



## The Need

A contingency plan is just so much printed paper until it is tested. It enables you to tick a box and say you've got one, but how do you know whether it will work, whether it will nearly but not quite live up to the job, or whether fundamental flaws will completely invalidate it?

Even a perfect plan will be hampered unless those who have to implement it have gone through the experience of invoking the plan - the training, experience and familiarity with the plan that they acquire will be invaluable.

So, for many reasons, plan testing is vital - whether your plans are newly completed, still in development and need stress testing, or mature and need reviewing and refreshing. Whilst it can be done entirely in house, an outsider can bring fresh slants and maybe help you to test aspects that you might have overlooked when creating your plans, and could therefore overlook when testing them.

## Our approach

Drawing on our extensive experience of helping organisations to both create and test their plans, our totally flexible approach enables us to tailor a programme that precisely matches our client's needs, participants and budget. Our experience is across a wide range of plan types, from media scandal to business continuity and emergency plans, and in both the public and private sectors. Exercises can range from totally realistic simulations with actors, journalists and camera crews to desk-top tests that involve little more than flip charts and our unique testing processes.

## Recent examples

Some examples of our most recent activity in this field (Autumn 2006) will give an idea of the breadth and flexibility of our approach.

A project to challenge, test and improve the **crisis and business continuity plans** of a government body. In five consecutive full-day workshops all 150 senior officers participated in the testing process, working with flip-charts in small departmental groups of between 5 and 10. Feedback was excellent and the exercise was judged a resounding success on all counts, highlighting many areas for plan and risk improvement, and making the plans come alive, and thus achieve buy-in, for the first time.

A **pandemic crisis simulation** for a major bank, involving video links to other operational centres. To make the crisis realistic we first created an interdependencies map for the bank's critical functions and from this we were able to identify and track the effects of random absent staff levels in key areas. As a result, key pressure points were identified and many valuable lessons were learned and implemented.

Our **Crisis Kick Start** programme for a major food & drink wholesaler/ distributor. In this exercise we took the management team through a review of 40 potential crisis scenarios that we had customised to them after studying their business. From this we selected six to prioritise, and helped them to brainstorm the most challenging, as the first stage of a programme of training, coaching, support and trouble-shooting.

## Further reading

See also the following brochures, all of which are available on our website:

- Contingency planning
- Crisis simulations
- Executive crisis simulations
- Crisis kick-start