



INTE 2014

## Managerial competency of crisis managers

Marek Tomastika, Jan Strohmandlb, Petr Cechc \*

*a,b,c Tomas Bata University in Zlin, nam. T. G. Masaryka 5555, 760 01 Zlin, Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management, Czech Republic*

---

### Abstract

Crisis management is at the time of dramatic changes external settings to current issues. In today's tough competitive setting we can assume that organizations will increasingly compete for the most able employees who continue to deepen their knowledge, which are able to use not only normal but also crisis management. The managerial competency consist of skills and abilities contribute to the excellent performance of crisis managers. Crisis manager must be a strong managerial personality is able to cope with mentally and physically demanding process recovery company. Crisis manager has to deal with crisis situations well, it is necessary to constantly develop their managerial competency.

© 2015 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University

*Keywords:* crisis manager; crisis situation; competence; professional knowledge; practical skills.

---

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +420 576 032 088.

*E-mail address:* [mtomastik@flkr.utb.cz](mailto:mtomastik@flkr.utb.cz);

## 1. Introduction

The subject of crisis management is to deal with extreme situations and crisis situations of various extents up to catastrophes in all the phases of their management. A crisis situation can arise from the very essence without the intention to cause the crisis or on the basis of conflict. It is not important whether the conflict arises gradually on the basis of different interests or suddenly. Catastrophes have usually extremely fast change of parameters in the system, thus high dynamics.

## 2. Crisis and Crisis Management

Any subject can suffer from a crisis – a political party, an alliance, a state, an organisation, a family, an individual etc. Moreover crises are becoming globalized in various systems. Nowadays, in the time of interconnected world through market, information networks, finance and state interests, the chance of crises development and wide spread is much higher. A common crisis can be defined as a change of balanced state towards imbalanced state or dominance of particular elements over the others. However, crises come in different forms – as natural disasters, big anthropogenic accidents and disasters as social, communal and economic threats. (Antušák 2009, p. 13-17) They threat not only individuals, families, organisations but also states, alliances, continents and supranational corporations. While crises can be statistically and locally foreseen, their immediate and real manifestations cannot be organised so that they happen in convenient time for an individual, company, state. There lies the memento of crises phenomenon. We generally know that a crisis can happen anytime but we do not know what kind of crisis it will be, who will be affected by it, how destructive will it be and we do not have the information about its coming in advance. More than 80% of crises are caused by mistakes in management, unprofessional or unethical behaviour, long-term underestimating or neglecting of rules. Crises have to be taken into account, foreseen and be ready for them.

Crises represent a potential threat which in today chaotic and turbulent environment cannot be avoided by almost anyone. They have become a concomitant phenomenon of people's lives and business. They affect without any difference both small businesses as well as world business giants, companies with a strong tradition as well as the recently founded ones. They attract the interest of media.

This era brings a new quality into the comprehension of adverse effects. It requires the effects to be approached coherently and confidently, not only by the so called method of trial and error. Systematic and continual approach is required. Campaign concept of crisis management costs huge amount of money but brings very little effect. (Antušák, E., & Kopecký, Z., p. 25-35)

For company management, as well as for the majority of political, legislative, governmental and other organs of public administrations, is dealing with actual problems connected with dealing with their profile – political, legislative, economical and other problems more important than dealing with not so common problems. The issue of preparation for crisis and the process of crisis management becomes a secondary problem, which results in a general decrease of motivation of crisis organs, citizens and the public to learn and prepare. But the process of crisis management requires strategic flexibility of organisations. Planning is the first step and goes hand in hand with safety.

