decisions will not always be "right" - in many cases, it will not be possible to judge their rightness until after the event, but a decision needs to be taken there and then, based on what is known at the time;
- h) ensure that all decisions are (and are seen to be) reasonable, based on the best information available at the time, compassionate, proportionate, necessary and legal;
- i) ensure that decisions are recorded and documented in a way that captures the rationale for them, making them more robust to scrutiny after the event and allowing them to be analysed so that lessons can be identified;
- j) review and authorize the overall public and media information strategy and its application, as well as key internal communications produced by the communications team;

- k) stay in their assigned strategic role, direct and empower subordinate leaders and avoid being drawn into the detail of operational matter so that they can concentrate on defining what has to be done, rather than the technical detail of how it is to be done;
 - l) review the composition and performance of the crisis management team and its supporting staff as the crisis evolves, in case the composition of the team (and the distribution of responsibilities within it) needs to change to meet the changing requirements for specific types of expertise;
 - m) make strategic arrangements for the recovery and regeneration phase as early as is practicable, and commit resources to it;
 - n) chair the team's executive meetings, determine their timing and frequency and set the agenda for them;
 - o) be prepared to think outside the paradigms of normal business and organizational culture, and consider radical solutions that need to be applied in innovative ways outside the organization's established processes and general expectations;
- NOTE This suggests that the crisis leader needs a high level of trust and autonomy, and enough authority to command resources and drive change rapidly.*
- p) determine when it is desirable and safe to scale down or stand down the response; and
 - q) engage in cost capture and loss prevention.

6 Strategic crisis decision-making

6.1 Decision-making

Decision-making is the process that leads to the selection of a course of action from more than one alternative option.

The challenge of crisis decision-making is frequently underestimated, ignored or unknown, except with the benefit of hindsight. Even the most clear-headed and decisive senior executive in day-to-day settings can be overwhelmed in a crisis, leading to uncharacteristic errors, decision avoidance or delays.

Good decision-making at the strategic level can steer an organization out of crisis and on to future success, whilst bad decision-making almost certainly exacerbates an already difficult situation and has potentially long-term negative impacts on the reputation and value of the organization.

At its core, crisis response involves making decisions based on the best information available and turning those decisions into direction and action that control events and minimize the impacts of the crisis.

6.2 How are decisions made?

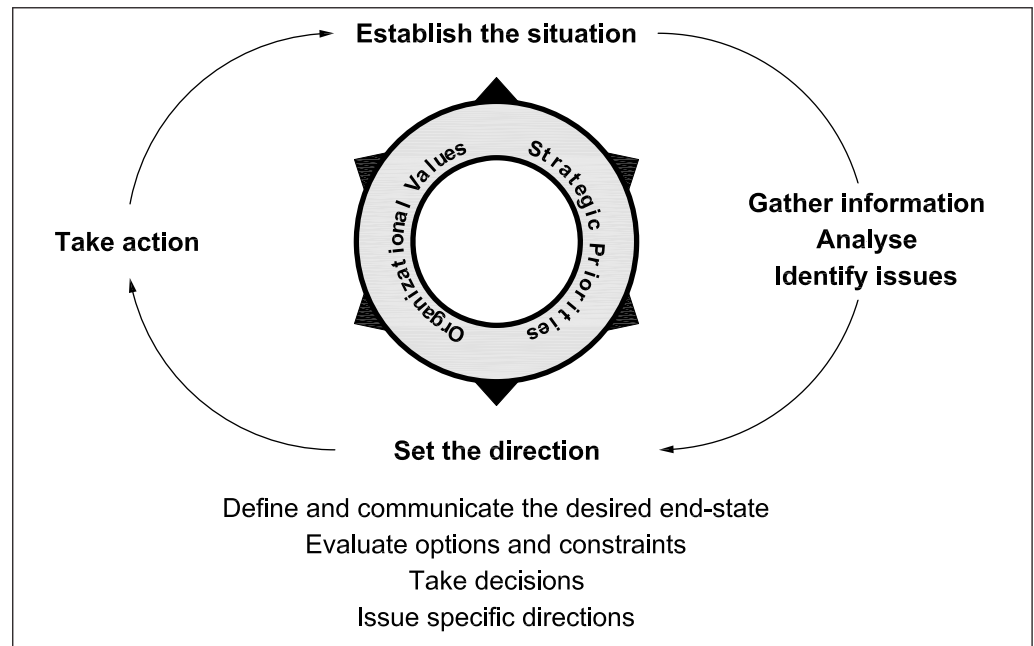
A wide range of decision-making models exists, and the practically useful ones are generally organized around three primary considerations.

