Every year, companies invest millions of dollars creating plans to ensure that their businesses only experience minimal interruption during a crisis. One of the most important and often overlooked aspects of this preparation is fully testing the plan to ensure that it is sufficient. A proven method for testing a crisis management plan is to construct a realistic scenario and execute what is called a "table-top" exercise.

These exercises allow crisis management planners to walk through their crisis management plan and assist them with a methodical process to acknowledge their vulnerabilities.

Goals & Tasks:

•Enhance the current database so that our scenarios are more efficient and effective.
•Amend current and new scenarios to include "starter" scenarios, allowing the user along with the use of "injects" (information that is injected throughout the exercise), to obtain scenarios custom fit to their specific businesses.
•Add more customization to our application by allowing the user to specify for example the number of employees; number of sites; number of floors per site; types of services and/or products produced at each site, etc, and thus create more realistic scenarios tailor fit to each business.
•Provide the additional ability to add these "injects" at any stage during a live tabletop exercise.
•Develop instructions on how to run a tabletop exercise to create a more successful live test.
•Provide access to a pilot group of businesses and gather feedback.
•Continue the development of a working prototype incorporating new enhancements.
•Submit the required reports/documentation.
Organization:

The team was divided into the following subgroups.

Research/Writing/Analyzing:

This team was responsible for the continued research of all aspects of crisis management, specifically how to successfully target different areas of a crisis management plan through the writing of effective scenarios.

Creative/Marketing/Design:

This team was responsible for the visualization of our product. This included the general structure and decorative scheme providing edifice, expression, and marketing aids.

Documentation:

This team was responsible for writing, communicating, and documenting all aspects of team meetings.

Design/Development:

This team was responsible for implementing technical changes to our web-based application.

User Experience:

This team was responsible for the integration of our web-based application to actual crisis management plans. Through research, interviews, and observation, they gathered the effective information required the crisis management community prospective.

Leadership/Deliverables:

This team was responsible for management of the IPRO. Goals included ensuring that all deadlines were met, tasks were being executed and focused in a timely and efficient manner, and assisting where needed.

Accomplishments:

•Modified our web-based tool so that companies can test their current crisis management plans specifically targeting various levels of impact and penetration throughout their company.
•Enabled Crisis Management Teams to create more robust scenarios to not only test but also gain a better understanding their plans.
•Gave Crisis Management team's measurable data showing the potential impact on an organization's sustainability if ever faced with a crisis while evaluating their overall preparedness.

Future Outlook:

•Continued development of the CMS Application, including methodology, assessment, templates, injects, scenarios, and traceable methods.
•Actual testing of the CMS Application with social and private agencies.

Are You Ready?

Overarching principles:

Improving the security of organizations through comprehensive crisis scenario based testing.

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