

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE – From the Control Room through to the Boardroom**

By Adil Ahmad

TCS is a 24/7 operation. It is a business that never sleeps. The one department within TCS that stays wide awake at all times is Safety & Security, and forever updating and expanding their knowledge and information base were Ghulam Murtaza (TCS Head of Safety & Security) and Muhammad Ayub Khan (Manager Safety & Security). They joined a large number of senior management delegates from a cross section of trade, commerce and industry at the OCTARA seminar on Emergency Response conducted by Jim Truscott of *Truscott Crisis Leaders*.

Jim Truscott, OAM, CPEng, MIEAust has been a crisis practitioner for twenty six years, cutting his teeth in the world of special operations and unconventional warfare with Australia's Special Air Service Regiment. Military crisis resolution saw him intimately involved in multiple special situations in Southern Rhodesia, Papua New Guinea, the Himalayas, Cambodia, Iraq, Indonesia, East Timor, the Olympics in Sydney, the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and the Southern Ocean.

His foray into the corporate world in the last four years has seen him cope with maggots in nursing homes, insider trading, fires on gas platforms in the South China Sea, misuse of market power, anchor drags on sub-sea pipelines in the Straits of Singapore, kidnappings in Sumatra, executives behaving badly, threats to gold mining in Kalimantan, the loss of financial processing centres and ships of shame off the Australian coast, amongst many other situations.

"Crisis champions live a Jekyll and Hyde existence between wildly contrasting boardroom-based planning sessions and operations-room emergencies on a daily basis," says Jim in his book 'Riding the Tiger – The Art of Business Crisis Leadership'. "Emergency managers must continue to look at patching the hole in the fence, and their plans and actions must be focused on getting back to the past – solid status quo. Crisis Leaders, however, must see the open paddocks beyond the fence, and their strategy will focus on getting back to the future and the opportunities that await them. This is vision and it happens in the boardroom. Failure is not an option is the mantra at the SAS."

Given Jim's credentials some people might think that conducting business is becoming more and more an act of war! Welcoming Jim Truscott, the CEO of OCTARA Jamil Janjua said that whenever he thought of Australia the image that came to his mind was that of a happy go lucky Crocodile Dundee! "Now wrestling crocodiles into a state of submission takes more than a capacity to remain cool under fire. It takes mental and physical agility, and a controlled aggression whose objective is to subdue the croc, not kill it. I don't know whether Jim Truscott has wrestled any crocodiles, but given his association with the Australian Special Air Services I am sure he has done his fair share of wrestling in the field!"

The seminar was engrossing, with theoretical frameworks alternating with case studies and simulations that put the delegates in groups and tested their ability to engage as teams and function under fire. Practice makes for confidence, and confidence gives one the ability to implement the experience one has, was the wisdom on offer. Leaders need

to rise above the noise, and organizations that put people first are the ones that are the most resilient.

Emergency Response is the language of the front end of the management handling the crisis. The word crisis is generally overused. Preparedness equals practice. Know your risks and mitigate them. Crisis often happen in isolation from emergencies. Companies with physical assets in the field are the most likely to experience emergencies. BHP Billiton has the largest mining operation in the world, and only its CEO is authorized to use the 'C' word. The word 'Crisis' sends the wrong signals to the stakeholders.

An Incident is defined as a physical act that threatens life, environment, or property. An Emergency is an abnormal event that disrupts the normal routine at the site and presents an immediate threat. A Crisis is an actual or potential threat to the Company's long term ability to do business due to the impact on reputation, legal and financial liabilities, and ability to operate.

Saving lives, protecting property, and avoiding damage to the environment are the main objectives of emergency management. The On Scene Commander (OSC) fits in between the Emergency Response Team (ERT) and the Emergency Management Team (EMT). ERT needs to comprise of 5 to 7 fit young men and women whose skill sets embrace fire, rescue and medical. Depending on the risk perception the ERT could be on standby for immediate mobilization, as in Pakistan. First Responder is any employee on the scene who takes charge.

EMTs are noisy, which is their normal style of functioning. There is therefore the need to call a Time Out, and state the situation 'as I understand it'. Time Out is a distinguishing feature of Emergency Management. EMT areas may extend beyond the EMT room where managers confer with their various support groups. The style of problem solving in the EMT room moves from noisy to quiet to noisy to quiet, and so on. Move information in a calm and orderly manner. Follow the check list. Communications can become a choke point.

Shell's mantra is: Prudent over-reaction, and Rapid de-escalation. If in doubt, call it out. Emergency Response Procedures are fat documents that nobody reads, with people working from mental pictures.

Crisis Management Teams (CMT) operate in quiet, calm and controlled environments with conversation carried on in low whispers, not noisy rooms like the EMTs. CMTs look at the problem from the perspective of business continuity, financial and legal liability, and reputation. Reputation and business continuity compete for priority.