- a) **Situation:** What is happening, what are the impacts, what are the issues, what are the risks, what might happen and what is being done about it? Situational awareness involves an appropriate knowledge of these factors.
- b) **Direction:** What end-state is desired, what is the aim and objectives of the crisis response and what overarching values and priorities will inform and guide this?

- c) **Action:** What needs to be decided, and what needs to be done to resolve the situation and achieve the desired end-state? The effectiveness of actions should be monitored and reported on.

The basic decision model is: analyse the situation, identify the issues, generate options, evaluate the options with reference to the desired end-state, and make a decision or choice, all of which should be consistent with the values and the strategic priorities of the organization. Ideally, strategic decision-making in a crisis also follows a step-by-step process, made up of the stages in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Strategic decision-making in a crisis



This process seems logical and straightforward, except that these types of rational models assume the decision maker is fully informed, can compute the outcomes of a choice with perfect accuracy and is thinking entirely rationally. The reality is often different.

6.3 Why is decision-making in a crisis challenging?

Studies of decision-making by people in real-life crises have shown that they do not always follow a clear-cut decision process. The nature of crises creates an environment that potentially derails the rational decision-making process at both strategic and tactical levels during crisis response.

A crisis is a unique and challenging decision-making environment compared to day-to-day business, with unique characteristics (see 3.1).

All of these factors place extreme psychological pressures on the CMT and other affected staff across the organization. However, the high levels of uncertainty that characterize the majority of crises, caused by lack of knowledge and a plethora of rumours, assumptions and misinformation, are particularly threatening to effective decision-making. Uncertainty significantly increases a decision maker's stress levels, which can negatively affect their cognitive processes, and increases the likelihood of flawed decision processes and poor decisions.

The challenges to good decision-making are clear, but even overcoming these challenges does not guarantee a successful or "good" outcome. However, good decision-making significantly increases the likelihood of success.

6.4 Dilemmas, decision delay and decision avoidance

Crisis decision-making is typically characterized by ill-formulated dilemmas, for which apparent solutions are not *right* or *wrong* but *better* or *worse*, and where solutions to one problem potentially generate further problems or issues. Such dilemmas are perceived as having no good outcome and potentially leading only to more or less bad outcomes. These dilemmas induce particularly high levels of stress and anxiety in the decision maker.

While uncertainty might not increase the chances of the CMT actively making large-scale errors or wrong choices, uncertainty over the potential outcome of a decision can block or delay the CMT from implementing those crucial decisions that they should be making to take control over the crisis.

One of the main reasons for this is the CMT's perceived accountability over a decision that might, with hindsight, be judged by interested parties as having been the wrong choice. Therefore, doing nothing might be perceived as less blameworthy than an actively-made mistake. However, the failure to make crucial decisions and take action when required is one of the most pervasive problems that decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of the crisis response, and which has produced tragic outcomes to crises [see also 5.4g)].

6.5 Decision-making problems

Decision-making is beset with complexity, not only in the issues being faced, but with the dynamics of how decisions are made and the biases flowing around when a group is brought together to consider a problem. Good leaders and decision makers are aware of the risks and pitfalls they face in order to balance approaches and ensure as much bias can be taken out of the final stages as possible.

This text cannot comprehensively review the full range of potential biases and pitfalls, but self-awareness is critical. Crisis leaders and decision makers should be mindful of potential problems, such as groupthink; the tendency to seek or prioritize information that confirms a preferred interpretation or option at the expense of contradictory information (which might be correct and relevant); wishful thinking; stereotyping; disproportionate emphasis given to preferred sources; a failure to challenge assumptions of various types; and premature closure on a particular interpretation, position or path of action.

6.6 Effective crisis decision-making

A number of factors improve the effectiveness of strategic decision-making in a crisis. These include:

- a) implementing, at an organizational level, policies, structures (teams and roles), plans, processes and tools to support the organization's crisis management capability as a whole and the CMT in particular;
- b) gaining experience in crisis decision-making environments as individuals and teams;
- c) training CMT members in the use of decision techniques to reduce the effect of uncertainty on their cognitive abilities; and
- d) recognizing the signs of weak decision-making, including a failure to challenge evidence, assumptions, methods, logic and conclusions, and the adoption of measures to provide alternative perspectives.

