Issue Management and Crisis Management: An Integrated, Non-linear, Relational Construct

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Abstract:

Despite extensive attempts to define and differentiate issue management and crisis management, the definitional approach – and linear life-cycle models which focus on the elements – fail to capture the full dynamics of the disciplines. Instead of a focus on definitions, this paper proposes a non-linear, relational construct which considers issue and crisis management in the context of interdependent activities and clusters of activity which must be managed at different stages. This includes the role of issue management in both the pre-crisis and post-crisis phases. The model addresses some of the limitations of linear approaches and helps analyze the outcomes and overlaps between activity clusters in order to optimize strategic relationships and enhance bottom-line effectiveness.

1. Introduction:

During the parallel development of issue management and crisis management there have been extensive academic and practitioner attempts to define and differentiate the two disciplines**.**

Issue management as a defined activity began in the late 1970's but the first book devoted solely to issue management was not published until 1984 (Howard Chase: *Issue Management – Origins of the Future*). Significantly, one of the seminal works on the emerging discipline of crisis management was published just two years later (Steve Fink: *Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable)*

Chase and his colleague Barry Jones established the pioneering definition that an issue is "an unsettled matter which is ready for decision" (Chase 1984, p. 38). Over the ensuing twenty years, issues have been defined and categorized in many different ways. Yet, there has come to be reasonably broad acceptance of an issue as "a condition or event, either internal or external to the organization which, if it continues, will have a significant effect of the functioning or performance of the organization or on its future interests." (cited in Regester and Larkin 2002, p. 42)

At the same time there appears to now be a good level of agreement in the management literature about the definition of a crisis. This broad consensus has been consolidated by Christine Pearson and Judith Clair (1998, p. 60). "An organizational crisis is a low probability, high impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effects and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly."

More recently Anne Gregory (2005, p. 313) similarly reported that a literature review concludes crises are characterized as "high consequence, low probability, overlaid with risk and uncertainty, conducted under time-pressure, disruptive of normal business and potentially lethal to organizational reputation"

However, the challenge is not so much in defining issue and crisis but in the *application* of those definitions to management theory and practice.

2. The Definitional Approach

While there is now a good degree of consensus about what is a crisis and what is an issue, there is much less consensus on how to define crisis management and virtually none at all on how to define issue management. Robert Heath wrote in 1997 (p. 5) that no definition of issue management had achieved consensus and his judgment remains valid. This lack of clarity suggests that while crises can properly be defined independent of crisis management, it is difficult to define issues independent of issue management.

The weakness of the purely definitional approach is illustrated by a student thesis (Monstad 2003, p. 1) which typifies a common misapprehension: "Issue management involves mainly looking into the future to identify potential trends and events which *may* influence the organization, while crisis management is a more reactive discipline focusing on the situation *after* a crisis has occurred." While a crisis is by definition a situation out of control (Benedict 1994, p. 22), this concept of crisis management as purely reactive would be valid only if crisis management is regarded simply as a tactical discipline.

Unlike issue management, where both strategic and tactical elements are recognized, the same distinction for crisis management is less well understood, which perpetuates superficial distinctions and impedes progress. Within a strategic context, crisis management should be seen not just as a tactical reactive response when a crisis hits, but as a proactive discipline embracing inter-related processes ranging from crisis prevention and crisis preparedness through crisis response and on to crisis recovery.

When crisis management is viewed in this holistic way the focus turns to process rather than definitions, and research makes it clear that definitions alone are an insufficient basis for properly understanding the integral relationship between issue management and crisis management.

3. Life Cycle Models

Beyond purely definitional attempts to distinguish between issue management and crisis management, life cycle models have been developed and analyzed to illustrate the distinction and relationship between different management elements (including Mahon and Waddock, 1992; Bigelow et al, 1993; González-Herrero and Pratt, 1996; Jaques, 2000; and Zyglidopoulos, 2003)

Life cycle models broadly rely on two common propositions - that some problems left unaddressed trend towards increasing seriousness and greater risk; and that the longer an issue survives, the choices available decrease and cost of intervention and resolution

increases. The labels and vocabulary may vary, but in general such models graphically illustrate that matters of contention typically move progressively along a sequence from concern to problem to issue to crisis and then to some form of resolution.

