

ROLE OF HR IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

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Abstract

A Crisis Management Team (CMT) is a central component in preparing organizations for responding to emergencies to maintain operation stability and reduce the impact of the crisis. The team must provide strategies for prevention of, and response to, incidents such as natural disasters, hackers, or public relations crises. Based on the well-defined leadership roles and special responsibilities, the CMT continues to work under pressure to make essential decisions and bring organizational functioning back to normal. Training and participation in the exercise of crisis management teams' structure, roles, and responsibility underline the significance of risk management and organizational resiliency in the present paper. Among them there is an analysis of the necessity of having subteams and differentiated functional roles in the large organizations, variable in their activation depending on the degree of the crisis. In addition, it looks at how these institutions involve the Human Resource managers, senior leaders, public relations practitioners and other technical personnel in operational teams to avail a pluralistic approach in mitigating crises. Thus, with strong analytical evidence, this paper shows that efficient planning, application of efficient communication technology and logistical organisation are some of the key cornerstones in a proper crisis management. It also assesses the importance of training, drilling, and role plays in the improvement of contingency planning. Last of all, the suggested directions for constructing resilience approaches and using technologies will help enhance the response to crises and reduce long-term consequences.

Keywords: Crisis Management Team (CMT), Incident Response, Emergency Preparedness, Risk Mitigation, Organizational Resilience, Crisis Communication, Decision-Making, Disaster Recovery, Role Assignments, Crisis Simulations.

Introduction

In the current world of business, the specificity of which is instability, various risks and threats are poised to happen resulting in either natural disasters, cyber-attacks, instabilities within the company's or other financial issues as well as various negative events that may harm a company's reputation. Such occurrences can and do happen and can be the cause of disruption, breakdown of business reputations, and losses. In order to minimise these risks, organisations have to establish a Crisis Management Team (CMT) – a group of professionals responsible for developing and implementing appropriate and timely response to emergencies. This team shall consist of senior management personnel, heads of departments, Human Resource officers, communication officers/ public relations officers and operations staff. Crisis management is divided into many compartments and each member is held responsible for certain areas within the crisis which include planning, communication, decision making and logistics. The top priority of the team is to safeguard employees, preserve organizational property, and get business back on track as soon as possible. Crisis management can be broken down into two main stages: planning and handling a crisis. Under preparedness phase, the team draws up scientific measures to be taken in case of an emergency, undertake assessments of contracting risks and put in place simulations to be done to cover some or all emergencies. These activities assist in acquainting the team with some of the responsibilities of its members to help assuage a somewhat uniform response in

real disasters. During the response phase, strategies are implemented, situations watched, messages passed, and methods adjusted to match events. The use of subgroups or regional response groups may also be used for local concerns, or for specific work areas, due to their larger size, which may cause them to respond more slowly. For example, there is a communications subteam which addresses the issues of media and others subteam addresses the problems of evacuations and resources. Organized this way the CMT can effectively manage crises at any time and in case of multiple / multi-location ones.

Technology is also used modern methods in managing crisis. Application such as the tracker, communication system and analytical system support decision making and coordination in handling of incidents. First, these systems offer real-time information, enable team communication and help leaders evaluate the effects of a decision almost immediately. Finally, the effectiveness of the Crisis Management Team requires regular skill building sessions, dry runs and constant development. Management needs to reflect over past occurrences, assess weaknesses and tailor preventive measures with regard to new risks. The capacity to modify the tactics used as well as to make the most of the most effective models of the given economy guarantees the organisational sustainability.

Objectives

1. Discuss the Position of HR in the Management of Crisis and Business Continuity Planning
2. Propose/assemble a plan for the enhanced workforce recovery or for mitigating personnel vulnerability.
3. Improving Co-ordination and Decisions-making Process in Organisations during Emergencies
4. Build and sustain long term organizational resilience through human resource management

Planning Stage: Building Crisis Preparedness

The planning function of a Crisis Management Team (CMT) involves preparing an organisation for effective management of emergent conditions. This phase entails evaluation of threats likely to recur and how best to mitigate the impact and have a rapid recovery. The major purpose is to achieve the aim of cultivating a positive approach of the organization in combating the existing crises. First, an assessment of risk is conducted by the CMT, the potential risks under consideration include; physical such as natural disasters, cyber and those affecting finances. First it helps the team prioritize the identified risks and come up with matching risk response plans. The other important activity that is carried out during this phase is the engaging of the stakeholders. The CMT collaborates with internal staff including the top management and directors, and external respondents and suppliers. In these sessions, the facilitators are able to verify needs and anticipations in ways that make sure that all sides are represented in the crisis plan. The following activity is therefore a resource audit in which the currently available resources such as the emergency kits, the available technological tools and any backup system option is reviewed. It is still needed to find out what gaps existed and needed to be filled by procurement or by partnerships in order to have those resources ready for use when needed.

