Business Continuity Communications
Contents

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction x

1. Types of incidents 1
   Is this serious or are we just having a bad day? 1
   Slow-burn or sudden 1
   Potential risks 3

2. Determining the contents of your plan 6
   Questions you need to ask 6
   Hitting the phone 6
   Where is everybody? 7
   Here’s one I prepared earlier 7
   Press conference locations 8
   Fact sheets 8
   Winning the media war 10
   Setting a budget 10
   Recovery site 11
   Evaluation 11

3. Press gang 13
   What will the media want to know? 13
   Unexpected questions 18

4. Strategy layout 19
   Statement of intent 19
   Plan layout 20
   Aide-mémoire 21
   Strategic intent, main effort and the six questions 23
   Incident management team 25

This is a sample chapter from Business Continuity Communications. To read more and buy, visit http://shop.bsigroup.com/bip2185 © BSI British Standards Institution
Contents

5. How the strategy migrates to a plan
   The communications team
   The early hours and days
   What can you expect?
   Roles and responsibilities
   Gizmos, gadgets and equipment

6. Press conferences
   Theatre
   The venue
   The role of the spokesperson
   The role of the press officer
   Over the internet

7. Holding statements, press releases and templates
   Further plan components

8. Coping with the press pack
   Best practice for dealing with the media
   Interview techniques for both the written and electronic media

9. Media monitoring
   Do we need this?
   In-house monitoring
   Media monitoring report form
   Outsourcing media monitoring

10. Social Media
    A rapidly changing landscape
    The business case for social media
    Internal audiences
    External audiences

11. Call-takers
    Who’s calling please?
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-prepared responses for call-takers</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful times call for cool heads</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templates</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the information to the right people</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What callers hate</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Information, fact sheets and general know-how</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A grab bag of ideas</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key contacts</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call cascade</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder contacts</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press kits</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident website</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheets</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery site</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information card</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past incidents and emergencies</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle box</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Post-incident evaluation</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now can we forget about that?</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders – how do they feel about your organization now?</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Testing the plan</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So does the plan work?</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of exercises</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple exercises</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium exercises</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex exercises</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and objectives</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you want to involve?</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planners</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

How the teams fared 107
Action plan 107
I want to stage a similar exercise – is there anything else I need to know? 108

15. Communication plan checklist 109
Time to get cracking 109
Acknowledgements

Jim Preen would like to thank his colleagues at Crisis Solutions for their help in writing this book – particularly Peter Brown for his work on Chapter 14.
Introduction

A colleague at Crisis Solutions once said that in most cases managing an incident is essentially the same as managing the media. Some people may not agree, but the truth is that if you do not deal quickly and effectively with the media fallout from an incident then your troubles may have only just begun.

That was true three years ago when the first edition of this book appeared and that was before Facebook, Twitter and the whole social network revolution really took off. These tools have provided individuals and organizations with new forms of instant communications; tools that can both help and harm those who use them.

This book should be read in conjunction with ISO 22301.1 This Standard, which establishes the principles of business continuity management, sets out the requirement for a communication plan and is the starting point for this book.

Most organizations need a plan – even HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). I should know because a few years ago, I wrote a communication plan for HMRC that involved travelling around the country to several of their offices, looking at disaster recovery sites and interviewing numerous members of staff; a process that anyone writing such a plan will have to undertake.

But this book is not just about communicating with the media – it has a wider remit; for example, on one occasion a client remarked that even if the world’s press were banging on the door, he would want to let his staff know what was going on first, before talking to journalists. So we will also look at internal communications – what to say to your staff. But bear in mind that whatever you do say to your staff may end up in the media, so consistent messages are essential.

The media is fond of playing divide and rule so if you say one thing to your staff and another to the press – particularly if they are contradictory – then reporters will pursue you.

---

Media monitoring

Those working in communications generally take a keen interest in the news. As we will see, media monitoring during an incident is of prime importance – how will you know if you are winning the media war if you do not know what the press are saying about you?