A key weakness of life cycle models is that they are linear, suggesting that activities take place in a sequential fashion, leading to some form of resolution. The models also imply that competing issues are managed one at a time, whereas different issues are often managed simultaneously, frequently each at different phases. In reality issue management is inherently not a linear process. As Bigelow et al (1993, p. 29) concluded: "Issues do not necessarily follow a linear, sequential path, but instead follow paths that reflect the intensity and diversity of the values and interests stakeholders bring to an issue and the complexity of the interaction among the … factors."

Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk (1988, p. 54) explored issue life cycle theory in the context of a natural history model (which posits that social problem recognition and attention follows an orderly trajectory akin to evolution). But Lamertz et al (2003, p. 83) are critical of what they call "highly stylized" natural history models. "The main source of discontent," they argue, "is that issues often fail to progress along predictable lines, and deviate frequently from the linear, sequential path suggested by evolutionary frameworks."

4. Chaos Theory

One counter to the linearity of the lifecycle approach was to explore whether Chaos Theory – which emphasizes multi-directional causality and lack of predictability – has utility for understanding crisis management. Chaos theory is built on the two ideas that systems, no matter how complex, rely on an underlying order, and that within such systems very small changes or events can cause very complex behaviors or outcomes.

Recognition of this non-linear interaction between components prompted Priscilla Murphy (1996) and later Matthew Seeger (2002) to advance the application of chaos theory to crisis management. However this approach does not appear to have gained much ground. Indeed Seeger himself recognized that both crisis communication researchers and practitioners have focused primarily on the short term goals of resolving a crisis quickly as possible with as little damage to image as possible, as opposed to the longer term time frames and broader scales needed for chaos theory to play out.

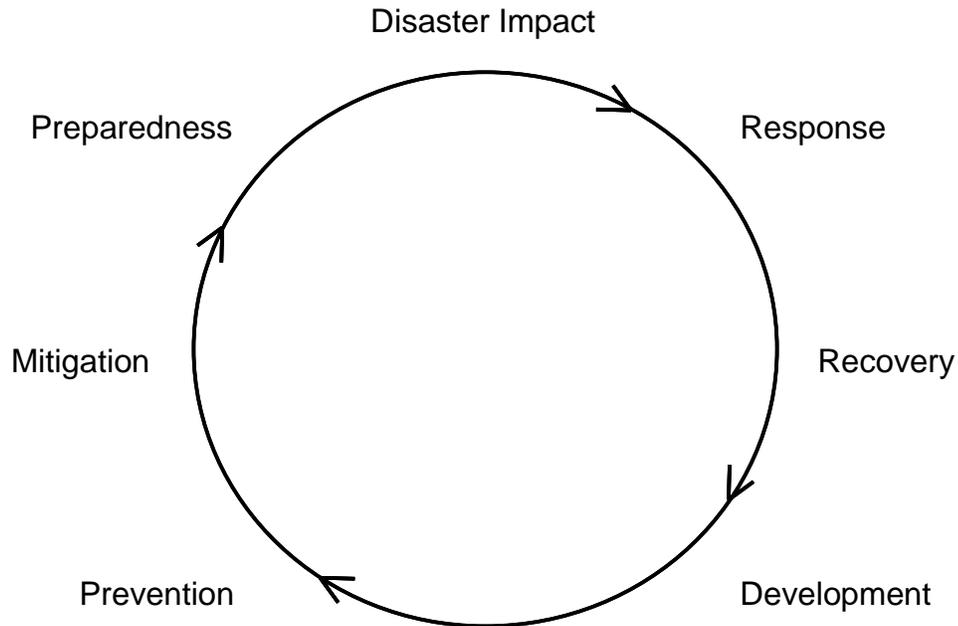## 5. Disaster Management as a model

Another alternative to the linearity of life cycle models or the multi-directional causality of chaos theory is the holistic approach exemplified by disaster management, where different elements or clusters overlap substantially and can be worked on simultaneously.