Decision makers need to be aware of the challenges they face and understand that there are tools and techniques available to support them in managing uncertainty, to reduce the likelihood of them making either individual or collective decision errors.

7 Crisis communications

7.1 Introduction

Crisis communications are the actions taken by an organization to communicate internally and externally during a crisis. This requires the ability to develop and deliver a consistent message that conveys the organization's reaction to a crisis, in terms of what it knows at the time and what it is doing about the various issues concerned, and should encompass its responses both at an organizational and a human level.

Effective crisis communications position the organization as the central source of information, reassure interested parties and demonstrate control of the situation. Crisis communications need therefore to form an integral part of the organization's response to any crisis and cover all means of communication, both internal and external, designed and delivered alongside, and in support of, the crisis management function.

7.2 Pre-crisis preparation

The transition between the routine day-to-day management of communications and the activity undertaken to manage a potential or full-blown crisis needs to be seamless. With modern communications, information can be available in near real time and every second can count. Good pre-crisis preparation enables an organization to respond effectively and to quickly move from a reactive to a proactive phase. To enable this, a crisis communications plan should be in place to set out the roles, responsibilities and actions to be taken by members of the communications team and those supporting them.

The plan should set out a structured approach to managing a communications response, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities, the establishment of procedures, tested arrangements for invocation and the options for resourcing to meet high levels of demand. The whole crisis communications process should be regularly rehearsed to make sure the systems are effective and teams are prepared.

7.3 Management of reputation and interested parties

A key aspect of crisis management is that the foundations of reputation management are established in the time prior to a crisis, building up capital and trust which can then be effectively "spent" during a crisis. A crisis can damage even a previously good reputation, and the challenge is a) to ensure it is not lost altogether, and b) to quickly rebuild it. The management of interested parties is critical to the reputational success of the crisis response as a whole and effective communications can shape the perception of how well the organization responded.

The needs and views of all interested parties need to be identified and taken into account, including customers, employees, shareholders and suppliers. It is important that any crisis response arrangements include the capability to assess and understand the factors that are important to these stakeholders and which could impact reputation.

The communications team should have a management matrix to track which interested parties have been spoken to, when, by whom and when the next communications will be.

7.4 Key roles

7.4.1 General

Key roles within the communications team include:

- a) spokesperson (see 7.4.2);
- b) head of communications;
- c) press officer;
- d) media monitoring (see 7.4.3);
- e) social media monitoring (see 7.6 and 7.9);
- f) call takers; and
- g) internal communications.

These might not all be performed by individual personnel, but personnel need to be covered within the resources available.

7.4.2 The spokesperson

The organization needs to have trained and prepared spokespeople who can engage with the media and are comfortable in such a role. There should be more than one spokesperson and, ideally, they should be at varying levels of seniority to avoid the same person being used too frequently. Use of the chief executive as the spokesperson needs to be carefully considered as to when this is necessary and appropriate.

7.4.3 Media monitoring

Effective media monitoring is key to gaining early warning of crises, allowing an assessment of the level and focus of external interest and wider impacts not being reported through normal channels. It is also critically important during the crisis response phase and for post-crisis recovery. Detailed information and analysis of what is being reported and the external “conversations” and “trends” allow for validation of the organization’s position and for a measure of how effective it is in engaging with the issues, delivering its message and generating the conversation it wishes to engage in.

7.5 Developing a crisis communications strategy

If a crisis is likely to go on for some time, a strategy for communications should be developed that sets out the organization’s core message to be used across all media, the key themes within the message and the supporting material behind those themes. This strategy should be agreed with top management.

The strategy should identify and prioritize which stakeholders will receive what information, when and how. A stakeholder engagement plan should be developed and provide guidance about the level of information that is to be transmitted and to whom.

It is important to remember that communications may be adapted in style and tone for different audiences, but the core messages they are conveying should be consistent.

