

Crisis Management

Table Discussion

Risk assessing and crisis planning pre-event

1) How do you currently assess risk pre-event from choosing where to go, to risk assessment before going onsite?

Responses:

- Often driven by the client and their own process or approach to risk
- Some clients need to organise events in very high risk locations for their regional meetings eg. Africa region is having their event in Zimbabwe. Once a destination is decided, it's up to the events agency / team to make it work.
- Dangerous activities are unlikely to be booked by a client – delegate's own risk
- It's difficult working overseas as a lot of suppliers do not understand or value the risk assessment process
- Sometimes challenges occur when programme has sold and operational investigations reveal risks e.g. having to use unlicensed aircraft for internal transfers

1b) What tools do you use to assess risk?

Responses:

- Use insurance policy cover as a guide, does insurance cover the team?
- Make sure YOU are familiar with the destination. Don't rely on local knowledge
- Common sense e.g. Don't go anywhere too remote, impact on Health and Safety, Wi-Fi coverage, nearest hospital, etc
- As numbers increase liability moves to the individual e.g. 8vs300 pax
- Checklist for inspections to ensure risk is assessed as part of that – it's not enough to tick the boxes, someone needs to be checking fire exits / escape routes are clear
- Rigorous pre-event risk assessments but priorities on site change so often get overlooked. The process is done and measures are put in place if necessary but not documented.
- Having a generic Risk Assessment template makes it quicker and easier

2) What collaboration do you have on the crisis planning with the client and/or suppliers pre-event?

- Rely on information from hotels, venues, DMC's
- Often when clients don't have procedures in place there is a need to go through a process of educating them e.g. Does the company have a policy regarding how many members of staff of a certain grade flying on the same plane?
- Most do not have a formal process; or even a conversation with their clients regarding communication protocol in a crisis – eg. if someone has been injured, who should inform the CEO / press / client's PR team.

Crisis management planning re-event

1) What does your crisis plan look like?

- A majority of attendees did not have a specific Crisis Plan
- Anything they do have has been formed organically as a reaction to an actual crisis

- We have a 24 emergency call centre with a script, which it uses to determine the nature of the crisis. It asks if you would like to activate the plan, then uses a call tree to locate the appropriate people.
- Occasionally, the client will have a general business crisis plan, but not event specific
- There is a need for an industry wide Crisis Management template or a best practice document

2) What documentation/information do you prepare/collect in advance of going onsite to prepare in case of an incident?

- Just usually ask the venue or DMC what policy they have in place
- Get a local list of hospitals, embassies, etc
- There's a danger with formal Crisis Plans that they are too wordy and complex and as such are not read therefore fail their objective
- Great idea was a small laminated Emergency Card for all staff or just Senior Management which will include all phone numbers etc.
- It shows due diligence to communicate crisis plans with delegates and / or corporate partners – although there does need a balance to make sure they are not put off / scared.

3) How often do you review/rehearse the plan?

- Quarterly?
- If there is one, it should probably be done every 6 months...
- Every time the insurance is up for review
- Good to include role play and separate out fire drills from terror drills
- It's important to test the scenario event if it's just a virtual test – doesn't have to be a full blown simulation

4) Who is responsible for the overall plan?

- Senior management

Practical Tips for Managing a Crisis on Site

- Don't forget that DMCs on the ground in a major crisis may be concerned about their own family and friends and less focussed on your group. Does the office have a contact or team to call on who can come in from a more objective position?
- It's important to have emergency / crisis information easily accessible for the right people – ie. not on a laptop or in an office – in hard copy in onsite files etc.
- Set up separate phone lines for relatives and press to ensure both can be answered promptly and both can be handled appropriately
- Public response: sympathy, praise, promise
- Consider engaging a PR company to manage the external view of the crisis
- Whats App group, again, for Senior Mgt or Crisis Mgmt Team to ensure comms is instant, efficient and to everyone
- Have a back up landline in case of crisis that affects mobile phone network
- The onsite event team need someone who is not connected to the crisis who is responsible for keeping them safe and well ie. making sure they sleep, eat and receive appropriate counselling post event.