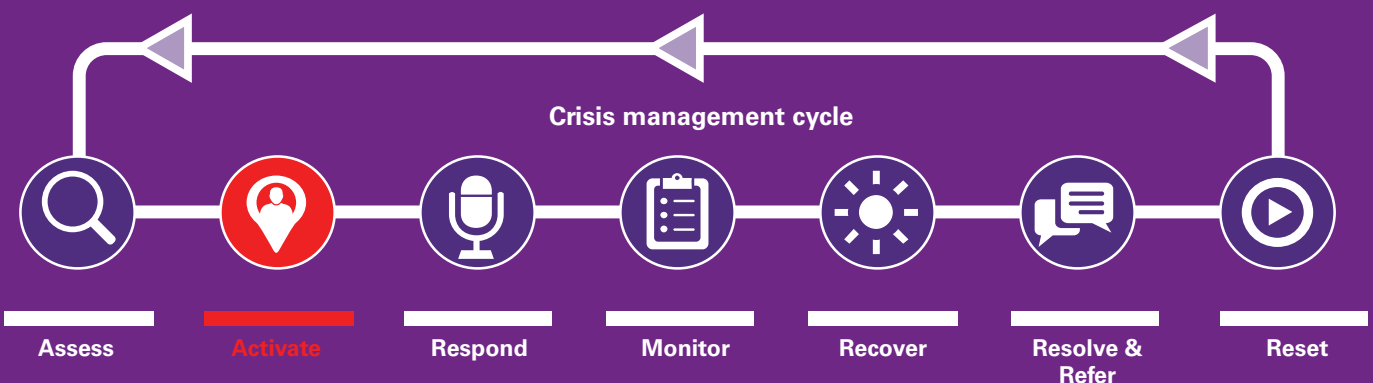


COVID-19 Crisis Management

Hints and Tips

Managing critical moments during the COVID-19 crisis means bringing together a range of separate capabilities and disciplines to help the executive make decisions and manage the issue:

- Crisis Management focuses on the management of strategic impacts of incidents, such as severe financial losses; reputational damage; and / or, compromise to the organisations ability to achieve its strategic objectives or fulfil its mission.
- Emergency Management focuses on the immediate response to an incident to manage time critical threats to the lives and safety of individuals; the protection of assets under threat; and, the risks of broader environmental impacts.
- Incident Management focuses on the escalation and management of events which fall outside existing processes and/or systems; or, are considered by the organisation as warranting special management attention.
- Business Continuity Management focuses on the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable, predefined levels –despite disruptive incidents – and to recover these services to a business as usual position.
- IT Disaster Recovery/IT Service Continuity focuses on the response and recovery of IT systems and assets from significant outages, failures or degraded service.



Why does crisis management (as a capability) fail?

- Strategic intent not established and absence of clear leadership over priorities.
- Non business-wide response, uncoordinated and stovepiped by business unit.
- Business leaders from affected departments leave issues to SMEs rather than owning it.
- Bureaucratic processes and lack of empowered decision making lead to slow response.
- No crisis communications/lack of communication (internal and external).
- Not 'managing the impact' and instead getting fixated on tactical fixes to address issues.
- No review of the situation or evaluation of response to date.

What makes a good Crisis management team (CMT) response?

- **TRIAGE!** (repeatedly) – Situations change. Critically evaluate new information. Do you need to change your approach?
- Leverage the past – Have elements of the crisis been faced before? What learnings can you use?
- Communicate – In times of confusion and stress, clear communication of information, decisions and actions is critical.
- Group-wide – Involve all members of the CMT. Cyber isn't just an IT issue, a fire isn't just for health & safety, and COVID-19 affects us all.
- Delegate – Divide and conquer – trust.
- Record and remember – capture actions and decisions, have a common view of the situation.

Strategic Response - Gold

Key Considerations

Continuously **create situational awareness** to understand the incident; what has happened, what is happening and what might happen

Managing the impact on **people** will be a national priority

In consultation with your crisis communications team, consider **consistent messages** in line with client treatment strategy

Gold team members **may be pulled into tactical issues**, this may impact their ability to adopt a more strategic view of how the situation is developing

Multi-disciplinary approach for issue resolution will be required. Ensure an integrated approach is in place to achieve a shared view of the situation and rapidly update or generate strategy and response plans

Regulators will **need to be informed** and regularly updated throughout the crisis. Engage the legal team for guidance on reporting requirements

Consider the **whole organisation** and how to manage and care for staff throughout the crisis

Do you have **the information you need** before making a decision?

