

# Insight

## Crisis leadership involves planning to anticipate and alleviate problems

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a crisis in part as a decisive or critical moment.

Examples of familiar crises in the workplace include violence, terrorism, problems with manufactured products and product tampering.



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When a crisis develops, people tend to react immediately to try to solve the problem. Stability is no longer the norm.

Chaos can be minimized, though, with a written crisis plan.

Crisis management is reactive, while crisis leadership is proactive. Crisis leadership requires thinking and planning how a company will react to a crisis situation.

With a written plan of action, leaders stay connected while dealing with the situation. They remain emotionally separated and focus on the strategic goals of the company. Crisis leadership is basic to strategic advantage and competitiveness.

There are two distinct phases of a crisis. First is the emergency phase, which requires an initial response to the threat itself. What follows is the adaptive phase — that is, responding to the aftermath of the crisis.

There are also long- and short-term crises.

A long-term crisis is viewed as a chronic threat and employees need structure to focus on the primary mission. A short-term crisis is an acute threat or the emergency portion that

requires short-term objectives in dealing with a crisis issue.

A crisis plan begins with crisis prevention. Take time to brainstorm ideas about different types of crises that could possibly happen within the company.

Then determine how to recognize the early warning signs. If early warning signs are acted upon, a crisis could be averted. The crisis plan should outline a systematic and integrated series of actions based on a total systems view of the business.

The chief executive officer of the company will have the most public role during a crisis, one that is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the organization. Employees will look to the CEO for communication, planning and capabilities of the company. At the first sign of a major crisis, the CEO must get the truth out to employees and the public, first responding to emotional needs with care.

After writing a crisis plan, keep it updated by reviewing it annually. During the annual review, try to identify an additional possible crisis and improve at least one part of the crisis leadership procedure.

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