The main framework of this phase is a crisis management plan. It contains standard operating procedures of the organization that give responsibilities of various persons including timelines to undertake response actions. It also includes the communication tactics when there is a case because it outlines the internal and external communication strategies in case of a crisis. Once the plan is formulated training seminars and dress rehearsals are organized to educate the employees and to expose the nuggets of the plan. Such simulations are effective in exposing vulnerabilities and define the state of preparedness.

Table 1: Key Activities in the Planning Stage

Activity	Purpose	Outcome
Risk Assessment	Identify vulnerabilities and prioritize risks.	Clear understanding of potential threats.
Stakeholder Consultations	Gather insights and expectations from internal and external parties.	Enhanced alignment and preparedness.
Resource Audit and Procurement	Evaluate existing resources and address gaps.	Availability of critical resources during emergencies.
Plan Development	Create detailed crisis response protocols.	Comprehensive and actionable crisis management plan.
Training and Simulations	Test plans and prepare employees for emergencies.	Improved readiness and identification of weaknesses.

So the planning stage can be regarded as making those organizations which are faced with crises to go with proactive measures of response. To destabilize threats and uncertainties, organizations need to work on the susceptibility, role clarification, and employee awareness. By emphasizing preparation, interruption is reduced, self-confidence is raised and the context for a proper crisis management is created.

Crisis Response Phase: Executing Emergency Measures

The crisis containment phase logically, encompasses operational strategies that are exercised during a real crisis. This stage needs quick organized and efficient decision, planning, and control to prevent, or at least lessen the impacts of, such disruption. The CMT uses defined response plans, measures the consequences and offers support services for the safeguarding of personnel and the continuation of business operations. The initial level is the identification of indicative signs of potential crises through logging and incidents tracking systems. When the problem is detected early, then the team can let the emergency plans be put in practice before things get out of hand. As soon as an event is classed as a crisis, then the impact assessment measures the depth and outlines the necessary resources. This evaluation makes sure that right measures are taken depending with the level of calamities.

Subsequently the crisis commanding system is launched and the roles and responsibilities of the team members are defined. Mitigation, which includes; evacuation, medical response, and distribution of resources are exercised to prevent loss of life and property. There is active communication, which is very crucial at this stage. These means that the CMT sends information to the employees, stakeholders, and the media through mass notification systems and press releases to prevent panic. The CMT also puts operations measures and offers support services to enhance morale and welfare. These are for counseling, medical needs and food support for the victims. The CMT also engage the senior management and the external agencies in order to ensure different strategies are harmonized as responses are fashioned. Fixed update makes flexibility possible hence helps the teams to alter the plans in response to events as they unfold.

Table 2: Key Activities in the Crisis Response Phase

Activity	Purpose	Outcome
Early Monitoring and Detection	Identify early warning signs to prevent escalation.	Faster response time and reduced damage.
Impact Assessment	Evaluate crisis severity and determine resource needs.	Targeted resource allocation and risk containment.
Command System Activation	Implement emergency measures and assign tasks.	Organized and efficient response execution.
Communication Plan Execution	Disseminate critical updates and instructions to stakeholders.	Reduced uncertainty and improved transparency.
Support Services Deployment	Provide counseling, medical aid, and morale-boosting activities.	Enhanced well-being and focus on recovery efforts.

The crisis response phase focuses a lot on speed, vertical communication, and collaborative plans for dealing with crises. With the help of data monitoring, real-time updates, and support services organizations can limit damage, protect their stakeholders and continue operation. The emphasis on change means that the response is constantly developing in relation to the crisis and protecting the organizational sensitivity and recuperation.

Crisis Management Team Structure and Roles

The ICS enables an organization to display order in approaches towards dealing with or managing crisis in an organization. Basic to this framework is a concept called the Command Team, which is responsible for managing the entire process of crisis response and to guarantee compliance to organizational goals. The Command Team has the role in setting goals, obtaining necessary support, communicating with the upper management and overcoming conflict. Some of these positions include; Communication officer responsible for internal and external communication, Safety officer responsible for the physical safety of the employees and facilities, and Executive relation officer who communicates and connect the command team with executive management. All together, these roles give leadership direction, ensure decision-making coherence, and afford execution of contingency plans.