Key Outputs

Calmness, composure and confidence is consistently reported as a key component of mental toughness and its development

Consistently be **responsive and supportive** of all employees

Identify who will **front** all media interviews or press conferences – and make sure a deputy is in place as well

A **disciplined virtual war room** will help bring people together and drive pace and delivery – set up a collaboration space

Prioritise internal and external stakeholders – i.e. regulators, parent companies, subsidiaries, branches

Be ready and prepared for the long haul – **months not weeks**

Tactical Response - Silver

Key Considerations

Maintain **situational awareness** to understand the incident; what has happened, what is happening and what might happen?

Prioritise information that comes into play throughout the crisis

Consider customer **attraction and retention strategies**, which articulates how to continuously protect, treat and compensate your customers

Consider **external support** for:

- Technical assistance
- Complaints handling
- Crisis communication and monitoring
- Legal

One **big learning** from most incidents, is that the initial response of applying a tactical 'Band-Aid' on issues without considering the longer term or underlying issues can cause problems downstream

As the crisis may evolve from days to weeks, develop CMT rosters for core members to **handover to deputies** as it moves to 24/7.

Consider the **impact** of the incident on attracting and retaining customers, from a multi-channel perspective

Consider **different platforms** to relay messaging quickly

Key Outputs

Ensure **decisions and actions are logged** as regulators may request copies of this and can become increasingly demanding throughout the crisis

Monitor the **status** of what information is being sent to key stakeholder, when it is being sent and by whom

Monitor **response** to the messaging (including social media) and react appropriately

Review and manage impact on staff's **well-being and morale**

Look out as well for **stress indicators** in CMT members – watch for people attempting to be superheroes

Make sure everyone has a **trusted source** of advice on what is happening during the COVID-19 crisis

Long-term Crisis Management

As the COVID-19 crisis evolves from weeks to months, so too, should the approach to managing crisis operations. BAU activities shift to include those activities surrounding managing the crisis response. Teams should consider implementing the following:

- Ensure an appropriate number of staff are trained and available for each CMT role – have deputies
- Develop CMT rosters and a rota for core members to handover to deputies, if necessary providing 24/7 cover for the extended period
- Monitor stress indicators in CMT members. Have plans in place to manage stress, burn out and mental wellbeing. Beware of people trying to be superheroes.
- Empower colleagues to delegate tasks so as to spread effort across the team and reduce fatiguing scenarios, consider cross-training staff.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place with agendas for every meeting. This will ensure the collation of appropriate information even though team members may change
- Have a robust procedure and checklist in place to manage all handovers
- Ensure a communications plan is in place and all members of the CMT are aware of this and the channels available for use.

Although it may not seem to be a priority, it is important to consider long-term reputational impact, before any major decisions are made or statements released. Thinking should not be restricted to the organisation but, consider customers, stakeholders (employees, investors, suppliers) and the broader society.

There will be a number of challenges faced by organisations in the long-term:

- Teams must critically evaluate all new information as it arises. If uncertainty is a big part of the situation, making sense of what is actually going on, and updating that diagnosis and impact in the face of dynamic developments, becomes a key challenge.
- Teams must be ready to focus organisational capacity and resources on business priorities, stopping non core tasks, and looking for opportunities to cross-skill and provide flexibility. While management of the financial challenges will be paramount, operational resilience issues will come to the fore over time.
- The challenge of communicating the right message: persuading the public, the media and others of the organisations' interpretation of what is going on, what can be done, and how the organisation is supporting its employee, the public and its key clients/customers.

The return to 'Normalcy'

Organisations would be advised to adopt a new standard of 'Normalcy' driven by their experiences whilst responding to COVID-19. Organisations have had to adapt operating models, at pace in order to maintain their ability to continue providing key services to clients. The initial set of crisis management meetings will undoubtedly focus on a rapid strategic response to COVID-19, e.g. how do you protect your people? How do you manage people who become ill? What about your supply chain? However, once some of these hard decisions have been made, there may be space to consider normalising some of these practices. Should your crisis response become part of business as usual, including:

1. Working from home
2. Automation of certain manual processes
3. Diversifying your supply chain
4. Working collaboratively within your industries
5. Focussing on your staff well being
6. Remote delivery of services and products

These types of actions can lead to multiple benefits including better supported and empowered staff, better systemic resilience across your industry sector, reduction in your carbon and industrial footprint, increased efficiency, rationalisation and standardisation across processes and reduction in costs and overheads.

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