

Expect the Unexpected

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Expect the Unexpected

PrepTIME: Crisis management
system for companies and organizations

**Bas Poelmann
Arjan de Pauw Gerlings**

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Preface

HOW MUCH IS PREVENTING OR CONTROLLING A
CRISIS WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION WORTH TO YOU?

Michiel Kuethe

And all of a sudden it goes all wrong!
A destructive fire, power failure, hacking,
fraud, an act of violence, explosion, pollu-
tion and/or mass (food)poisoning, adverse
weather conditions and so on... There are
many conditions to be summed up which can
threaten the continuity of your organization.
Your reputation and the safety of your
visitors and employees are no longer guaran-
teed under such circumstances. Everything
you have built up carefully over the past
years might evaporate before your eyes.

To be prepared for this, most medium
and large organizations have a crisis organi-
zation which takes over control immediately.
Taking over control however is not some-
thing done easily and is not to be taken
lightly. In my experience, most organizations
give the generic crisis management process
the attention that it deserves only then:
when the crisis is already manifest.

What I observe regularly, is that atten-
tion for prevention and possibly controlling
crisis situations is not self-explanatory. It
takes a lot of effort to assemble the mem-
bers of a crisis management team at most
once or twice a year for a workshop and/or a
crisis exercise. On one hand understandable:

time is a scarce resource. On the other hand,
while managing a crisis too many prevent-
able mistakes are still made so the process
requires and deserves more attention.

And suddenly I'm approached by
Bas Poelmann – Bas has become an
accomplished trainer and crisis manag-
er over the years – who I have met years
ago as a student when I was conducting a
training in crisis management. His approach
directly appealed to me. For his employer,
he travelled all over the world. In the long
evenings spent alone on hotel rooms and
airport lounges he had written down all his
knowledge and findings related to crisis man-
agement. From that documentation, a whole
new approach to crisis management was
formed: The PrepTIME system was born!

After reading the first concepts
I became increasingly enthusiast about
the described methodology. Besides
more attention in a broader perspective,
I also detect a desire for more deepening
of skills and knowledge with our clients.
Superficial knowledge and experience
with crisis management process no longer
suffice. Proper generic management skills
will only get you so far, but are unfortuna-

tely no longer enough. With the PrepTIME system, Poelmann introduces an interesting approach in which his model treads new appealing and challenging paths, both in a broad perspective as well as in depth.

Now back to the title of this preface. What is it worth to you – preventing or controlling a crisis within your organization? To every (crisis)manager seriously contemplating this question, I strongly recommend reading this book!

Michiel Kuethe

CEO In The Picture B.V.

An introduction to the 2nd revised edition

After the successful launch of Expect the Unexpected in 2018, it became time for a second, revised edition. With another two years of experience gained, many companies from different industries trained and more knowledge acquired, we thought it was time to share that with the public.

In this second, revised edition, we have chosen for a different set up of the chapters and added a lot of content, graphs and new ideas. The chapters discussing crisis meetings and crisis communication have been significantly expanded, and also the chapter discussing preparation and prevention have been revised and new content has been added.

Several new tools have been introduced such as the CIDAC matrix and the generic visual plotting quadrant.

We hope you will enjoy reading this new, revised edition.

Bas Poelmann

Arjan de Pauw Gerlings

Februari 2020

About the authors

Bas Poelmann started his career in the Dutch armed forces, serving as an officer in the Royal Netherlands Army for several years after having completed the Royal Netherlands Military Academy. In 2006, he started working for Falck, while further developing skills in safety and Emergency Response training. He specialized in Scenario Based Training, a form of training in which immersive scenarios are used to train professional Emergency Response personnel from primarily offshore installations and ships. Together with a small team, operational crisis management courses were developed, again both for the offshore and shipping industry. Bas trained and coached Falck's crisis management trainers and developed Emergency Response and crisis management training programs on strategic level for high risk industries.

Bas currently works for V&R, a Netherlands based training and consultancy firm specialized in crisis management and crisis communication, as a Senior trainer/Consultant with specialism in crisis management for high risk industries.

Arjan de Pauw Gerlings had an education in Information Sciences and

Organizational Psychology. He has been training managers at all levels of a variety of companies before joining Falck in 2012. Here he provided crisis management training for managers in the shipping and offshore industries. He developed and led the project for crisis management training for the maritime sector. Together with Bas he built the strategical crisis management trainings and trained crisis management teams at home and abroad.