Although the expression "disaster management" is sometimes mistakenly used as a synonym for crisis management, disaster management is in fact a distinct process, typically involving government agencies and territorial authorities and most often related to national or community disasters.

A central component of disaster management is a cross-functional, "whole of government" commitment to planning - often mandated by law or regulation. While the

focus – especially with natural phenomena such as earthquakes, floods, pandemics, landslides and hurricanes – is on reducing the impact of disasters rather than on preventing the disasters themselves, disaster management can provide a useful framework for corporate issue or crisis management, particularly by highlighting the elements as linked processes and not stand-alone disciplines.

Disaster Management Cycle

Disaster Impact

Preparedness

Response

Mitigation

Recovery

Prevention

Development

Source: Asian Development Bank, Carter 1991

Referring to the deceptively simple classic disaster management cycle, Nick Carter (1991, p. xx) says that while the cycle is often portrayed in other forms, the important point is that the format should indicate that "disaster and its management is a continuum of inter-related activities; it is not a series of events which start and stop with each disaster occurrence."

In line with the approach typified by disaster management, Caroline Sapriel (2003, p. 348) developed an "integrated and holistic" risk and crisis management model, which she said reflects a growing recognition among corporations that crisis management must be institutionalized and that all key business functions must formally address crisis prevention and management formally as part of business planning.

Her model provides a useful progression from risk assessment though crisis preparedness assessment and emergency and crisis response towards a goal of increased crisis preparedness, along with a concurrent progression from risk assessment to risk reduction. Yet, while this model demonstrates an improved element of integration, it too is built on a step-wise, linear form.

6. The Evolution of Crisis Management

The concept of crisis management has seen a steady evolution over the last twenty years. Early phases of this evolution included Littlejohn's (1983, p. 13) six step crisis model (structure design, crisis team selection, team training, crisis situation audit, contingency plan, manage the crisis); Fink's seminal (1986, pp. 21-25) four stage model (prodromal, acute, chronic, resolution); Burnett's (1998, p. 482) 16-cell classification matrix approach; and the Home Office (UK) Emergency Planning College eight stage planning process (direction, information gathering, plan writing, consultation, publication, training validation, confirmation/revision - Harrison 1999, p. 21)
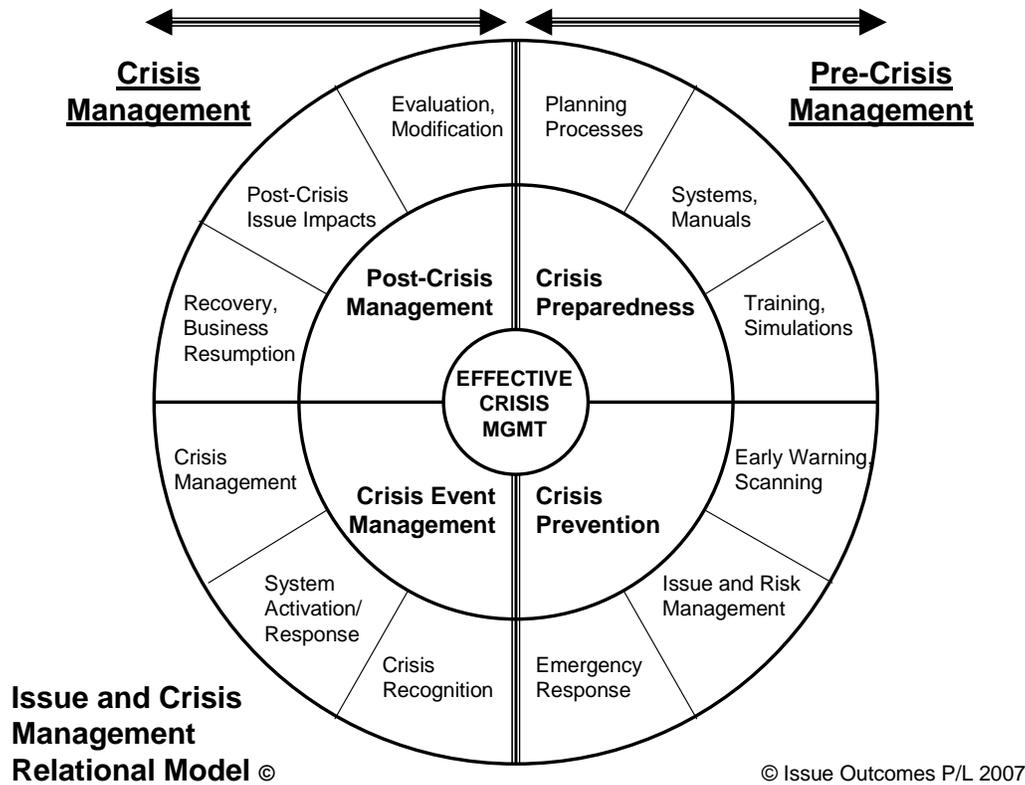
Alongside the development of models for crisis *management* was a focus on models for crisis *classification,* for example Meyers (1988, p 14) who identified nine types of business crises; Lerbinger (1997, p. 19) who developed four crisis classifications; and Coombs (2002, pp 343-343) who identified four crisis situations and a "repertoire" of five crisis-response strategies. In addition there has been a strong academic focus on image and reputation management and on the typology of crisis response strategies. (See for example Hearit 1995 and Sellnow et al 1998).