7.6 Key principles of crisis communications response

Comparatively new social media have transformed the international news landscape. News messaging of events in words and pictures from “citizen journalists” (e.g. members of the public photographing at the scene and/or “reporting” events) have removed most, if not all, control over the nature and source of material entering the public domain in a crisis from organizations under scrutiny. Consequently, top management should:

- a) take prompt steps to correct misleading reports and be able to discuss non-contentious issues within their expertise;
- b) prepare what is to be said, how it will be said it and why it will be said;
- c) anticipate being asked at least: What happened? Why did it happen? (Who is to blame?) When was it discovered? What is being done about it?

Table 2 outlines the key principles for crisis communications.

Table 2 Key principles of crisis communications

1	Be prepared	have a clear, straightforward communication process in place
2	Move fast	communicate quickly and appropriately, indicating that more information will be given when possible
3	Monitor continuously	keeping track of what is happening everywhere is critical
4	Maintain the flow	release what is known; “little and often” is better than waiting to release everything
5	Speak with one voice	but not necessarily a single spokesperson
6	Be transparent	it will all come out in the end
7	Accuracy is key	use hard facts and avoid rumour, conjecture and assumptions
8	Apologize	do not be afraid to apologize when appropriate and relevant
9	Build a strategy	develop core message(s) and the supporting themes, and keep building them
10	Manage the timing	let those closest know first
11	Be human	be empathetic whenever appropriate
12	Sign off	know who has authority to sign off communications for issue

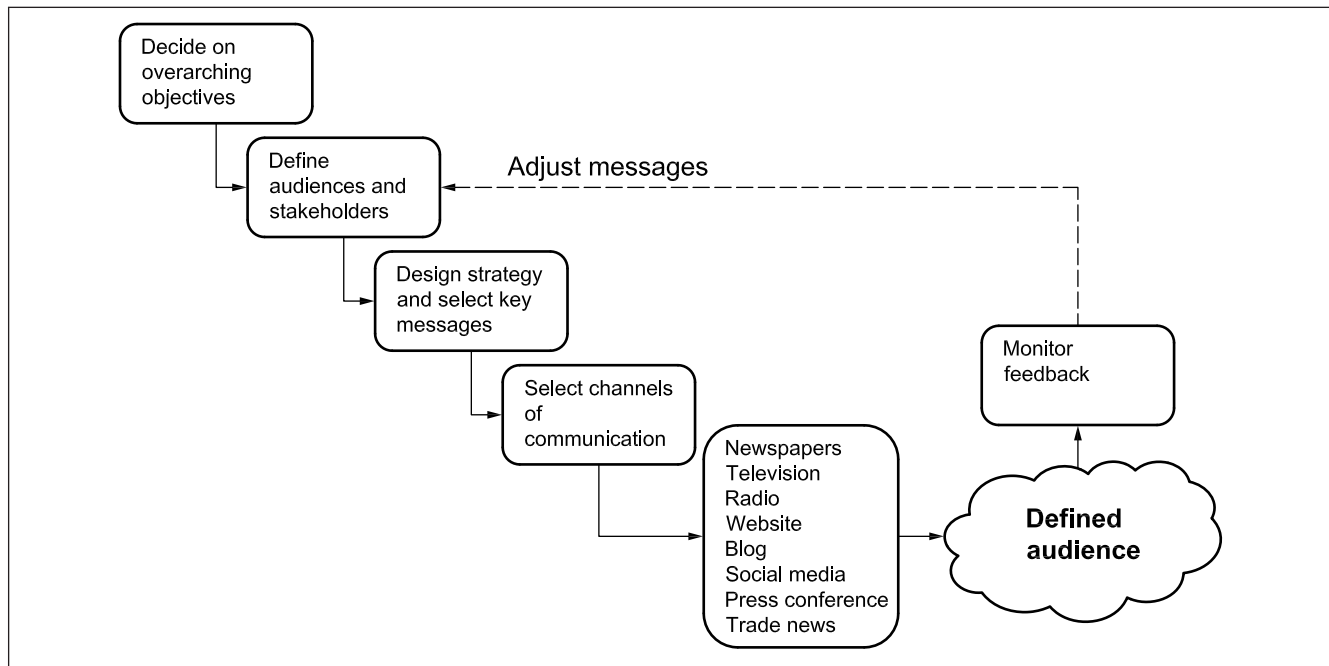
7.7 Consistency of message

Once the message has been established, its core content needs to be shared across the organization (lines to take) in order to ensure that there is consistency of message across all forms of communication that are going out, with those core elements being retained in whatever format is being used, e.g. tweets or press statements.