Crisis management is usually perceived as a specific area of management, which deals with a specific set of approaches and methods used by management to tackle certain functions of the subject in the conditions of adverse effects caused by a certain type of extraordinary event. The management is considered to be administration with a strong participation of human factor. As all other activities, like technology, society and design, management is also art. Managers can work better if they use systematic management knowledge – knowledge based on science. If we accept the premise that the management is a symbiosis of science and art, than in the case of crisis management the symbiosis of science and art is even more important because the whole process takes place in abnormal conditions of a certain type of extraordinary event. (Bělohlávek, F., Šuleř, O., & Košťan, P., p 230 – 234)

The problematic of management in the present turbulent environment of world's economics development fulfils a very important and irreplaceable role in theory as well as in practice of every business subject but also in public

administration. In the present management environment, in which are significantly applied the elements of globalisation expressing themselves in the worldwide scale and blending with regional elements, it is necessary to find suitable approaches for their combination and, therefore, optimise the position in the set environment. Crisis generally arouses as a result of mutual effect of internal and external risk factors on one side and unsuitable manager reactions on the other. For the majority of companies the globalisation tendencies are so critical that a number of the authors (P. F. Drucker, K. Lewin, D. A. Nadler, H. J. Leavitt and others) started to look for possibilities as to how to use the change of external environment to strengthen and exploit their positions. (Antušák, E., & Kopecký, Z., p. 35-40) P. F. Drucker emphasised, that these new conditions will require a new style of management, new creative approaches which will be able to understand the changes of external environment, to solve the arisen problems, to compensate them in required extent or even exploit them for their own benefit. The process of management work has started to be affected by a number of traditional as well as new threats and crisis phenomena which significantly determined the work environment of managers. Every crisis is an unrepeatable and unique event. The threats escalate independently on the will of human (especially the natural ones). Crisis situations and crises of variable character (natural, anthropogenic, security or military) aroused, are arousing and will arouse in all states of “crisis environment” (peace, crisis, war). Even so, there are basic steps that can be used in solution of every crisis. These elements of crisis management are similar for all the types of organisations irrespective of their susceptibility to crises. Crisis management has the following steps for crisis solution:

- Analysis of threat to the organisation
- Determination of crisis strategy
- Realisation of crisis strategy.

The whole process of crisis management is based on a number of interconnected activities which are called basic functions of crisis management. The functions are:

- Prevention phase – minimisation of sources (causes of crisis arousal) of crisis situations
- Coherence phase – preparation for the activities in crisis situations
- Anti-crisis intervention phase – preventing arousal of crisis situations
- Reduction phase – reduction of sources of crisis situations and their negative effects
- Restoration phase – removal of consequences of the effects of crisis situation negative factors. (Zuzák, R., & Königová, M., p. 50 – 55)

In principal, the standard techniques of management are applied in the phases of prevention and restoration, in the phase of solving the crisis we realise special techniques because we are significantly influenced by time factor. Especially typical for this phase is:

- Routine approaches
- Suppression of cooperative forms of management, strong autocratic management.

## **2 Crisis and crisis management**

The function of crisis manager requires much knowledge, skills and experience which cannot be acquired only by study. Managerial competencies, which consist of skills and abilities, contribute to an exceptional performance of a crisis manager. A crisis manager has to be a strong management individuality that is able to manage the demanding process of extraordinary event both mentally as well as physically. A crisis manager has to correctly solve crisis situations. Therefore it is necessary that he always develop his managerial competences.

The concept of managerial competence is not entirely clean-cut, it is not possible to define one type of successful manager. The base for competence development is the personal potential of the manager. Through the development of this potential the requirements for a successful performance are met. It is, therefore, up to every manager to assess his level of competence and realise his need for further development. Managerial competence is, therefore, a set of complex skills and other prerequisites, especially motivation, for manager's performance. The organizations with highly motivated workers perform better than their competition. Their motivation is the result of how they are led. Competence approach contributes to success or failure of the organization by the highest portion.

A crisis manager has to be a strong individuality that has to be able to stir up the others, aim all his power at the realization of the right things and priorities, has to be able to manage the process of restoration both mentally as well as physically. A crisis manager is different form of normal manager because he does not only have to cope with potential technological malfunction but also has to carry out saving of people, property, protect his good name in the market which could be, in the case of production drop out, replaced by another.

The function and position of a crisis manager requires much knowledge, skills and experience which cannot be acquired only by study, they are inherited. He can acquire other attributes by relevant education and training, crisis manager or leader of crisis team.