Yet while there was acknowledged discrepancy between a largely practitioner-driven tactical response approach and more academic models, neither approach fully recognised the relational interaction between the management elements. It was only late in the debate that Pearson et al (1997) and Preble (1997) came to argue that crisis management should in fact be integrated into the strategic management approach.

A similar view of crisis management as an holistic, integrated process was proposed by John Penrose (2000, p. 166) who observed: "In the past, pre- and post-crisis actions have not been consolidated as one integrated unit. . . . . These activities do cluster together and should be considered in aggregate rather than as separate sets of activities."

7. The Relational Model of Crisis Management

The concept of crisis management as a continuous discipline based on clusters and non-linear elements forms the basis of the present proposal for a relational model.

Crisis Management

Pre-Crisis Management

Evaluation, Modification

Planning Processes

Post-Crisis Issue Impacts

Systems, Manuals

Recovery, Business Resumption

Post-Crisis Management

Crisis Preparedness

Training, Simulations

EFFECTIVE CRISIS MGMT

Crisis Management

Early Warning, Scanning

Crisis Event Management

Crisis Prevention

System Activation/ Response

Issue and Risk Management

Crisis Recognition

Emergency Response

Issue and Crisis Management Relational Model ©

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This new model is predicated on the holistic view of crisis management, that crisis prevention and crisis preparedness are just as much parts of the overall process as the tactical steps to take once a crisis strikes. Furthermore, that the post-crisis cluster of activities has a critical function looping back to preparing for and managing future crises.

The model's non-linear structure emphasizes that the elements should be seen as "clusters" of related and integrated disciplines, not as "steps" to be undertaken in a sequential fashion. And while the pre-crisis and crisis management hemispheres of the model have an obvious temporal relationship, the individual elements may occur either overlapping or simultaneously. In fact crisis prevention and crisis preparedness for example most often *should* happen simultaneously.

Moreover, not only do some of the adjacent elements or clusters overlap but there is a substantial overlap or commonality between some non-adjacent elements, for example between early warning/scanning and crisis recognition. Similarly, the post-crisis learnings of one organization can provide early warning and improved crisis preparedness for *other* organizations.