Arjan is currently employed as Developer of Digital Learning Systems and Trainer Firefighting for the Security Region Noord-Holland Noord, a public organization, where local governments join forces with police, fire squads and medical aid to act effectively in large-scale emergency situations.

With a background in operational crisis management and roots in high risk industries, the PrepTIME system was developed for corporate management. This is based on the conviction that crisis training should be more comprehensive and fun. That's why the use of management games are introduced to assist large organizations and companies to be prepared for the unthinkable, in a proactive way.

A word of thanks

The authors would like to thank Garth Howard and Karin de Raad for their advice and the time they took to review the preliminary versions of this book. We'd like to thank Michiel Kuethe and Mariëtte Neumann from In The Picture for their time, dedication and professionalism. Their advice was invaluable and without their words of wisdom this book would not have been the same as it is today. We'd like to thank Falck Safety Services for their support and opportunity to gain experience and knowledge.

For the second, revised edition (2020):

We'd like to thank Toon van de Sande from Spiritension for his feedback and expertise which helped to finetune and improve this second edition. His input has been highly appreciated. Also the experience and knowledge from the colleagues at V&R is highly valued. A lot of their input can be found back in this book.

Introduction to crisis management

WHO NEEDS TO READ THIS BOOK?

You do! You have a senior position in your organization. You're either a manager, a CEO or another C-whatever-O and you get to decide things. Or your colleagues perceive you to be such a person. You're comfortable with this. It's what you do. You manage things. You're good at it: you've done it for years. Or maybe you're not quite the top dog, but the top dog has asked you to be in charge of the emergency response plans and the first responders of your organization. Or one of the above persons has appointed you to be part of the organizations' crisis management team. Then this book is for you. Read on.

If you think that crisis cannot happen to your organization, or that you'll probably manage just fine without any preparation, this book is especially for you.

So... During an unexpected major incident in your organization, your colleagues will look at you to take charge. Or at least play your part. The most common mistake is that you think: *"OK. I manage things. It's what I do. I can fix this"*. Yes, during day to day business you can. You're good at it. But this is not day to day business. Your business just got turned 'upside down'. And quite possibly also 'inside out'.

This situation is out of the ordinary. Your day to day management skills have just gone out the window. Suddenly the situation requires an out of the ordinary set of skills, a different mindset and a different organization structure. Forget what you usually do on an average Monday morning. That won't work today. Read on; it's not rocket science. You can do it, but you were not born with the necessary skills. Read this book, and follow a proper training. You'll become the steady rock in the turbulent waters that are about to overwhelm your organization. You will keep your organization on track, also in the long term.

RISKS

Risks exist in every business. We know this. Therefore, we manage them. Every company has made risk assessments and has consequently introduced risk reducing measures. After these measures, we accept the fact that there is a residual risk which is deemed acceptable, or "ALARP" (As Low As Reasonably Practicable). In a high hazard industry, a company may have hundreds of identified risks, and assumingly, all of them have been managed well by applying risk

reducing measures. Every single one of them is thus considered or labelled as “acceptably low”.

The fact is, there *are* remaining risks. Each one of them is acceptable on an individual level. But have we ever looked at the chance of the cumulative risk? What is the chance that a single one of those residual risks ever becomes manifest?

As risk is defined as chance x effect, we can either take measures to limit the effect or damage that a manifest hazard causes or we can take measures that limit the chance of an occurrence. Especially in the latter, there is a latent problem. If all of our managed risks have a very small chance of occurrence they are usually considered as acceptable, even if the possible effect is still relatively high. The cumulative chance that a random one of that list ever becomes manifest over time, regardless which one, is a lot bigger than the individual chances. The longer the list of our managed risks, the higher the chance that eventually a random one out of that list of high-effect-low-chance-hazards finds its way through the Swiss cheese model¹. If a high-effect-low-chance-hazard eventually becomes manifest, this will always lead to a crisis as the effects are widespread and far reaching. An example is the chance of a melt down in a nuclear power plant. Everyone, including the designers of the plant, agree that a meltdown is totally unacceptable. That’s why these installations have many safety features to prevent a meltdown from happening. There are many layers of so called barriers, so if one barrier is inadvertently breached, at least two others remain. Many high-hazard installations, nuclear plants but also many others, have been engineered to a safety degree of a catastrophic event happening in a theoretical and mathematic every once in a 100.000 (10^{-6}) years or less. Regardless of this theoretical number, two of those nuclear plants blew up within 25 years of each other: Fukushima in 2011 and Tjernobyl in 1986. Mathematically, that chance is extremely low if the predictions of once in 100.00 years were correct. Accidents apparently do happen, no matter what the maths say.