Normal leadership style at CMTs is virtual, with video-conferencing a major tool. Some loss of management control is inevitable in an emergency. At the CMT decisions will not be logged. If you don't want it found you don't write it down! The decision for a senior person to visit the scene has to be carefully contemplated. When the CEO of Union Carbide went to Bhopal they put him in jail! Crisis strategy needs to be made on the basis of rock solid information, not assumptions.

EMT thinks low level. CMT thinks high level. The EMT leader should sit next to Operations Manager, and all information sheets should have the time on them. There is need for leadership compression, and a direct technical line should exist between

Liaison/Media and Corporate Affairs. The Process Person is the chief whip who ensures that the process is working. Having spare people in the room to act as gofers is helpful.

The Telephone Responder, also known as the Director of First Impressions, is a key position in an emergency, receiving queries from internal and external stakeholders. Anyone who answers the telephone reflects the public face of the company, and the advice on offer is to handle all calls with courtesy and efficiency, be calm, build up a relationship with the caller, log all calls, only pass out authorized information, never speculate, ensure that if a call back has been promised, it is made, tell the HR Coordinator of any unusual or difficult calls, and support other members of the team. Handle the stress, and apply the principles of communication that include concern, control, and commitment. Understand the grieving process that moves from shock to denial, anger, guilt, depression, acceptance, and growth.

Dealing with the media is tantamount to going public with the problem. Don't rush into a press conference. It is unusual for one to be called within the first 24 hours of the incident. Media companies are publicly listed. They have thousands of employees and are often global companies. News articles and TV programs are their 'products'. Their consumers 'buy' stories to read and watch. Journalists' careers and jobs depend upon it. Quotable Quotes of 10 sentences may occupy between 50 to 100 seconds. This would translate to between 40 to 60 seconds on Radio, and 60 to 80 seconds on TV. The sound bytes that have the most chance of airing are within 6 to 10 seconds.

To handle that 5 minutes of media fame one needs Preparation, Attitude, Control and Expression focusing on a Single Overriding Communications Objective. Develop a strategy that takes the organization back to the future – "I see it happening this way; it will be this way." Brainstorm and prioritize issues with regard to business continuity, financial and legal liability, and reputation. Tailor your team, and remember Rudyard Kipling's quote: "I kept six honest serving men, and they taught me all I knew. Their names were 'What' and 'Why' and 'When' and 'How' and 'Where' and 'Who'."

Implement the strategy. The instructions for Enron employees were to grab the box of documents, take the box to the shredder, and step into the shredder with the box!

The exercises conducted during the two days seminar involved an offshore platform catching fire with 4 dead and 2 burnt. It really put the participants through their paces with terse exchanges between the OSC and EMT. The practical need for prioritizing questions and identifying stakeholders was experienced first hand. Stakeholders were seen to comprise suppliers, competitors, special interest, regulators, government, management, stockholders, employees, customers, and media. A second exercise involved kidnapping and formation of a Hostage Unit Negotiation Team (HUNT). Jim played the villain and put the HUNT under tremendous pressure by killing off a hostage every two minutes when faced with indecision from the negotiators!

All in all it was a great two days of learning and networking. I sat down with Jim the next day to find out more about this most unusual man from Down Under. Jim Truscott is a Civil Engineer by profession, and attended the Duntroon Officer Training School in Canberra which is associated with the University of New South Wales. He admits to have spent more time deconstructing (counter-terrorism) than constructing! He is the same age as Osama Bin Laden who, he points out, is also an engineer. Jim speaks Indonesian as a second language, and his first exposure to violence was in Rhodesia

(now Zimbabwe) where he was assigned to supervise the separation of Mugabe's troops from those of Ian Smith. Jim has also been involved in seizing fishing boats in the Southern Ocean near the Arctic, protecting the Patagonian Toothfish. He has done a bit of mountaineering as well, and climbed Broad Peak in Pakistan in 1986, which was a bad year for mountaineering he says considering the number of fatalities. In 1988 he climbed Mount Everest.

The 26 years that Jim spent in the military he equates with attending the best experience university that teaches to think, speak and write under pressure. His last assignment in the military was the Sydney Olympics security detail. In 2001 he started up Truscott Crisis Leaders which today boasts of a \$1.6m annual turnover. He describes his customers as companies who recognize their risks and are prepared to do something about them. It's a bit like mopping up blood from the boardroom floor.

There was blood aplenty a few days after the seminar when suicide bombers struck two five star hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia, claiming the life of Truscott Crisis Leaders' Country Manager for Indonesia, Nathan Verity. Jim was devastated. "It was a harrowing day last Friday....," he wrote in an email. "The media demands have been incessant for the last three days....". May the Lord keep us all in His Protection.