Let us state the basic requirements for the personality of crisis manager

Proactive and conviction about his thing, he should have strong inside motivation, be able to foresee and be one step ahead the real situation, be able to control and manage the situation, not to be controlled by the situation.

Have deep knowledge and indentify with manager role, have professional experience with management of extreme situations – know the methods of coping with risk development, have deep professional knowledge of management sphere.

Have emphatic communication and team approach in the decision making process, has to be able to start communication and communicate with anybody even with a stranger, build a team of co-workers, assign adequate activity, evaluate, appreciate and motivate team members.

Is able to use both right and left brain hemispheres, systematically develops both hemispheres. He has intellectual and rational abilities but at the same time he has a grasp of emotional and affective part of human behaviour, has intuition.

Fulfils the trust and charisma of leader's personality, is able to let his charisma affect others and, therefore, creates space and gains time for situation evaluation and following decision making process.

Perceives quickly and reacts to impulses, does not hesitate with reactions to serious impulses, quickly evaluates situations and therefore eliminates the dangers of delay.

Uses scientific methods, is able to use basic scientific methods.

Has own ethical strength and resistance to emotions, resists dreadful effects of accidents and catastrophes, his capable of controlling the emotions of his and others. Has a professional attitude.

Has a good mental and physical state and keeps thinking positively.

Maintains overall strength and resistance of his personality, does sports, searches for sources of positive attitudes. (Rais, R., p. 73–76)

Apparently, the demands on constitution of the crisis manager are indeed very high and it is obvious that a successful crisis manager is considered to be among the top management. Therefore, a crisis manager is a subject who is characterized by special training, work conditions, specialities of system management and individual human qualities. His training is always very complicated and complete. If we summarize the demands on a crisis manager, we will reach the following profile of his characteristics, he should have: intuition, broad experience, ability to deal with people, decision making ability, stress management ability, creativity and innovativeness, should be able to make priorities and have action ability.

Let us take a look at management competences of crisis managers within integrated rescue system in the Czech Republic. Integrated rescue system (thereinafter IRS) was created after the catastrophic floods in Moravia in 1997 and shown its functionality during other extraordinary events which affected CR. We chose managers of fire brigade for investigation who are within IRS system, by law, the main coordinators - crisis managers – of extraordinary events reparation control.

The function of crisis managers is very demanding and responsible especially at the operational and tactical level of IRS, the managerial and professional but also personality abilities of crisis managers are tested during the solution

of extraordinary events. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen and educate these workers. While managing the intervention they have to show considerable mental resistance, they also have to have extensive knowledge of the rules of law and regulation that govern the activity of crisis management sector, they also have to have basic information about the types of extraordinary events. That is why it is necessary to continually educate the crisis managers. Such a worker has to regularly attend various seminars and train mock situations. The prerequisite for the activity performance of professional IRS workers is, therefore, to gain professional knowledge. These are very important steps to assure readiness for solving extraordinary events.

Personal potential has to be pursued in these managers. Fulfilment of requirements for effective solution of extraordinary events is achieved by development of this personal potential. It is also necessary for this manager to assess his level of competence and realise his need for further development. Competence approach has a significant impact on the following management of extraordinary situations. Considering that the managers are the ones who have tacit knowledge, it is necessary for the organization to ensure the development of tacit abilities among its managers. This knowledge influences managers' style of work. They also manifest themselves in his decision making and the manner of dealing with problems from which follows that they determine the success or failure of his activity. Tacit knowledge has extraordinary significance for an organization and that is why they put effort into keeping them. (Kresová, P., (2010), p.63-64)

Well-established form for tacit knowledge passing in tacit form is by advice. Work as well as sharing of tacit knowledge is based on human contact. Within training, crisis managers use three basic tools that are very important and can significantly help managers in controlling knowledge work. They are stories, communities and tools based on apprenticeship. The traditional apprenticeship is based on distribution of work and clearly defined skills necessary for work execution. Nowadays not only apprenticeship itself belongs among them but also coaching, mentoring and counselling.