It has been said that the best way to manage crises is to understand and manage issues, and in the context of this relational model, the full scope of issue management in positioned in both crisis prevention and post-crisis management. By contrast Heath (1997, p. 289) believes that crisis management is a *part* of issue management, and not vice versa. Indeed he goes further and asserts that crisis management is actually a *function* of issue management. Heath also argues persuasively for going beyond the traditional problem-issue-crisis-resolution linear sequence, emphasizing that not only can crises arise from issues, but that issues can arise from crises.

For example, the much-analyzed Exxon-Valdez disaster was first an environmental crisis (a major oil spill); then a management crisis (slow and inadequate response); then a management/litigation issue (sustained legal and public review of management response) and finally a persistent reputational issue which may never fade.

In this context, most writers accept that crisis prevention is a distinct step in the broad crisis management continuum. Yet most do not elaborate the actual management processes required to achieve that outcome, nor do they characterize that step in terms of specific management disciplines

Major crises which occur – for instance financial collapse, product failure, fatal accidents – are often the subject of exhaustive investigation processes, such as coroner's inquests, crash investigation, committees of inquiry and law suits. But in all these different forms of root cause analysis, the real cause of the crisis is almost certainly never that the crisis management manual was not up to date or that the management process flow charts were not well enough laid out. Yet it is often such process matters which occupy management or consultant time and effort.

The real identified cause of major crises is much more likely to be poor maintenance practice, human error, bad planning, material failure, unethical or dishonest behaviour, unresponsive culture, leadership failure, poor judgment, or insufficient training (not training of the crisis management team but perhaps of maintenance workers or designers or accountants). However none of these activities would traditionally be seen in the context of "crisis prevention."

An additional challenge in corporations is that turf wars can lead to deliberate barriers between functions which simply don't perceive themselves as part of this relational construct. For example, the auditing department might see itself as contributing to financial risk management but not as a key element in corporate crisis prevention, despite the fact that a number of high profile financial crises and corporate collapses have been traced back directly to poor auditing practice. (cf Crandall et al 1999)

Similarly, the organization's maintenance workshop would not normally be seen as a key locus of crisis prevention. Yet the trigger cause of many industrial and transport crises has been shown to be faulty maintenance, for example of chemical plants or aircraft.

The relational model of crisis prevention introduced here attempts to address both trigger events and underlying causes. It also emphasizes that crisis communication is an important part of crisis management, but one part only alongside other key management disciplines. Based on these considerations, this new relational model illustrates the interdependence between issue management, crisis management and the related activities, and addresses some of the weaknesses identified in the previous theoretical models.

8. RELATIONAL MODEL - DISCUSSION

The model comprises four major elements - Crisis Preparedness, Crisis Prevention, Crisis Incident Management and Post-Crisis Management – each built around clusters of activities and processes, and these are discussed in turn. As previously described, the

elements and the clustered activities are not sequential and in some cases can and should be undertaken simultaneously.

8.1.1 Crisis Preparedness – Planning processes

- Includes putting planning in place, assigning roles and responsibilities, establishing process ownership.

Numerous studies (including Fink 1986, pp. 67-70; Guth 1995, p. 132; Penrose 2000, p 162; and AMA 2002) have determined that a disappointingly low percentage of companies have a crisis plan in place – typically around 50% - and even fewer have tested the plan to demonstrate that it is operational.

Introducing effective issue management or crisis management requires commitment from the top. If senior management is not committed to planning it will not happen. While Ian Mitroff and Thierry Pauchant (1990, p. 98) identified more than 30 different rationalizations managers have given for NOT putting crisis planning in place, it has been clearly shown that when a crisis hits an organization which has no operational plan, the crisis last much longer (Fink 1986, p. 69). Indeed Brown (1993, p. 46) reported that research in the United States and Europe showed 80% of companies which lack a well conceived and tested contingency plan go out of business within two years of suffering a major disaster.

8.1.2 Crisis Preparedness – Systems, manuals

- Includes crisis management infrastructure, equipment, "war rooms," resources, documentation.

