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Crisis Gaming as an Element of Risk Mitigation and Organizational Resilience: A Case Study of The University of California, San Diego

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Crisis Gaming as an Element of Risk Mitigation and Organizational Resilience:
A Case Study of The University of California, San Diego

Phillip Van Saun
University of California, San Diego
Questions:

- Thinking about work, what potential issues or risks; ‘Keep you up at night?’
- What process do you use to actively search for ‘trouble spots’?
- What risk management practice or protocol do you use to mitigate exposure to negative consequences?

Takeaways:

- Provide examples and encourage the use of active crisis sensing, mitigation, response and recovery methodologies.
- Facilitate the open exchange of better practices regarding vulnerability reduction, response to and recovery from campus specific crises.
- Practice the use of crisis management techniques in response to an evolving, UC specific event scenario.
Uncover the ground-truth and cover your assets from future incrimination
“Those of us who have looked to the self-interest of lending institutions to protect shareholders’ equity, myself included, are in a state of shocked disbelief”

“People, organizations, communities, countries make bad decisions all the time based on their experience – Some call this the “preparing to fight the last war” syndrome.”

- Wayne Blanchard
Bad Data Guided U.S. Fukushima Call

Wrong Information
U.S. officials believed after Japan's nuclear accident that a pool containing fuel rods had lost its water and may have created the danger of a nuclear release, but Japan later found the rods remained submerged.

FUKUSHIMA REACTOR NO. 4
- Roof was blown off
- Spent fuel rods
- Spent-fuel pool
- Pressure vessel
- Core contained no fuel rods
- Suppression chamber

[T]here's no water in there whatsoever.'
- NRC official John Monninger, March 16, 2011

‘Unit 4’s spent fuel pool remains nearly undamaged.’
- Japanese government report, June 2011

* The reactor was not in operation at the time of the accident. Note: Drawing is schematic.
“Awareness, without the requisite tools, usually means that you die enlightened.”
1 individual can make the decision

Military

Local City Government

For-Profit University

Public University

Nonprofit Organization

Private University

Executive Leadership

Legislative Leadership

Complex Governance
Diffuse Decision Making
“Constituencies”
Culture

1 individual can veto the decision
“people can suddenly become their own boss at the worst possible moment” – Mann Gulch

Normal Operations
Crisis/Emergency

NIMS/ICS
Expectation Gap

- Must seek by listening and scanning
- Must know stakeholder—their expectations
- Must know performance on expectations
  - Change behavior and policies
  - Improve awareness or the perception gap
  - **Conditioned for disruption**
Conduct crisis micro-games.
Present the basic details of the risk to be addressed

Brainstorm possible solutions

Discuss challenges to resolution

Select moves to respond to the problem

Determine possible moves given the realities of your culture

Implement steps to mitigate identified risks
Crisis decision-making micro-games

- Present a problem – Problem Based Learning
- Facilitate the game
- Encourage brainstorming
- Identify and adjust for bias in the decision-cycle
- Guide the process to fast & frugal decision-making
- Close with plus/delta
Efficiency and effectiveness
The physical environment – setting up for success

Facilitate creation of dialogue web:
- Make the room small
- Orient so all equal and facing each other
Focus on the impact of cognitive bias to decision-making and adjust accordingly.
Predictable surprise

“They (business leaders) tend to ignore or downplay the possibility of random or uncontrollable occurrences that may impede their progress toward a goal.”

- Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman
Do not assume rational action.
"I'm in control here"

In 1981, after the March 30th assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan, then Secretary of State Alexander Haig asserted before reporters that "I'm in control here" as a result of Reagan's hospitalization.
Anticipate the ‘Blame Phase’

"This chart depicting the agencies responsibilities in the event of a disaster....It begins with a response to a disaster, leads to recovery, mitigation, risk reduction, prevention, preparedness...(dramatic pause) and ends up BACK IN DISASTER!"