Most risks that are identified, are internal risks and we have some degree of control over these, but there is another category of risks: externally induced risks. We have little control over external factors, which may also cause a crisis situation. Examples are of course extreme weather conditions or other natu-

¹

Swiss cheese model: a model used in safety studies to describe mitigative barriers and their possible weak points, the holes in the cheese.

ral phenomena, which we actually might treat as internal risks. But also large accidents in our supply line or an accident caused by our neighbours with a cross fence area of effect, can have a severe impact on our business.

The bottom line is, that if we continue to operate our business long enough with a long list of risks, even if they are very well-managed, eventually something will hit the fan. No company is invulnerable no matter what your safety record says. Large incidents do actually happen. Read the news. If it can happen to someone else, it can also happen to your organization. If this is a given certainty, then why is your dedicated crisis room (Do you have one?) full of cardboard boxes with products that didn't make it through the quality control and why has your crisis plan (you do have one, don't you?) been getting dusty somewhere on a shelf for years?

THIS BOOK

If you feel that your organization is not sufficient enough prepared to mitigate such events once a true crisis becomes manifest, this handbook will assist you in preparing your organization for the unexpected.

If you feel that you or your organization *is* actually well capable of managing a crisis, but you have not invested a significant amount of time in preparation, training or drills over the last year, this book might wake you up from your wishful thinking.

We believe that a crisis is best managed *before* the crisis.

PrepTIME (Prepared Team, Information Management, Emergency leadership) is the first integral system that also addresses the "How to" instead of just the "What". Besides preparing your organization for the unthinkable, you'll find that lessons from the PrepTIME system are very usable in the every day management of your organization, making it faster and more efficient. The contrary is not quite applicable however: your day to day style of management may be very effective for business as usual, but you'll find that it's quite inefficient, ineffective and counterproductive during a crisis. Hopefully you will not have to deal with this in future reality...

The time and money invested in preparing your organization according to the PrepTIME system is easily won back as it may even help your organization become more efficient: skills acquired during the training program may find

their way in daily business, especially when organizing meetings. The biggest win is of course during a crisis. If unprepared, the costs of cleaning up the continually growing and spreading mess in an unorganized and inefficient way are incomparable to seizing the chances offered by the crisis and responding in a well-prepared way!

In the next chapter we start with defining what a crisis is, after which we discuss what the specific PrepTIME approach is in chapter “The PrepTIME system”. The best solution to a crisis is preventing that it happens, so that will be discussed in chapter “Phase 1 - Preparation”. If the inevitable and unthinkable happens, you’ll find that each crisis follows the same 6 phases. Chronologically, we discuss every phase going through all details which are relevant during each phase. But before we go through the specifics of all the 6 phases, we’ll discuss some crisis management essentials in the chapter “Crisis Meeting Essentials”. As crisis communication is essential during every phase (crisis management is about 80% communication), a special paragraph is dedicated to crisis communication in every chapter describing each of the six phases. In all those chapters we explain the process of how to manage a crisis and give you a variety of tools that you can use while managing a crisis.

If the crisis and the required decisionmaking eventually escalates above your “paygrade” we’ll discuss in the chapter discussing the preparation in how to escalate the management of the situation to the next senior level - and thus preventing authority chaos: who’s in charge?

Training and exercises which can prepare you and your colleagues for an adequate response should it ever be necessary, are part of Phase 1, but the details of the different available training modules are discussed in the chapter “The PrepTIME Training system”.

PrepTIME represents the new way of thinking in crisis management. Don’t miss it! If you do, you’ll only find out afterwards.

It’s Prep TIME ² !!

²
PrepTIME: Prepared Team, Information Management
and Emergency leadership

³
C.F. Hermann, 1972