The practitioner-oriented crisis management literature (for example Fink 1986, Fearn-Banks 1996, Lerbinger 1997, Bland 1998, Seymour and Moore 2000, Skinner and Mersham 2002, Regester and Larkin 2002) has a predictably strong focus on process and systems such as crisis team selection and training, reporting and authority lines, pre-prepared materials, system activation, stakeholder communication, functional check-lists, logistical resources and centralized crisis management centers, business protection, and an often very strong emphasis on media relations.

This stepwise process approach is also typical of proprietary models developed by consultants and in-house practitioners, which sometimes overemphasize physical outputs such as decision-trees, flowcharts and manuals.

Systems and manuals are not unimportant and are part of the foundation of effective crisis management. But the mere existence of such systems and manuals - often in a dusty three-ring binder - can lure an organization into the false belief that it is "crisis-ready." Planning is self-evidently much more than manuals, and research by Frank Marra (1998) has shown that the existence of excellent crisis communication plans had little effect on the outcome of some well-known crises.

8.1.3 Crisis Preparedness – Training, simulations

- Includes familiarization programs, testing, table-top exercises, live simulations.

The American Management Association reports that a survey of its members and customers in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 found that only 49% had a crisis management plan and only 39% had ever carried out a drill or simulation. (AMA 2002)

Most organizations practice emergency response on a regular basis, from simple school fire drills or office evacuations through to full-scale simulated chemical spills or fatal accidents involving not only company resources but teams of police, firefighters and other emergency professionals. But when it comes to testing the crisis management plan, many companies and other organizations patently lack the same level of commitment.

8.2.1 Crisis Prevention – Early warning, scanning

- Includes processes such as audits, preventive maintenance, issue scanning, social forecasting, environmental scanning, anticipatory management, future studies.

There are many established tactical mechanisms to support early warning and scanning, including leadership surveys, media content analyses, public opinion surveys, legislative trend analysis, trade association participation, literature review, conference attendance, monitoring key websites, chat-group analysis.

The challenge for management - greatly exacerbated by the rapidly expanding use of data bases and computer-based issue monitoring (Jaques 2006, p. 70) - is more often not too little information but too much. And not only inadequate management of the information already to hand, but also a lack of management commitment to taking effective and responsible action on the basis of that information.

Heath (2002, p. 211) cites the case of Enron, which developed a mammoth database monitoring and response system that could track threats and opportunities, calculate impact on business plans and operations, and suggest coordinated responses. "This was the essence of an excellent issues management program that had at least one flaw, a commitment to corporate responsibility that truly reflected the reality of sound business practices rather than sheer opportunism."

8.2.2 Crisis Prevention – Issue and Risk Management

- Includes identification, prioritization, strategy development and implementation.

Early warning and scanning, plus the identification and prioritization phases of issue and risk management, are to a large degree overlapping clusters of activities. Both depend fundamentally on management recognizing the need for action, deciding what to do, and getting it done.

Kurt Stocker (1997, p. 192) says the first step - analysis - involves knowing what can happen to you or your industry and what you can do about it… if anything. "Getting information about a potential crisis can be as sophisticated as a formal issues

management program or as simple as interviewing your own employees about what could go wrong, or what may be going wrong. ….. In most internally generated crises, the knowledge and potential for a problem was well known in advance of the onset of the public crisis, and top management found out about it as it was going public."

It is clear that issue management and risk management are stand-alone disciplines with strategic scope and significance far beyond just early warning for crisis prevention. (Clarke and Varma (1999, p. 415) for example specifically posit risk management as an holistic strategic process) However for the present purposes it is equally clear that both disciplines include proven activities to help identify problems early and effectively manage them to reduce the chance of a problem becoming a crisis.

8.2.3 Crisis Prevention - Emergency Response

- Includes infrastructure, documentation, training.

Not every crisis is triggered by an emergency, but enough are to demonstrate that emergencies badly handled can lead to crises. While an organization well versed in crisis preparedness and management can handle emergencies routinely (Coombs 2002, p. 344) a good emergency response process does not substitute for a proper crisis management capability.