Messages need to be tailored for their audience, taking into account normal practices and the culture of the sender and recipient.

Figure 3 outlines a straightforward and practical crisis communication flow.

Figure 3 Crisis communication flow



7.8 Barriers to effective communication

As with all forms of communications there are barriers to effective crisis communication, which need to be recognized and circumvented. These include:

- use of complex or technical language which can confuse those reading or listening;
- unclear messages which do not convey the desired knowledge;
- failure to use the correct channels to reach the desired audiences; and
- failure to use the relevant or appropriate language for the target audience.

In addition, communications need to be aligned across departments, as well as with other (e.g. parent, sister) organizations involved in the response.

7.9 Social media: the opportunities and risks

Social media have accelerated exponentially the speed with which information is disseminated. Managers should therefore expect knowledge of a crisis to be in the public domain very quickly. The prevalence of social media presents an opportunity as well as a risk, and is a means of wide-area communication.

Due to its prevalence in modern society, organizations can no longer ignore the potential impact of social media and need therefore to be prepared to at least monitor, if not fully engage with, the online community. Ideally, this would be part of normal day-to-day communications in order to develop a credible online presence in the pre-crisis stage and therefore be better able to dispel rumour and misinformation at the time of a crisis.

The use of social media requires a careful balancing act. Delay in communication can severely damage relationships with interested parties and reduce trust. However, once a message is sent through social media, it cannot be withdrawn, so it is important that the message is timely, well drafted and accurate.

Social media provide organizations with the opportunity to engage with audiences, both actively and through monitoring on a scale and at a speed previously unforeseen. They can be extremely powerful if used well, for instance to dispel rumours, calm fears and demonstrate commitment.

8 Training, exercising and learning from crises

8.1 Developing people and rehearsing crisis management arrangements

Learning, development and the rehearsal of crisis management arrangements require a coherent strategy (see 8.2) and active implementation to improve the organization's crisis management capability (see Clause 4).

Analysis of the organization's vulnerabilities could expose staff to a level of scrutiny that is considered intimidating and invasive, but it is essential for addressing latent vulnerabilities.

8.2 Learning and development strategy

If the organization seeks an observable improvement in its crisis management capability and is prepared to invest in suitable ways of achieving this, it becomes important to make a distinction between training and exercising.

- a) Training is about people: it is concerned with the improvement of their knowledge, skills and attitudes in ways that will enhance their performance and thus benefit the organization.
- b) Exercising is about rehearsing crisis management arrangements: it has another dimension, in that it gives people practice in the application of their training. This adds value, but it remains secondary to the overall purpose of exercising, which is to rehearse and evaluate arrangements to establish their fitness for purpose.

It follows from this that training should usually precede exercising. To put people through an exercise without developing and confirming their fitness for their crisis management roles and responsibilities could be counterproductive, wasteful and possibly unethical.

Training and exercising should encourage and facilitate each individual to ask (and pursue) reflective and searching questions about their own and the organization's readiness and fitness for crisis management. The organization should support this and encourage legitimate challenge, in order to avoid complacency and false assumptions about its crisis management capability.

Another key principle is the need for a means of assessing the degree of improvement (or otherwise), demonstrated by exercises. This can be revealed by the review process outlined in 8.6 to 8.8.

8.3 Training for crisis management

The roles staff are expected to carry out in crisis management should, whenever possible, be broadly comparable to (or a natural extension of) those they carry out normally. For example, staff with data processing expertise might be suitable as log keepers and information handlers. Managers should also consider how best to use staff on the basis of transferable skills. Both serve to reduce the training burden, although it cannot be removed entirely.

However, care should be taken when selecting people (especially the most senior) for critical roles in the crisis management structure. Promotion to high grade is not necessarily confirmation that the individual has the right skill-set for the specific challenges of this discipline.

Once the crisis management roles have been identified and specified, a training needs analysis should be carried out to confirm what crisis-specific training is required for all staff involved in implementing the organization's crisis management arrangements. The results may be included in job specifications and performance agreements.