The Command Team has four more subsidiary teams known by their official titles OPERATIONS, PLANNING AND INTELLIGENCE, LOGISTICS and FINANCE. The Operations Team is responsible for the tactical aspects related to management of crises. Some of the responsibilities are to assess the damage, coordinate with primary responders, to reconnect services and gather status reports. This is a team from the facilities, security and IT departments for example to deal with situations that could escalation to threats and stabilize important operations.

The Planning and Intelligence Team deals with information as it aims at assembling and processing data with view to the development of the organization. They evaluate status reports as well as track activities and make recommendations that affects the command team. Often this team consists of the specialists from the corporate communications, legal department, and business continuity to enhance the reliable and prompt delivery of information to a stakeholder. By having both command and operational personnel present the organization is able to form a solid base to work from and allow the team to move quickly and limit the amount of downtime that is experienced by the business in the event of a crisis.

Support Subteams and Finance in Crisis Management

Besides the command and operational teams, it is necessary to indicate the Logistics Team and the Finance Team, the support of which is important in a critical situation. The Logistics Team is involved in meeting the necessities of life requirements for people such as; food, shelter, transportation, medical, and emotional support. This team is to ensure that both employees and responders are taken care of and provided all that they would require to continue working. People that are likely to belong to this team come from functions that include human resources, EAP or else, travel. They also offer for support and encouragement through social counseling programs since they ensure that teams are motivated especially during difficult moments.

The Finance Team is responsible for the finances related to the crisis mitigation; how money is spent, whether the money was budgeted for such expenditure, and if the claims have been filled appropriately. This encompasses payment of employees which involves computation of wages as well as purchase of goods in case of an emergency and insurance claims and workers compensation. Another finds the principles thereof realized in collaboration between the members of the finance, risk management, procurement, and the treasury departments to document the costs during the crisis. The Finance Team also plays a crucial role in assessing potential outcomes for the company's financial structure and strategies the company should take to get back on track.

Each team is very important in making sure that enough resources are provided and the financial status of the crisis management is checked on. They ensure that contingencies go uninterrupted, there is no fraud within the affected area, and the recovery inputs are protected.

Crisis Management Team Organization Chart



The Incident Command System subdivides tasks into positions so that organizations can address the mishaps in question efficiently. The Command and Operations Teams are related to the actions taken immediately in response to a disaster, while efforts to eliminate the consequences can be supported by the Logistics and Finance Teams, which keep the work going financially. This approach ensures that the organizations can be in a position to counter any calamity which may happen and at the same time ensure that all the stakeholders are in a position to know all the things that are happening in the organization and at the same time the organizations will be in a position to show that they have a good probationary measure in case anything wrong happens. In terms of coordination and control, designating roles and responsibilities in the system will improve the organization's cooperation and reduce misunderstanding, so can help the organization to have a stronger recovery capability in the event of emergency.

The Role of the Crisis Manager

Post-holder: Crisis Manager is the overall coordinator and lead of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) and therefore holds the roles of planning, direction and control of the crisis handling. Reporting to the organization director, this position is independent of the chain of command so that the crisis manager can make quick decisions without direction from company executives. Autonomy is important because some situations require a business to act quickly to reduce the damage caused by a terrible event. Still, for the crisis manager to succeed, the authority to make decisions should rest with the board of directors, and senior leadership must back all related actions unequivocally. This structure avoids the formation of bottlenecks resulting from second-guessing or over-supervision. The crisis manager's main duty is to create and discuss the CMP to be followed in the organization during a crisis. Such activities are formation of the crisis management team, preparedness involving training and practices and risk assessment before they occur. The manager has to detect potential threats, evaluate conditions, or state an emergency and initiate the response program. By seizing initiative in emergency situations, the crisis manager assesses, disputes, and develops a course of actions to avert harm. They also ensure employee safety, security of the organization's property, and shareholder- management transparency. Besides that the crisis manager leads the response and if there is not direct connection to senior management the crisis manager works as an intermediary. Among these responsibilities, they include reporting, making presentation of recommended solutions, and in some occasions making, critical decisions. In the case of internal crisis it means when the crisis is based on internal violation of ethical norms, for instance, executive misconduct the crisis manager would have to go right over the heads.