Passing the knowledge of a crisis manager is important for a better function of IRS and, therefore, better interventions within extraordinary events. (Matošková, J., (2010), p. 88-89) From the analysis of IRS crisis managers at the operational and tactic management level arise following conclusions:

It arose from the research that the competences of crisis managers are sufficient with regard to the execution of their work position. It was also found that skills and abilities, with which the crisis managers dispose, are considered to be appropriate for dealing with crisis situations. Organisation ability and professional knowledge can be considered the key characteristics for management of crisis situations. Individual managers expressed interest and will to extend their education. They consider education to be an important factor of success. On the base of this assessment it can be concluded that the managers are able and eligible to carry out the activities related to management of IRS. They are aware that their responsible approach to the problem solving can save a lot of human lives.

Crisis managers are unfortunately more and more overloaded, which is the result of unceasing reduction of IRS personnel, especially due to reduction in funding for IRS operation by state budget. It is the insufficient time and unceasing workload that impede the development of managers' personality.

Crisis managers also discovered the fact that methods for passing tacit characteristics within IRS are insufficiently elaborated, which they consider a big drawback.

On the basis of the findings it would be appropriate for the top management of IRS to elaborate better methods for improving management competences of crisis managers especially putting stress on sharing of tacit characteristics. One of the options is to create case studies related to extraordinary crisis situations, how should they be solved, and make conclusions for better management of these unexpected states. Appropriate tools could be methods of creative team problem solution like brainstorming or group discussion and decision making.

Within conferences and workshops observe practical sharing of knowledge. Younger crisis managers care about gaining knowledge from older managers in the form of presentations and stories based on a real event. The form of cooperation between individual working compartments and sharing of their experience is important because some of the compartments do not have experience with some of the extraordinary situations.

### 3 Conclusion

With the development of methods and tools of crisis management relates the outlook on crises. While in the past crises were considered to be negative, nowadays a crisis is perceived as a certain test of organization readiness and an opportunity for application of creative precautions. Therefore, the readiness of crisis managers and their high competence is necessary for dealing with other extraordinary events.

### References

- Antušák, E., & Kopecký, Z. (2005). *Krizový management: krizová komunikace*. (Vyd. 1., 91 s.) Praha: Oeconomica.
- Antušák, E. (2009). *Krizový management: hrozby - krize - příležitosti*. (Vyd. 1., 395 s.) Praha: Wolters Kluwer Česká republika.
- Bělohávek, F., Šuleř, O., & Košťan, P. (2001). *Management*. (1. vyd., 642 s.) Olomouc: Rubico.
- Drucker, P. (1998). *Řízení v době velkých změn*. (1. vyd., 285 s.) Praha: Management Press.
- Kressová, Petra. "Možnosti rozvoje tacitních znalostí manažerů založené na reflexi, "In: *Rozvoj tacitních znalostí manažerů: jak vyhledat, rozvíjet a využívat skryté znalosti a zkušenosti manažerů 2010: recenzovaný sborník příspěvků z konference : Zlín, 20. května 2010*. (pp. 61 - 69). (2010). (Vyd. 1.) Ve Zlíně: Univerzita Tomáše Bati.
- Matošková, Jana. "Metody sběru dat uplatněné při výzkumu tacitních znalostí manažerů na Fakultě managementu a ekonomiky UTB ve Zlíně," In: *Rozvoj tacitních znalostí manažerů: jak vyhledat, rozvíjet a využívat skryté znalosti a zkušenosti manažerů 2010: recenzovaný sborník příspěvků z konference : Zlín, 20. května 2010* (pp. 85-93) . (2010). (Vyd. 1.) Ve Zlíně: Univerzita Tomáše Bati.
- Rais, R. (2007). *Specifika krizového managementu*. (Vyd. 1., 92 s.) Ostrava: Key Publishing.
- Zuzák, R., & Königová, M. (2009). *Krizové řízení podniku*. (2., aktualiz. a rozš. vyd., 253 s.) Praha: Grada.