During an incident, it is essential that the communications team learn to think like journalists – only then will they be able to anticipate a reporter’s actions and questions.

As a former political reporter, Alastair Campbell, former Prime Minister Tony Blair’s press secretary, had an astute take on managing the media. Campbell instituted The Grid, which itemized all upcoming events – both good and bad – putting his press room completely across the news cycle and allowing them to get their retaliation in first. He always maintained a critical story needed a full stop to draw it to a close – that or time – and claimed that only huge stories ran for more than 11 days.

Is this a story?

So what does constitute news? Lord Northcliffe – the press baron – famously said, ‘News is what somebody, somewhere wants to suppress, the rest is all advertising.’ To me this still has the ring of truth about it.

People not in the media often assume the news is just ‘what happens’, but as any journalist will tell you, hours are spent in newsrooms with people saying, ‘Is this news? Will anyone care about this story?’ Similarly what is big news one day may be spiked the next. And of course if your organization is undergoing an incident you may be hoping for a larger story to come along to knock you out of the headlines.

In 1997 several other journalists and I were told to prepare to fly to India because it was widely known that Mother Teresa was very ill and would probably die in the next few days. Just prior to leaving, Princess Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris. Mother Teresa did indeed die, but I never went to India as what would under normal circumstances have been a front-page story was virtually ignored as the Princess’s death reverberated around the world. Predicting what will lead the news is a tricky business.
The public mood – ignore it at your peril

One of the main themes in this book is the importance of keeping in touch with the public mood. If your actions do not reflect the thoughts and feelings of your staff, clients, customers or indeed the wider public then your communications strategy is not working.

To give an example, when terrorists attacked London on 7 July 2005 the emergency services took a long time to set up an emergency phone number for those trying to find information about family and friends.

When the number was finally broadcast, switchboards were immediately swamped with calls – people were left hanging on the phone for long periods of time – only to discover later that this was not a free phone line but was costing, in some instances, up to 50p a minute.

Getting it right

But I do not want to accentuate only the negative – what about getting it right?

On the same day, Ken Livingstone, then the Mayor of London, issued a statement that I would argue got it spectacularly right. In the opening few paragraphs he praised the emergency services for their work and Londoners for their calm response – all essential details – but then he made what could have been a bland political statement come alive.

Here is part of what he had to say:

I want to say one thing specifically to the world today. This was not a terrorist attack against the mighty and the powerful. It was not aimed at Presidents or Prime Ministers. It was aimed at ordinary, working-class Londoners, black and white, Muslim and Christian, Hindu and Jew, young and old. It was an indiscriminate attempt to slaughter, irrespective of any considerations for age, for class, for religion, or whatever.

That isn’t an ideology, it isn’t even a perverted faith – it is just an indiscriminate attempt at mass murder and we know what the objective is. They seek to divide Londoners. They seek to turn Londoners against each other. Londoners will not be divided by this cowardly attack. They will stand together in solidarity alongside those who have been injured and those who have been bereaved and that is why I’m proud to be the mayor of that city.
In my view, the Mayor’s choice of words and his tone were entirely appropriate and in touch with the public mood.

Naturally, any communication plan must contain pre-prepared press statements and these will be examined in detail.

**Writing your plan**

There are many excellent books available on incident or crisis communications – where this book differs is that it is an attempt to outline all that is needed to create a communication plan. It is not a plan in itself and contains far more detail than most plans require. Think of it as a set of building blocks – take what you need, construct the plan that meets your requirements and discard the rest.

A plan must be user-friendly, should be compressed, flexible and easy to use. Huge screeds of text won’t do – you will need headlines, subheadings and checklists because if you do not include these then your plan may go unread and all your hard work will have been for nothing.

The first part of any communication plan will almost certainly contain a checklist of all the things that must be done now, or at least as soon as the plan is invoked. For many with expertise in communications it will be something of an aide-mémoire. Thereafter we will look at what constitutes an incident communications room, what roles need to be filled, what potential crises might beset your organization and what you need to put in place to recover quickly.

