

5 Ways to Ready Your Organization for Crisis

Written by: Drew Koch, CM | April 3, 2020



The outbreak of the novel Corona virus and its unparalleled, global effects has caused most organizations to take a hard look at their readiness to meet major crises. Unfortunately, all too many have discovered that they were woefully under-prepared, threatening the very existence of the organization.

Simply put, the best way to deal with a crisis is to be prepared. While we can't go back in time and be better prepared for this crisis, we can learn from our mistakes and make sure our organizations are better prepared for the future. Managers and supervisors play a key role in these preparations. Here then are five ways to ready your organization for the next crisis.

1. **Plan ahead.** The old adage “failing to plan is planning to fail” is never truer than when a crisis hits. The last thing any organization needs is to be caught unprepared when something goes majorly wrong. Develop detailed contingency plans to guide your organization through sudden difficulties. More importantly, make sure everyone knows and understands the plans and how to execute them.

2. **Develop and communicate clear guidelines.** This needs to happen long before a crisis hits. Workers need to know what to expect and what is expected of them when a major crisis occurs. What are your organization's telework policies? How will jobs and responsibilities change? What do workers need to do in advance to be prepared? How will the organization communicate vital information to workers? All of these questions – and many more – need to be answered in advance.
3. **Make sure your people have what they need.** Almost overnight, millions of office workers became a remote workforce. Many may never have worked from home before and may not be prepared to do so. They may not even have a home computer or high-speed Internet. Organizations need to have policies in place to mitigate these issues. For example, you might allow workers to take their office computers home if needed, and/or pay them a stipend to hook up Internet service. Remember: preparation is the key.
4. **Be patient and flexible with parents.** When schools are closed, teleworking parents have a lot more to think about than doing their jobs. When kids are out of school for an extended period, parents will have the additional burden of keeping their learning on track. In such cases, parents may not be as available as usual during typical work hours and take longer to respond to phone calls, texts and email. Supervisors and co-workers need to keep these additional challenges in mind, be patient and flexible waiting for responses from parents, and trust that they are doing their best in a difficult situation.
5. **Have reasonable expectations.** The reality is that productivity will likely suffer when a major crisis hits. A lot of things we take for granted in a typical work environment will suddenly get more complicated and less efficient. Teleworking alone can lead to lots of problems. For instance, issues with meeting software and Internet connectivity may hamper communications. For these – and lots of other reasons – project deadlines may need to be adjusted, certain non-critical tasks may need to be temporarily suspended, and you may need to accept a lower volume of work to maintain quality.

While this is by no means a comprehensive list, following these five suggestions will go a long way in helping your organization to prepare for a crisis, survive, and thrive.

Other resources:

What does it mean to be a crisis ready organization?

<https://www.continuitycentral.com/feature1172.html>

3 steps for Communicators to implement a Crisis Ready Culture

<https://spinsucks.com/communication/implement-crisis-ready-culture/>

How to Build the Crisis-ready organization

<http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/258353/file-590152650-pdf/Downloads/Crisis-Readiness-TVEyes-Playbook.pdf?t=1395251335000>

About the Author



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