Indeed, understanding the difference between emergency and crisis is a critical factor in managing both. Defining the exact difference in a generic sense is not easy because a crisis for a small organization may be appropriately handled as an emergency for a larger one. Each organization should have its own criteria for defining when an emergency might become a crisis, and the transition from emergency response to crisis incident management is one of the more hazardous elements in management.

But irrespective of the tactical differences and the transition points, it is essential from the overall strategic perspective to recognize that a serious emergency can trigger a crisis, and that as such, prompt and effective emergency response is a core element in crisis prevention.

8.3.1 Crisis Incident Management – Crisis Recognition

- Includes the transition from emergency, objective assessment, early recognition.

While recognizing and managing the transition from an emergency to a crisis can be difficult, it is even harder to recognize a crisis which develops other than through a serious emergency.As previously mentioned, early warning and scanning are important in helping prevent a crisis - either chronic or acute - but they are of no value whatever if management ignores, denies or tries to suppress the warnings.

Sometimes management simply fails to read the signs, such as in the well known case of the faulty Pentium chip. (Hearit 1999, Regester and Larkin 2002, p. 55). Sometimes management turns a blind eye to internal warning signs, such as the Firestone ATX tyre recall where quality problems had been known since 1992 but nothing was done until the

issue broke as a billion dollar plus crisis in 2000 after scores of deaths in accidents resulting from tyre failure. (Blaney et al 2002, p 380).

Finally there are the occasions when managers attempt to deliberately cover up or misrepresent the facts, as critics have claimed during the prolonged asbestos and tobacco crises.

Recognizing and characterizing a crisis may seem simple and obvious, but the reality is far different. As Fink (1986, p. 73) warned: "You should accept almost as a universal truth that when a crisis strikes, it will be accompanied by a host of diversionary problems. As a manager your task is to identify the real crisis."

8.3.2 Crisis Incident Management – Systems activations/response

- Includes the activation process, effective mechanisms for call out, availability of back-ups, systems redundancy.

Crisis recognition alone is obviously not enough. Response systems must be activated effectively and rapidly. When Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana in August 2005, some US Federal authorities initially claimed not to understand its full impact even though everyone else could see it on live television. As a result system activation and response was slow and rightly criticized.

Similarly Fink (1986, p. 84) takes as a classic example the Iran Hostage crisis of 1979/1980 which was clearly recognized as a crisis, but where President Jimmy Carter suffered from "analysis paralysis" and failed to implement an effective response

There are many reasons for inadequate response - such a lack of planning and practice - but unfortunately, too often management are more concerned with messaging and reputation protection than taking action to manage the crisis.

8.3.3 Crisis Incident Management – Crisis Management

- Includes strategy selection and implementation, damage mitigation, stakeholder management, media response.

Managing the crisis itself is the area perhaps most extensively described in the literature and requires little further discussion here. The sources cited present numerous check-lists and action plans and very detailed case studies which contain most of what is reasonably needed to select and implement an effective strategy.

Analyzing the alternatives, Coombs (2002, p. 342) suggests three distinct research streams regarding alternate approaches to the selection of crisis response strategies – (1) corporate apologia (2) image restoration theory (3) situational crisis communicating theory.

The very extensive case study literature focuses on crises well handled and, more often, crises less than well handled. But only a full understanding of the options can help determine whether individual organizations will become case studies for crisis management success or failure

8.4.1 Post-Crisis Management – Recovery, Business Resumption

- Includes operational recovery, financial costs, market retention, business momentum, share price protection.

In the aftermath of any crisis there is a logical desire to move on as quickly as possible, to resume business as usual. And this is reinforced by commonly available business recovery programs which focus strongly on infrastructure breakdowns such power outages, computer failures and the like. Indeed, many management models present "post-crisis" and "recovery" as synonymous. The reality however is that the risks to an organization post-crisis can be even greater than during the crisis itself.

Stocker (1997, p. 196) says the potential for legal costs tends to determine how companies respond to a crisis, yet in almost every case, this ends up being a minor segment of ultimate costs. He says the largest single segment is market costs – lost sales, damaged products and damaged reputation – impacting market share, ability to grow, and margins, while at the same time the company's market value suffers as stock price falls.