Training for the CMT should be realistic, practically useful and focused on issues of strategic significance to the organization. It is recommended that training includes reflection on crisis decision-making, the potential utility of decision frameworks (see Clause 6) and the balance between intuition and more deliberative and inclusive approaches. Decision makers should be familiar with the impact of innate and learned biases, heuristics and behaviours that condition individual and group decision-making, so that their impact can be moderated – or at least understood.

8.4 Skills development

Development of the following key skills for the crisis team members is important within the training programme:

- a) creating and maintaining shared situational awareness, with the underpinning skills in information management and analysis;
- b) analysing issues to appreciate their potential wider impacts;
- c) deconstructing problems, in order to assess their scale, potential duration, impacts, interdependencies and various dimensions;
- d) identifying and communicating effectively with stakeholders, the media and the public;
- e) identifying and countering threats (actual and emerging) to the organization's integrity, brand, values and reputation;
- f) determining, articulating and reviewing strategy, aims and objectives, and maintaining strategic focus without being drawn into the operational detail;
- g) demonstrating visible leadership and decision-making, and providing clear, unambiguous direction to teams and people working in stressful situations; and
- h) using tools provided to assist in the performance of crisis management roles.

8.5 Methods of instruction

The following methods may be used in training and developing skills.

- a) Use of case studies to promote reflection and analogous learning.
- b) Consideration and analysis of examples and case studies that reflect challenging and realistic levels of uncertainty, difficulty, dilemma and complexity.
- c) Graduated introduction of significant and appropriate levels of pace and tempo, designed to reflect (in a controlled way) the stresses of crisis management in individuals and teams.
- d) Structured and facilitated debriefing to identify strengths and improvement areas at the personal and organizational levels, with action planning to follow up on lessons identified. In this way, training is seen as a process of development rather than as an isolated event, however successful it might be perceived to be.
- e) Recording and justifying decisions taken, so that the actions of the crisis managers are open to examination later. This facilitates learning and allows managers to account for their choices during any enquiry after the event.

It is important that crisis managers understand that post-crisis reviews are concerned not with whether a decision was “correct”, but with whether or not it is defensible in terms of what was known at the time. “Defensible” implies that it was necessary, proportionate, legal, ethical and consistent with the values of the organization. Individual decision makers need to understand this, but there also needs to be clarity about this expectation throughout the organization.

8.6 Rehearsing crisis management arrangements

The main purpose of an exercise is to rehearse and evaluate arrangements, give staff practice in the roles they have been assigned and trained for, and confirm that arrangements actually work in practice.

This exercise is an opportunity for organizational self-analysis that demands a high level of reflexivity and an honest appraisal of performance. It might be that staff and units, if not the organization as a whole, are found wanting. If so, this should be exposed and managed constructively and not covered up to protect reputations or avoid uncomfortable realities.

The exercise plan should include a rigorous debriefing and analysis that leads to a statement of the lessons that have been identified. An action plan should then be raised and implemented.

Once improvements and corrections have been made, and have been proven in subsequent evaluations, it will be possible to call them lessons learned.

The organization’s policy on testing and exercising should be articulated, approved by top management and then visibly supported. Furthermore, the presentation and handling of the whole process is important, to make it very clear that resilience is part of the organization’s core business.

Training exercises and their scenarios should be appropriately challenging and complex, reflecting the general characteristics of crises, but they should also be realistic if they are to have credibility and be based on a reasonable estimate of the impact of the notional crisis. Scenario design is, in itself, a very useful way of learning by exploring risks, as well as testing the limits of assumptions about how crises might be managed.

8.7 Types of exercise

There is a wide variety of different exercise types available to support an organization’s training, exercising and testing requirements. The organization should select the exercise type or methodology that best meets its objectives and requirements.

NOTE Further guidance on exercising and testing is given in PD 25666.

8.8 Post-crisis and exercise activity

Post-crisis and exercise activity should be carefully managed and include:

- a) structured debriefings;
- b) scrutiny and evaluation of decisions and their implementation;
- c) analysis of the extent to which the exercise met its aim;
- d) identification of lessons that have been identified;
- e) an action to implement those lessons and a means of reporting and confirming this; and
- f) a “read forward” of these results into the rest of the exercise programme.

The services of specialist external facilitators and observers may be used for exercises and associated post-exercise activities. The lesson capture from a near-miss or an actual crisis follows the same process.

The results of exercising should be an increase in both the team capability and individual skills and awareness. Training and exercising should be an ongoing process of building and developing both.

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