

RSOG SEMINAR

The Seven Deadly Sins of Crisis Management

with
Peter R. Morgan, P.D.S.M

When : 25 August 2016
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Peter R. Morgan, P.D.S.M

About the Seminar

The Seven Deadly Sins of Crisis Management (and what you can do to avoid them) will explore and discuss the key mistakes repeatedly made by organisations when planning, preparing and responding to crisis and critical incidents. Such mistakes have the ability to escalate the situation from what should only be a minor crisis to a major disaster or a full-blown catastrophe. Failing to effectively plan, prepare and respond to a crisis can also cause severe damage to the credibility and reputation of an organisation, which would then cost them valuable time to resolve that could have otherwise been used for effective output. By sharing both worst and best crisis management practices through brief case studies and examples, participants will adopt a clearer understanding on how to better think ahead, plan smart and respond quickly in order to successfully resolve any predicament faced in the future.

Summary

The tense and stressful nature of crisis management is one Mr. Peter Morgan, P.D.S.M is all too familiar with. From his experiences in both the public and private sector, he notes how crises can be viewed differently by each (i.e.: Government typically has a macro, big-picture approach to crisis management while the private sector tends to be more on the micro-level). Nevertheless, there are similar approaches to its management. The impact of the crisis must always be considered, particularly how many it will affect, the amount of possible damage and whether there is any threat to life.

Crisis management can be largely affected by local, national, regional and global trends. Although different nations may experience similar issues (i.e. terrorism, natural disasters etc.), their unique experiences allow for stark differences on how they may prepare for them. For instance, Europe's raised awareness and alertness due to the recent terrorist attacks contrasts to that of Hong Kong, where crisis plans are less comprehensive due to lack of terrorist activities.

On the other hand, Hong Kong and China's experience with the SARS and Swine Flu outbreak has allowed them to build upon crisis management measures during epidemics. The

situation saw many precautionary health measures implemented, including legal provisions, multi-agency collaboration, border controls, cleaning programmes, public communication, school closures, designated medical centres and home confinement.

The speaker stresses the tendency for a minor crisis to escalate into a catastrophe due to lack of coordination and preparation, as was seen in the United States' handling of Hurricane Katrina. As the success of crisis management lies in preparation, Mr. Morgan emphasises the need to conduct as many drills and exercises as possible in order for all parties to run as efficiently as possible. This includes familiarisation with relevant equipment/technology, setting up contingency plans and communication with other relevant parties. This is particularly important, as a disaster's inherently volatile nature could create a cascading effect and cause other serious ramifications. The speaker cited Japan's Fukushima disaster in 2011 as an example of this, where the effects of natural disaster caused a shutdown of its nuclear power plant.

Among the preparation that could vastly contribute to the success of crisis management is community participation, as they could assume the role as first responders during times of crisis, and thus heavily involved in the proceedings of the event. South Korea was pointed out by the speaker as an example of a country that has conducted large-scale comprehensive drills with the participation of citizens. In addition to serving as preparation for disasters, drills would also help in raising awareness and to combat any misinformation surrounding the disaster.

Another key preventative measure for crisis management would be to collaborate with the media and to ensure correct information is being circulated. The speaker cited the successful cooperation between the Hong Kong Police and the media to raise awareness on suicide prevention. Organisations should also appoint a trained spokesperson to calm any anxieties surrounding the crisis. However, the speaker mentions this has become more difficult to control due to dependency on social media.

Finally, Mr. Morgan states the various human limitations that could arise during the actual disaster. He points to sleep deprivation and fatigue as sources of bad decision-making and suggests for the appointment of a good leader and a deputy to be adequately prepared for the pressures of the event. Leaders are urged to remain calm and stay in control of the situation. This should also apply to the entire response team, as personnel will require the resilience to manage situations of long duration. Furthermore, peer support, professional help groups and basic needs (i.e. food, water, medicine etc.) should be put in place to assist responders.

The seven sins as outlined by the speaker are as follows:

1. Not Having a Plan
2. No Preparation
3. Not Testing the Plan
4. Poor Leadership
5. Poor Communication

6. Poor Capacity and Resilience
7. Not Keeping Your eye on the Ball (Not staying alert)

Key Issues Raised

1. The role of the community and public is crucial to the success of any crisis management situation. Thus, it is imperative for the responsible emergency response unit to build a rapport with its community (understanding organisational culture, politics etc.) prior to any disasters. Keeping the community aware and informed will also curb unnecessary panic and fear-mongering.
2. Ideally, both the public and private sectors should work together in any crisis situation. The speaker stresses that if a partnership does not currently exist, it should be established as diplomatically as possible to achieve mutual understanding. Both parties may begin to build a partnership through small collaborations on a Standard Operating Procedure, practices and/or drills.
3. Crisis management must be conducted in tandem with public cooperation. However, as one participant notes, certain organisations must balance a line between giving too much information and not giving any information during bouts of crisis. The speaker suggests for organisations to maintain a degree of transparency and to consistently keep the community in the loop by providing only relevant information.
4. Sectors dealing with crisis management, particularly first responders, are heavily involved in unpredictable circumstances. Thus, it is crucial for any operational technicalities to be legally permitted prior to a disaster to avoid any liabilities. This can be done through the collaboration with a recognised judicial body.

About the Speaker

Peter R. Morgan is the Director of Potent Prep Ltd. and a recognised expert in crisis management, critical incident leadership and crisis communication. After retiring from the Hong Kong Police as an Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Morgan is now an Honorary Advisor & Fellow for the Hong Kong Police College and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, Hong Kong University. Mr. Morgan was also the Commander of the Police Negotiation Unit for more than 12 years and Head of the Police Service Quality Wing, responsible for strategic planning; complaints and internal investigations; integrity management and corruption prevention. Mr. Morgan received the Police Distinguished Service Medal (P.D.S.M) in 2015 and is the author of Critical Issues in Crisis Negotiation.

Contact

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