

Foreword

The largest simulation exercise I had ever been involved in was about to start. I was in a glass-fronted room in a tower block overlooking London with close to 100 people; the exercise command centre and the hub of what was about to unfold. A young man in a dark business suit rose to his feet and said, 'We go live in 10 seconds.' A hush descended on the room, which was abruptly broken by the insistent music of a simulated TV news bulletin. All over London, elsewhere in the UK and across the world, more than 80 corporate crisis teams were simultaneously seeing the same internet-streamed news and the exercise was underway.

Our purpose was to test the resilience of a vital part of critical national infrastructure and, as exercise director, ultimate responsibility for running the event rested with me. Given the government departments and the global companies involved it was pretty clear, success was the only acceptable outcome. To add to the pressure, international observers were in attendance so the stakes were high for everyone concerned.

A real first for this event was the way the internet was used to create a multi-channel interactive experience for the participants so that, during the course of the exercise, more than 2,000 players from over 80 companies were able to rehearse their roles in a highly realistic environment. A series of live websites were created to give all the players the same information at exactly the same time, representing news media, financial data and information from the emergency services.

During the three-hour exercise, the websites handled more than 15 gigabytes of data on more than 200 pages. The financial data site contained 480 constantly changing graphs and, on average, there was a page update every two minutes. There were also around 3,500 downloads of individual video files from the news site. By the end of the exercise all the corporate teams had had the opportunity to rehearse their role and were better able to understand how their planned responses influenced or were influenced by others' actions. Participant feedback was highly positive and the post-exercise report identified valuable lessons that were subsequently embedded within the exercise participant community so that resilience was enhanced. Success had been achieved!

When contacted by the British Standards Institution to put this book together, I was inevitably drawn to reflect on that exercise and the many others in which I have been involved and how best to share that experience. Although the example

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cited above was huge in every sense, the principles for success apply to the range of different exercises that you might consider running for your organization. This is because what holds true for a global simulation also holds true for an in-house desktop exercise. So what are the key principles of delivering an effective exercise? A strong planning process, meticulous attention to detail and actionable reporting are the foundations for success – and I hope that the content of this book will help you to achieve your goals.

Scarcely a week goes by when I am not involved in some form of exercise. It may be the way I earn my living, but I do it because I believe in it. In our increasingly uncertain times your organization needs to be ready to respond to disruptive challenges and demonstrate preparedness to employees, clients, customers, regulators and shareholders.

This book represents a huge amount of knowledge garnered by myself and my colleagues at Crisis Solutions and I am indebted to them for their support. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Jim Preen, Alistair Cartwright, Peter Brown, Russell Newmarch and Emma Perry. We know that the approaches, processes and procedures contained here work: we use them every day. Now we want them to work for you.

Dennis Flynn
CEO, Crisis Solutions

Introduction

This book should be read in conjunction with *BS 25999-1:2006, Business continuity management: Code of practice*, which sets out the processes, principles and terminology of business continuity management. The book is intended for use by anyone with responsibility for the planning and delivery of exercises. Where no plan exists, an exercise can be the ideal approach to defining the requirement.

Exercises that are properly designed and carried out will develop your people's capabilities, and test your technical, logistical, administrative and procedural systems. Do the members of your nominated crisis management team (CMT) understand their roles and responsibilities? Do they understand the tools available to support effective delivery of a timely response? Does your call-cascade system work? Do you even have a call-cascade? If not, how are you going to find the staff you need to get you through a crisis? Think about it this way: would your senior executives prefer to find the answers to these questions during a major incident or in the controlled environment of an exercise?

Above all, an exercise should enable everyone to understand an organization's current incident management capability. It can demonstrate areas of strengths but can also highlight elements of your planning that are incomplete or need changing. As such, an exercise can be a powerful argument for additional top-down engagement and resources. If your plan is in good shape an exercise will generate high levels of confidence throughout your organization that you are well placed to withstand the impact of disruptions.

About this book

Ideally, exercises should not take place in isolation, but should be part of an ongoing programme. It would be a great mistake to run a plan test, consider your business continuity plan (BCP) validated and the job done. Organizations change, sometimes at a furious rate, and if that is the case then plans will need to evolve and develop at the same pace. Exercises should be part of your planned ongoing maintenance programme as opposed to culminating events.

Chapter 1 looks at the importance of developing an exercise programme and at the challenges of getting senior management on board to endorse and pay for it. British Standard 25999 places exercises into the following categories: simple, medium and complex. Taking this as its starting point, Chapter 2 looks at the

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importance of choosing the right type of exercise, from a simple desktop to a full-blown crisis simulation that may involve your incident management teams, plus members of the emergency services and the media.

Chapter 3 deals with planning an exercise from scenario development right up to the point of delivery. It analyses the roles of participants and how an exercise should be constructed using a master events list (MEL) to allow for a fast-paced, challenging and fun event. In Chapter 4 we look at the actual delivery of an exercise: how all the players should be briefed, and what event protocols should be in place. It also includes invaluable checklists to help make sure nothing is forgotten.

Finally, Chapter 5 deals with the all-important task of writing the exercise report. There is little point in running an exercise if the data it produces is not collated, digested and understood. Only then can individuals and teams look at their performance in a dispassionate way and plan the way ahead.

Plan tests, exercises and simulations should always be challenging. But planning, developing and running them can sometimes seem even more daunting. With the help of this book some of the sting should be taken out of the planning and delivery. This book provides a straightforward guide that is practical, is not overly concerned with theory, and contains many real-life case studies from people whose livelihood it is to run such exercises.

You will be taken on a journey from the inception of an exercise programme, right through to running an event and beyond. Getting senior management interested in business continuity is often a challenge. This book will help you to deliver a well-run exercise that can raise consciousness from the boardroom to the shop floor and help make the work of those in business continuity valued and understood.