8.4.2 Post-Crisis Management – Post-Crisis Issue Impacts

- Includes coronial inquests, judicial inquiries, prosecution, litigation, reputational damage, media scrutiny.

Not only are the majority of post-crisis costs not legal costs or judgments, but the greatest reputational and long-term impact can be from issues which develop *after* the crisis. As previously described, post-crisis issues can persist for years or even decades and may impact whole industries.

Four of the best known and most intensely analyzed crises – the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, Exxon Valdez oil spill, Union Carbide Bhopal chemical release and Challenger space shuttle explosion – are all examples of a crisis poorly handled which led directly to prolonged and high profile public issues which had impact far beyond the original event.

Decisions during a crisis are often made under pressure and in the heat of the moment, yet have the capacity to impact the organization for years to come. Judicial and legal investigation in the cold light of day can be brutal, and the capacity of management to withstand such pressure is often directly related to how well the organization tried to prevent the crisis and how well it's plans and processes operated in response.

8.4.3 Post-Crisis Management – Evaluation, modification

- Includes root cause analysis, management assessment, process review, implementation of change.

While learning and evaluation should take place at every phase of the relational model, the post-crisis phase offers particularly fertile ground for genuine corporate learning and systems modification.

The end of every crisis should be the beginning of the preparation step for the next one, and Penrose (2000, p. 156) argues that companies which do survive disasters are more prepared for future challenges. However Fink's survey of the Fortune 500 (1986, p. 67) found that of the companies which reported having a crisis in the past, 42% *still* did not have any sort of crisis management plan.

Debriefing the crisis team and evaluating the crisis plan immediately after the crisis can be the most important part of crisis management (Penrose 2000, p. 158) but sadly, this is often not the case. As Lisa Tyler (1997, p. 65) commented on the notorious Exxon-Valdez disaster: "Company executives who insist that the Exxon spill was an unavoidable accident surely are less likely to work to prevent such accidents in the future. If corporate executives insist that the accident would not have occurred if Exxon rules had been followed, they have less reason to examine corporate policies and procedures and more reason to perceive themselves, unreasonably, as the victims of the situation."

The barriers to learning after a crisis have been assessed in detail by Elliott et al (2000, p. 21) who noted that immediately following a crisis there will often be a search for scapegoats as survivors and managers seek to project blame elsewhere. However they proposed that the post-crisis phase represents "an opportunity to change those aspects of the organization which helped create the potential for crisis in the first place."

Recovery then is not just getting back to work. It is asking, what have we learned to prevent this happening again, and what could we have done differently.

9. Conclusion

When considering the closely related activities of issue management and crisis management, it is clear that definitions provide a useful starting point but are insufficient alone for a full understanding. Not only is there no substantial agreement on key definitions but there is little common ground on language between disciplines.
Rather than relying on dubious definitions and distinctions, there is real value in positioning issue management and crisis management in the context of a broader coalescence of management processes.

This new relational model presents them as part of a cluster of actions, focused on more effectively preventing and managing crisis, and is intended to address the weaknesses identified in the previous theoretical models, particularly the limitations of a purely definitional or linear approach.

From a practitioner perspective, a typical working week may see the experienced public affairs manager seamlessly transition between the different activities and clusters nominated in the model. This is sometimes strategic but more often tactical, effectively managing and responding to the needs of a client or working organization without necessarily requiring a specific awareness of the distinctions. (Smudde 2001)

However the present model and the broader understanding it encourages, provides form and context for the different processes. At a practical level, it also helps avoids simplistic errors such as the belief that issue management relies mainly on lobbying, or that crisis

management is really little more than effective media relations, or that the crisis is over when the flames die down.

In this way the model aims to promote an improved theoretical understanding of the different disciplines and at the same time helps deliver real bottom line impact – minimizing human and financial cost and reducing both the risk and impact of adverse events.

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