We will look at press conferences – how to stage them, the role of press officers and the role of those giving the press conference. We will also look at how to conduct interviews – what to say and what to avoid. In large international organizations, it may well be that the plan will need details of overseas offices. You have a plant in Australia and an incident arises there – who speaks to the press, your staff and customers? There is a 12-hour time difference so waiting for Europe to wake up may not be an option.

In effect fact sheets may have to be written that deal with your various offices, plants and manufacturing sites both locally and overseas.
Case studies

As well as writing plans I also run courses that help organizations update or institute communication plans. The courses are usually made up of communication experts from across Europe and I often feel that I learn as much as I teach – they tend to be very collaborative sessions.

The courses inevitably employ case studies, quite often these are not detailed expositions but rather brief memorable examples used to back up a particular point. The same is true here, but also included are a couple of full-blown case studies. Every effort has been made to keep examples fresh and modern and not to trot out those that are familiar. Often they are instances of things I witnessed when working as a journalist.

ISO 22301

7.4 Communication

The organization shall determine the need for internal and external communications relevant to the BCMS including

a) on what it will communicate,
b) when to communicate,
c) with whom to communicate.

The organization shall establish, implement, and maintain procedure(s) for

- internal communication amongst interested parties and employees within the organization,
- external communication with customers, partner entities, local community, and other interested parties, including the media,
- receiving, documenting, and responding to communication from interested parties,
- adapting and integrating a national or regional threat advisory system, or equivalent, into planning and operational use, if appropriate,
- ensuring availability of the means of communication during a disruptive incident,
- facilitating structured communication with appropriate authorities and ensuring the interoperability of multiple responding organizations and personnel, where appropriate, and
operating and testing of communications capabilities intended for use during disruption of normal communications.

8.4.3 Warning and communication

The organization shall establish, implement and maintain procedures for

a) detecting an incident,

b) regular monitoring of an incident,

c) internal communication within the organization and receiving, documenting and responding to communication from interested parties,

d) receiving, documenting and responding to any national or regional risk advisory system or equivalent,

e) assuring availability of the means of communication during a disruptive incident,

f) facilitating structured communication with emergency responders,

g) recording of vital information about the incident, actions taken and decisions made, and the following shall also be considered and implemented where applicable:

– alerting interested parties potentially impacted by an actual or impending disruptive incident;

– assuring the interoperability of multiple responding organizations and personnel;

– operation of a communications facility.

The communication and warning procedures shall be regularly exercised.

I have quoted the relevant subclauses of ISO 22301 in some detail because to be able to respond in the manner the Standard suggests, means a lot of hard work and attention to detail. The Standard should remain our watchword throughout this book, which will only be judged a success if it enables you and your organization to comply more readily with ISO 22301 and thus be well prepared to deal with unexpected incidents.

One thing I have noticed over the years, whether during real crises or simulations, is that there is quite often a strong individual communicator – usually the head of communications – who takes control of the situation. A real worry for many organizations is: what if that individual is ill, away on holiday or leaves the company? The beauty of having a communication plan is that if it is correctly researched and written it should work regardless of who is in charge.
Keeping it fresh

Once a plan is written, someone has to take ownership of it.

A comprehensive contact list has been described as ‘tool number one’ in an incident media toolkit, but what use is a contact list if it is not kept up to date? Someone must grasp that responsibility and indeed the responsibility for keeping the whole plan current.

Finally, once it is complete, do not let your plan gather cyberdust on your computer’s hard drive. If you have done a good job then shout it from the rooftops and let people know. And do not just send your colleagues an email attachment of your work. Email attachments have a remarkable ability to go unread. Print copies and distribute them, then hold half-day sessions to introduce staff to the plan.

One of the great gripes within the business continuity fraternity is getting senior management buy-in. Senior executives do not like the look of crises and usually do not wish to be reminded of them. They can also be a little hesitant when it comes to opening the cheque book to pay for matters related to incident planning.

Well the good news is that writing a communication plan will cost very little aside from the time spent putting it together. If you have been tasked with writing or updating such a plan then read on.