

Scale your Priorities

When it comes to preparing for crises, many organizations do very little. This leaves them dangerously vulnerable, and puts their environments at risk. Underpreparing threatens their stakeholders, the individuals, groups, and organizations who could *affect*, or *be affected by* their organization's ability to handle a crisis, to adopt decisions, and take action (see Chapter 17, Crisis Tool #3: Stakeholder Analysis for deeper details). Ignoring the potential for crises reduces or nixes the possibility of coming out stronger. If your organization banks on improvising in any coming crisis, you will probably make a dreadful, intense, complex, uncertain situation even worse.

This concise summary of crisis priorities is based on urgency and vital needs under three conditions that typically motivate crisis improvements:

- 1) Wolves are at your gate.
- 2) Danger signs are emerging.
- 3) You want a solid preventive, protective foundation.

On the next pages, you will find practical one-page guides for each of these conditions. Use these to contemplate your organization's status and readiness. Distribute them for discussion. Store the pages on your devices. Make them the preface of your organization's plans.

Wolves are at Your Gate

Setting: A crisis is underway. You have no crisis preparations, or those you have are insufficient or outdated.

Strategy: *Focus on assessing, treating, notifying. For now, let go of chasing blame.* Rouse and rally diverse, expert attention and power. Invest resources immediately to understand what is happening. Confirm the level of threat and critical details with experts. Alert and activate internal and external communication lines. Weigh action based on your organization's core values. Keep sharp eyes on outcomes and fluctuating circumstances.

Immediate Action Checklist:

- **Do what you can within your power to reduce, delay or stop the crisis** (Chapters 2-10).
- **Create an interim Crisis Leadership Team (CLT) immediately.** Choose a small group of trustworthy, savvy, diversely powerful, diversely skilled/experienced employees, who are open-minded, and who live up to your organization's values consistently. At this stage, favor individual speed and responsiveness, as well (Chapter 4).
- **Rapidly brief, and solicit knowledge from the CLT.** Focus on crisis facts and insights, best- and worst-case prospects, and foreseeable needs and availability of tools, expertise, contacts, and resources (Chapters 9, 17).
- **Review your organization's values with the CLT.** Use your authentic core values to guide your objectives for the crisis, and to weigh particularly difficult decisions (Chapter 3).
- **Prioritize essential stakeholders.** Put victims and employees at the top (Chapter 9).
- **Gather additional vital information from internal and external experts.** Maintain direct contact with those closest to the core of the crisis (Chapter 9).
- **Map immediate plans.** Start with triage-level needs. Sketch a timeline. Deliberate best- and worst-case outcomes of critical decisions and turning points. Listen fully to potential threats and feedback, especially those you do not wish to hear (Chapters 5-8).

Danger Signs are Emerging

Setting: Dark clouds are building. You are aware that a potential crisis is brewing.

Strategy: *Identify and define priorities.* Expand crisis awareness and signal detection to decipher what is going on. Set direction for essentials specific to this particular crisis, such as resources, expertise, and communication.

Action Checklist:

- **Do what you can within your immediate power to stop or slow down the anticipated crisis** (Chapters 2-10).
- **Create an interim Crisis Leadership Team (CLT) immediately.** Choose a small group of trustworthy, savvy, diversely powerful, diversely skilled/experienced employees, who are open-minded, and who live up to your organization's values consistently. At this stage, favor individual speed/responsiveness, as well (Chapter 4).
- **Collect and assess all relevant signals of danger.** Seek input directly from trusted sources across your organization. Focus on anticipated epicenter of the potential crisis (Chapter 9).
- **Sharpen signal detection and reporting expectations regarding the crisis that you are anticipating.** Take quick measures to streamline access for reporting potential signals throughout your organization. Create a direct line dedicated to the issue, and remind everyone of their responsibilities to watch for and convey signals rapidly, (Chapters 7-8).
- **Determine top priority outcomes.** Conduct cost/benefit analyses regarding this crisis. Look not only at money, but also time, human resources, the potential detrimental impact on reputation and other outcomes. Base criteria and assessment on your organization's core values. Include worst-case scenarios in your deliberations (Chapter 17, Scenarios).
- **Sketch a rough map of your approach.** Create this tool to capture the big picture and details, to convey your perspective and plans to others, and to see their input (Chapters 5-6).

You Want a Solid Protective Foundation

Setting: No organizational crisis looms that you know of, but you want to improve lead time and preparation to optimize decisions and actions under threatening circumstances.

Strategy: *Determine how to make crisis investments manageable and fitting for your organization.*

Develop a foundation of powerful champions to create a systemic crisis approach over time.

Prioritize objectives relative to your organization's core values. Aim to eventually inform, engage and direct all employees.

Action Checklist:

- **First, build your own crisis expertise and skills.** Learn typical crisis threats, and effective practices in your industry. Broaden your understanding of how crisis norms and preparations differ among your organization's locations. Deepen your grasp of your organization's current crisis readiness. Think about capabilities and gaps, resources and scarcities across hierarchical levels and functions, at headquarters, nationally, and overseas (Chapters 2-10).
- **Identify alignments between your organization's core values and its crisis readiness.** Reflect about your organization's strengths and weaknesses in crisis preparation, resources, and expertise, especially as related to your core values (Chapter 3).
- **Recruit influential support.** Engage employees who have crisis expertise, experience, and power to create a superb Crisis Leadership Team (CLT) (Chapters 4, 7).
- **Draft an initial scope of priorities for your organization.** Work with the champions, including CLT members, to begin mapping your plans (Chapter 5).
- **Read *Come Out Stronger*.** Learn crisis preparation and response fundamentals, including the following: Create and develop a superb CLT. Map your plans, and take them on a test drive. Power up your crisis readiness. Make signal detection and reporting a core technology. Develop and practice your crisis procedures. Establish avenues for ongoing input and feedback to shape and sharpen your crisis expertise and agility, creating a learning cycle that will strengthen your corporate culture and stakeholder relationships.