

Supportive Connections

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Flawed assumptions

The Best Laid *Crisis* Plans That Go Astray

Anniversary acknowledgements of past crises tend to enhance awareness that the next event is most likely lurking in the shadows. Is it going to be another terrorist attack or will mother nature wreak havoc on us once again? Trying to be prepared, we pull our trusty crisis management notebooks off the shelf and dust off the cobwebs. For those of us who utilized the plan over the past year, we might have found it didn't actually hold up all that well under the duress of a crisis. So what's the problem? Where did we go wrong? We have the book, we have the plan, some of us had the crisis . . . but maybe we didn't have quite the outcome we anticipated. Let's look at a few flawed assumptions that contribute to the "not so perfect" management of a crisis.

Flawed assumption #1: We have the crisis plan, what more do we need?

The flaw in this assumption is two-fold. The first is that a crisis management plan is a task to complete on the to-do list and then put away for safe keeping. The second is that crisis management is viewed as a static rather than a dynamic process. In reality we have to breathe new life into our plan regularly in order to manage the many challenges we will face at that time. Crises change over time and so should our response.

Flawed assumption #2: How many times do we have to practice this plan, it's costly!!!!

The old adage "practice makes perfect" applies to sports as well as crisis management planning. The ideal for your crisis management plan is for it to become as integrated into everyday work-life as gathering around the coffee pot in the morning. This is labor intensive up front, but the payoff in the long run is priceless. The key to practicing a crisis management plan is to keep it fresh, include challenges that will help to identify gaps, but not so difficult that it becomes an exercise in futility. The more varied your simulations and practice exercises, the more expansive your skill repertoire will become.

Flawed assumption #3: If it "ain't broke", don't fix it . . .

Although there may be truth to this, advances in technology and the wide array of crises that are being thrown our way will challenge this overly simplistic view of your plan. When we become overconfident in our ability to manage a crisis, we stand a chance of being "corrected" at a very inopportune time.

Flawed assumption #4: As long as the people in charge know what to do . . .

Sometimes when we develop plans and teams, we forget that the planners (us) are also vulnerable to the catastrophic events. The plan may only be as good as the depth of each team (and backup team) you have identified to manage the crisis. When teams become tired, mistakes happen and burnout takes over.

Flawed assumption #5: It's not in my job description . . .

Crisis management is in everyone's job description – whether as a part of the team or a possible participant in a crisis event. Companies need to establish a norm that crisis management simulations and plans are part of everyone's work-life. You just never know when you might be called upon to execute a vital procedure in your company's plan!

Feel free to pass these tips along to your clients, your employees, your colleagues or other professionals responsible for the management of crises in the workplace. Preparedness is the key to a good response.

Sandbox Solutions

Need a Speaker?

Tonya Slawinski, Ph.D. has provided trainings nationally to Fortune 100 and 500 companies on topics related to crisis management, crisis response services, SSI's strengths based approach to crisis response and hostility management.

Whether your audience includes EAP professionals, HR, Loss Prevention, Safety and Security or other departments which manage crisis response services, SSI can meet your training needs.

Call 1-800-982-8522 for more information.

Client message corner

Supportive Solutions will be celebrating our 2nd anniversary on Feb. 23rd, 2007! I would like to take this opportunity to thank our clients and those who have supported our efforts over these past two years. Our sustained growth pattern has shown that we are on the right track to becoming an industry leader in the field of crisis response services

Our goal from the start was to provide you with a unique experience characterized by cutting edge practices, high touch supportive services and personalized attention to your individualized needs. The results of a recent survey indicated that our goals are congruent with your needs and we plan to continue to provide these same high quality services over the upcoming year!

Again, I want to thank you for trusting us with your business. We look forward to working closely with you during the upcoming year!

Tonya Slawinski, President

Resource corner

- **BOOK:**
Reconstructing early intervention after trauma: Innovations in the care of survivors (Ørner & Schnyder, eds)
Oxford University Press, 2003.
- **RESEARCH:**
Effective Trauma Management in the Workplace (link below)
<http://www.onrec.com/newsstories/14840.asp>
- **WEBSITE:**
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>
Revised Psychological First Aid Manual

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Sometimes you need a little support . . .
Sometimes you need a lot.

Let us help!

**Call our Crisis Support hot line:
1.800.982.8522**