A competent crisis manager assesses how well a tactical plan is implemented and how a strategic planner plans and thinks. They have to prepare for secondary crises, make long-term threat evaluations, and organize business recovery in order to avoid interruptions. They also conduct assessments after a crisis, determining the nature of the response and the activities that need improvement of enhancement in the next crisis. Besides, the mentioned people should be regularly trained, and the crisis manager collaborates with other experts outside the team. Concisely, the crisis manager acts as the organizations protector, directing crisis prevention, mitigation, and resolution efforts. They have the privilege of making quick decisions, top management backing empowers them to curtail loss and quickly regain normalcy. Such leadership implies that the organization is ready and able to respond to any future challenges as may be expected.

Key Roles in the Crisis Management Team

Members of the CMT are drawn from different organizational functions since an emergency may affect all operational areas. Every team participant has specific roles to play: for instance, security issues and logistical matters are addressed specially, as are financial concerns, and all are professionally involved in the crisis response. In large organizations, these positions may be occupied, while in small teams, people perform such tasks in parallel with other activities. One of the essential post is Security Manager, who is responsible for site security and examines to determine the exposures which may threaten the personnel and property of the organization during emergencies. They work with police and other external security companies for prevention and combatting of threats and insecurity. Another important position is the Spokesperson/Public Affairs Advisor who controls organizing the communicational activity, directs toward press, and provides for identity of stances. This position also crucial in ensuring that the public perception of the organization is positive. The benefits of the Human Resources Manager include being responsible for managing staff records and their contact information, their benefits data as well. They take charge of mental

health, help in making claims and see to it that the labor laws are observed especially in disasters. In the same way, the company has an HSE Lead whose tasks include safeguarding the employees, identifying threats to the staff's safety, and investigating the extent of any loss in order to determine the applied mitigation measures.

The Legal Specialist of the organization deals with the legal concerns on liabilities, possible legal actions, and oversight on written communiqué as well as control over privatized information. This also checks regulatory compliance and reducing risks of being sued by different parties. On the other hand, the Command Center Manager is held with the responsibility of sustaining command center as the working environment and ensuring that all the important amenities are available throughout the disaster period and that all the systems are running while the Operations and Business Recovery Manager's role is to facilitate the restoration of basic business functions. They schedule the power shut down and turn on processes, help in the recovery of staff as well as assist in repair works of structures. Support Staff help answer documentation inquiries, prepare meeting minutes and update the team on key data through their organisational memory.

IT has a crucial role as part of crisis management, and specifically the department is managed by Information Technology (IT) Manager to help human resources in case of cyber attacks, technical failures, or data loss. He/She is overall responsible for ensuring the organization's need in financial resources is met, that there are funds required in an emergency, oversees claims, and coordinates the relationship with insurance providers. They also provide records of expenses to help in audit and post-crisis financial reporting exercises Business Unit Representatives and Subject Matter Experts present specialist perspectives that may reflect their departments or industries to complement the team's skill set in solving certain types of problems. For instance, procurement managers can help to recovery supplies chains approaches, while the specialists on the health field can give information during the outbreaks.

Crisis Management Team Planning and Response

A Crisis Management Team (CMT) should be formed, and a checklist carries out to be sure that an organization is ready for crises. In the planning phase, it is required to determine the position of a crisis manager and divide work among departments including the communication department, operation and logistics, financial department, IT department, and security department. Everyone within the teams must have a backup should a team member be unavailable due to an emergency so as not to have any spaces in leadership and implementation. The Incident Command System is used by organizations that formally assign planners of intelligence and operations to ensure that the escalation of the system is directed by structures.

Risk assessment for the program to be implemented needs to be conducted during planning phase; establishment of communication structures; and notification tools like mass alert, phone trees, or cloud based alert for immediate notification. After the development of a crisis management plan, semiannual drills and tabletops check the team's able performance. These simulations enable tactical plans to be critically reassessed, and potential shortcomings unveiled and corrected besides building team confidence. In the response phase of the simulation the Crisis Team Leader alerts the emergency response, reviews the effects of the incident and oversees co-ordination of all the units. The focus is still maintained to communication where spokespersons address the media and liaisons provide updates to other divisions of the organization. While safety managers try to diagnose injuries, safeguard locations, and start investigations, finance officers monitor costs and the handling of claims.

Human resources takes care of employee welfare, for example, organizing for staff to get counseling and keeping their records for them.