"In truth, FEMA did exactly what they said they were going to do."  - Jon Stewart
Resist the temptation to develop or rely on elaborate and pedantic response plans.
'....As I mentioned in my earlier blog (Part 1), the Contingency Plan requirement is the seventh standard under the Administrative Safeguards requirement of the HIPPA security rule. The Security rule has Administrative, Physical and Technical safeguards. Each safeguard has its own standards. Each standard in turn has its own implementation specifications that are either required or addressable. As mentioned in Part 1, addressable does not mean optional.'
“AIG’s corporate philosophy has always encouraged full profit center accountability”

Charlie Shamieh, Executive Director, Enterprise Risk Management, December 6, 2007
Managing Risk Transfer

Applying a standards of care approach to risk management.

- **Definition of standard of care:** A diagnostic and treatment process that a clinician should follow for a certain type of patient, illness, or clinical circumstance. (New England Journal of Medicine, 2004)

- **Standard of care** n. the watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence *that a reasonable person in the circumstances would exercise*

- In legal terms, the level at which the average, prudent provider in a given community would practice.
Scan the horizon for threats, risks, and opportunities.
Basic Distinctions

- Open-ended; usually not sure exactly what you are searching for
- Look ahead, identify possibilities, contingencies
- Anticipate, prevent, manipulate
- Minimize uncertainty, see the risks
- Opponent or enemy
Turning Information into Intelligence

- **Credibility**: Trustworthy source, can be contacted, known or respected authority, verifiable credentials, evidence of quality control, organizational support.

- **Accuracy**: Current, factual, detailed.

- **Reasonableness**: Fair, balanced, objective, reasoned, no conflict of interest, absence of fallacies or slanted tone.

- **Support**: Available corroboration, claims supported, documentation supplied. A source you can triangulate (find at least two other sources that support it).
Develop pre-event crisis communication templates.
What to communicate

- What to do
- Where to go
- Where NOT to go
- How and when we will provide updates
Message mapping

- What are the three most important things your audience would like to know?
- What are the three most important things you would like your audience to know?
- What are the three most important things your audience is most likely to get wrong unless they are emphasized?
Apply a lean crisis-management structure.
Synthetic Organizations

Usually in crisis … organizations concede authority for a time to a new entity which then acts in some sense on their behalf, followed by a return to a new normalcy, perhaps with some key adjustments.
Decisions made during a crisis can be improved by training decision-makers to recognize and adjust for bias in the decision cycle and by using fast and frugal decision-making heuristics.
Fast & frugal crisis-decision tools

- Fluency heuristic - If one alternative is recognized faster than another, infer that it has the higher value on the criterion.
  
  Schooler & Hertwig, 2005

- Take-the-best - To infer which of two alternatives has the higher value: (a) search through cues in order of validity, (b) stop.
  
  Gigerenzer and Goldstein, 1996
Evacuate [or follow MTA guidance] and stay?

- One alternative is recognized faster than another, infer that it has the higher value.

- Which of two alternatives has the higher value – Stay or leave?

- 2700 employees survive.

- Rick Rescorla (RIP)
  Director of Security:
  Morgan Stanley, WTC 9/11
Remember the last event, and learn from it.
Close with Plus/Delta

- The Plus/Delta gives participants the opportunity to share what they thought was good about an activity (plus) and what they would change in order to improve the activity (delta).
- Plus - Things Done Well
- Delta - Ideas for improvement/fodder for next micro-game.
Think about how to bring goodness out of a bad situation.
Establish a ‘New Normal.’
Declare victory and leave the battlefield.
Recap

- Uncover the ground-truth, and cover your assets from future incrimination.
- Conduct crisis micro-games.
- Focus on the impact of cognitive bias to decision-making, and adjust accordingly.
- Resist the temptation to develop or rely on elaborate and pedantic response plans.
- Scan the horizon for threats, risks, and opportunities.
Recap

• Develop pre-event crisis communication templates.
• Do not assume rational action.
• Remember the last event, and learn from it.
• Think about how to bring goodness out of a bad situation.
• Establish a New Normal.
• Declare victory, and leave the battlefield.
Chance favors the prepared mind

• “When anyone asks me how I can best describe my nearly forty years at sea, I merely say, *uneventful*...”

*E.J. Smith, Captain RMS Titanic*
Sources

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– Van Saun, Phillip.
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  • *Reflections on September 10, 2001.*
Thank you.