Table Top Exercises

Preparing Your Organization for Crisis

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Message

This presentation offers a methodology for planning, designing and conducting low cost Table Top exercises to better prepare your organization for emergency situations.
Overview

• Introduction to the Table Top Exercise
• Planning Considerations
• Design Options
• Game Play
• Processing Lessons
Do you ever worry about…….? 

If (and when) things go wrong…

• Building Fire and Flooding
  • Terrorism and Protests
• Unplanned Loss of Utilities or IT Systems
  • Civil Disaster
  • Severe Weather
How well is your organization prepared?

Challenges

• Are contingency plans in place?
• Are plans current? Adequate?
• Are employees familiar with plans?
• Do plans fit with emergency responders?
• Will employees follow the plans?
Preparation Through ‘Gaming’

- **Scenario Planning**
  - Royal Dutch Shell – Envisioning the future
  - Post September 11\textsuperscript{th} family contingency plans
- **War Games**
  - War Colleges to Healthcare
- **Oral Board Examinations**
  - Professional Certification Boards – “What if…”
- **Table Top Seminars**
  - Fred Friendly Seminars – “The Constitution”
Healthcare Planning and Training
What is a Table Top Exercise?

A planning and training event, often around a table, for management, staff and service providers to game play contingency situations, identify considerations, and generate solutions, with alternatives.
Table Top Advantages

- Customized to your organization
- Designed to focus on your priorities
- Low Cost
- Low Impact on routine operations
- Invites Involvement at many levels
- Potential for High Return
  - Participation, Ideas and Preparedness
Table Top Advantages

Best of all…..

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Now, let’s look at…..

• Planning Considerations
• Design Options
• Game Play
• Processing Lessons
Planning Considerations
Why Do This?

Be clear on your

OBJECTIVES

If someone suggests a table top exercise, know what you want to achieve.

What is your anticipated ROI?
Why Do This?

What are the Drivers?

• Current Events
• Risk Analysis
• “I wake up at 2 AM worrying about …..”
• Just sound management & preparedness
Clarify Exercise Goals

Gain Lessons Learned - New Ideas - Evaluation

- Staff Response To Emergency Scenarios
- Clarity Of Roles and Responsibilities
- Adequacy Of Contingency Plans
- Internal Communications
- Team Building
- Inter-organization Cooperation
- Identify Competing Priorities
Conceptualize the Boundaries

• WHAT – is the Key Event?
  Fire – Weather- Protest- etc.

• WHO Will Play? – which employees
  (& other organizations?)

• HOW Complex
  Basic or More Advanced
From Boundaries to Resources

EVENT

Other Organizations

TIME ?

Design ?

Scenario ?

PLAYERS

COMPLEXITY

Moderator ?
Design Options
Design Steps to Consider

- Charter a Design Team
- Specify Objectives
- Select a Moderator to Work With Design
- Preview Organization Charts, Plans & SOPs
- Interview Key Players & Organizations
- Evolve the Scenario from Interview Issues
- Consider Multiple Game Cells
- Coordinate Date, Players, Facilities, Rehearsal
- Plan Collection & Evaluation of Proceedings
Exercise Scenario Design

Hallmarks of a good exercise scenario…..

• Believable – “This situation could happen.”
• Involved ‘the experts’ in development
• Is Interesting and Invites Participation
• Challenges Participants to Think
• Presents Open-ended Questions
• Segmented into Game Play Rounds
Scenario Design Input

Interviews can be invaluable

- Organization Executives & Leadership
- Vets and Technicians
- Contract staff
- Emergency Response Providers
- Suppliers and Service Providers
- Customers
Rounds Maintain Focus

Individual Rounds Focus On Exercise Objectives

For Example ......
Round 1 – Emergency Response & Internal Communications
Round 2 - Life Safety of Employees and Guests
Round 3 - Animal Care Concerns
Round 4 - Recovery Actions
Rounds Maintain Pace of the Exercise

Rounds…..

• Artificially Advance Timelines

  • Resolve Dilemmas from Previous Rounds

  • Pose a New Set of Challenges & Issues
Designing Round Disclosures

- Generate New Issues & New Twists
- Provide Just Enough Information – WYSIWYG
- Disseminate Critical Info To Key Players
- Prepare Disclosure Cards
- Challenge Players To Communicate
  - To share information
  - To clarify the situation
  - To identify issues for discussion
Round Design

For Each Round …..

- Plan which players receive disclosures
- Anticipate actions stemming from disclosures
- Prepare questions to stimulate discussion
- Anticipate issues and questions
- Anticipate conflicting priorities
- Remain flexible
Game Play
Game Play

Moderator Roles and Responsibilities…..

- Master of Ceremonies - Conductor
- Directs Focus and Pace Toward Objective
- A Facilitator
- Flexible
- Assisted by One or More Recorders
- Keeps the Exercise Moving
Game Day Setting

Create the Exercise Environment

• Send Instructions & Directions In Advance
  • Flip Charts
• Ensure Room To Play – Seats For Everyone
  • Name Tags And Table Tent Cards
• Documents – Manuals, SOPs, Blueprints
  • Refreshments Can Help Set The Tone
Introduction and Rules of Play

First
• Welcome by Organization Chief
• Clarify Expectations
• Introduce Objectives for the Exercise
• Explain Table Top Play – Rules and Rounds

Then
• “Let the Games Begin”
A Typical Round of Play

For Each Round ..... 
• Start With A General Disclosure Announcement 
• Distribute Select Disclosures To Individuals 
• As Necessary, Open With Leading Questions 
• Draw Players Into Discussions 
• Leverage Planning Ideas To Stimulate Play 
• Robust Use Of Flip Charts 
• Faithfully Record The Proceedings
Processing Lessons
Optimize Use of Flipcharts

- Capture Issues, Ideas, and Information
- Establish a “Bin” for Related Issues
- Capture Unanswered Questions
- Create an Action List
- Invite Players to Post Their Ideas
Post Game Critique

After the Game,

Ask the Players…

• Initial Impressions
• Key lessons
• Priorities
• Ideas for the Next Steps
• Critique On Exercise Design and Play
• Suggestions
Evaluation of Lessons

Consider.....

• Recorded proceedings during Table Top
• Flip chart information
• Comments from Post exercise critique
• Critique sheets

Look for .....

• Trends
• Priorities
• Recommendations
Common Lessons Learned

Observed Opportunities to Improve…..

- Communications – methods, accuracy, speed
- Coordination among emergency responders
- Competing Priorities
- SOPs – Inadequate or outdated
- Training issues

And there are positive observations as well!
Finally, After Processing the Lessons .....

You will want to follow up .....

• Feedback to participants
• Feedback to the organization
• Feedback to supporting activities
• Prioritize opportunities for improvement
• Initiate actions on the top few priorities
• Track and measure your initiatives

And then.....

another Table Top ??????
Thank you for your attention.

Questions ????