Multi-site organisations must also mimic CMTs at regional, national, and site-levels depending with their crises. This format of hierarchy makes sure that the responses achieved are standardized, with procedures for raising concern to another level. The approach ensures that there is order throughout the aspects of the organization tends to eliminate confusion in multinational places where operations are carried out. The CMT checklist helps there being preparedness and prepared action protocols...⁴⁰³ where all roles in one are described, communication channels established and the emergency plans set. The concept of proactive planning, training, and assigning responsibilities of staff contribute to the formation of a highly adaptive teams equipped with the best approach that reduce risks and offer the best approach in cases of disruptive occurrences.

Challenges and Solutions in Crisis Management Teams

Although CMTs are critical as components of the disaster management system, several organizational issues exist that can compromise the effectiveness of the teams. Perhaps the most typical problem is a lack of top management commitment: managers do not take risks seriously, and cut funding for contingency planning when no events have happened recently. This could result in out-of-sync strategic directions that can mean the plans are out of date, inadequate resources, groups that are not ready for the challenges they face. To address this, risk assessments must be conducted frequently while crisis planning needs to be regarded as an annual media investment. Too many roles remain ambiguous during a crisis such that team members are unsure about their responsibilities. This can clearly delay the responses and also may lead to confusion mostly during preferences and preference explanations. It is suggested to define individual working duties and regular training to remind people about their assignments. On the same note, theoretical all-tables exercises which pretend to pose issues and challenges, allow teams to demonstrate decision-making, communication, and allocation of resources on the real crisis situation.

Lack of adequate practice and teamwork are active dimensions of performance since; teams which do not conduct joint drills might not have well-coordinated response to emergencies. Teams thus perform well in response to patterns that are rehearsed and over time a team acquires muscular memory. Organisations should preferably conduct annual exercises and it is advisable to perform the simulation on at least two occasions in a year. These drills also enable teams to expose weaknesses in process and coordination and the log-chain, as well as enable them negotiate resources in case of actual emergencies. Another question that has been raised is that of over analysis or paralysis, that leads to in-action by teams because of the fear of making wrong decisions. Therefore, in certain situations being able to make decisions as fast as possible is more important than making the right one. There is pressure for action orientation, and solution development relies on pre-designated courses of action. Having a capable incident leader means that decisions are passed and made on time and there won't be confusion in the process.

Another weakness, inherent in the management of crises, is that communication within and between organizations may breakdown during a disaster. People to people communication is avoided being bogged down by the failure of lay down means of communication such as backup phones, texts, and digital cloud solutions. Organizations should also prepare and display on desks up to date contact cards of all it's employees. Cultural restraints and denial of risks within organizations also greatly hamper preparedness. There are organisations which do not readily acknowledge risks in a bid to cover up for the gaps they have by banking on the insurance policy as their fallback or hedge. Nevertheless, this strategy fails to

appreciate the effect of reputation losses, disruption of operations, and legal risks. Key issues in increasing organisational readiness include commitment, clarity of roles, training, and focus on action. Standard operating procedures and resources in crisis management can only be attained by encouraging transparency, accountability and organisational culture for learning. When gaps and response plans are addressed, reviewed, or observed, through drills and evaluation, then executives discover that their teams are sustainable and can manage emergencies. Therefore, fostering a preventive preemptive approach as well as investing in structural recovery allows the firms to not only be ready and proactive in the face of the disruptions but also to restore confidence and begin operations immediately.

Conclusion

In this case, a Crisis Management Team (CMT) is crucial to ensure that organization is prepared towards handling emergent situations. Thus, CMTs explicitly define who does what and when and how they are to do it, thereby, avoiding disruption, safeguarding staff, and preserving operations. Tactical, logistical and financial activities can also be well-coordinated through the ICS structure that offers systematic frameworks. A crisis manager is central for planning and controlling the emergency responses and directing those responses toward the goals set by senior management. Assisted by safety officers, IT managers, finance officers and legal advisors the CMT provides detailed counter measures to crises. Failure and effectiveness depend not only on the establishment of basic roles but also on training exercises, simulations, and post-execution assessments to fine-tune strategies and readiness factors. Still, such contingencies as role indeterminacy or ambiguity, inadequate practice, and scanty support from top management are likely to undermine success. But organizations can avoid these by practicing action based decisions, routine exercises, and technologically advanced communication networks. Altogether, anticipative crisis management is vital to organizational sustainability. They have ensure that companies can keep damage to a minimum and recover quickly through putting an adequate amount of emphasis on preparedness, accountability, and collaboration. Cultivating the CMT assures credibility with the stakeholders, flexibility in the future that is unpredictable, and growth of the system in the long run.

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