



TIME, STRESS & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Identify own time management preferences
- ✓ Explain how to set up and use a personalized time management system
- ✓ Describe how to apply time saving strategies at work;
- ✓ Outline what is meant by stress
- ✓ Recognize the impact of stress on modern life,
- ✓ Define a crisis and identify the four crisis stages
- ✓ List and discuss the major stages or steps involved in managing business crisis.

Time, Stress & Crisis Management

Time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity.

Time management may be aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals complying with a due date.

Entrepreneurs Joe Matthews, Don Debolt, and Deb Pervical provide the following time management practices:

- 1.** Carry a schedule and record all your thoughts, conversations and activities for a week. This will help you understand how much you can get done during the course of a day and where your precious moments are going. You will see how much time is actually spent producing results and how much time is wasted on unproductive thoughts, conversations and actions.
- 2.** Any activity or conversation that's important to your success should have a time assigned to it. Schedule appointments with yourself and create time blocks for high-priority thoughts, conversations, and actions. Schedule when they will begin and when they will end. Have the discipline to keep these appointments.
- 3.** Plan to spend at least 50 percent of your time engaged in the thoughts, activities and conversations that produce most of your results.
- 4.** Schedule time for interruptions. Plan time to be pulled away from what you're doing. Take, for instance, the concept of having "office hours." Isn't "office hours" another way of saying "planned interruptions?"
- 5.** Take the first 30 minutes of every day to plan your day. Don't start your day until you complete your time plan. The most important time of your day is the time you schedule to schedule time.
- 6.** Take five minutes before every call and task to decide what result you want to attain. This will help you know what success looks like before you start. And it will also slow time down. Take five minutes after each call and activity to determine whether your desired result was achieved. If not, what was missing? How do you put what's missing in your next call or activity?
- 7.** Put up a "Do not disturb" sign when you absolutely have to get work done.
- 8.** Don't instantly give people your attention unless it's absolutely crucial in your business to offer an immediate humanitarian response. Instead, schedule a time to answer emails and return phone calls.
- 9.** Block out other distractions like Facebook and other forms of social media unless you use these tools to generate business.

10. Remember that it's impossible to get everything done. Also remember that the odds are good that 20 percent of your thoughts, conversations and activities produce 80 percent of your results.

Stress Management for Managers and Employees

According to the American Heritage Medical Dictionary (2007), stress is a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness.

In addition to that, the Mosby's Medical Dictionary (2009) illustrates the application of stress with the crying of a young child due to his separation from his parents and with the dehydration caused by an increase in body temperature.

Effective Stress Management Techniques:

✓ Get a Rest

No matter how brilliant you are, when you are already stressed out and tired, your mind will not be able to work properly. Worse, you can make hasty decisions, which you will surely regret for the rest of your life. Do not be too hard on yourself. You are not unbeatable.

Simply get a sleep. You will need a fresh mind and a lot of energy to completely bustle the factors causing you stress. Besides, a complete rest is scientifically proven as an indispensable process in stress management.

In the long run, if you fail to control your mind from too much thinking, you can barely get sleep. It is your body that will eventually surrender. It may lead you to physical illness that will cause you low performance. Remember, you are not born to die of stress.

✓ Goal Setting

It is a well-settled rule that stress management is the answer to stress. But before starting with stress management, there is a need to set out your priorities first.

No matter how many 'how to deal with stress manuals' you read, they will not make sense if you do not clearly know how you can align your vision to the goals of the business. That is true because more often than not, it is us who create our own stress. When things get complicated, you get stuck in the vicious cycle of stress.

But if you come to think of it objectively, you will realize that the underlying causes of your stress are things that are not really important. You waste your time, effort, money, and emotions on things that are not supposed to be your problem. Until you are able to identify the root cause of your stress, all your efforts will just be trial and error solutions.

✓ Plan and Take Action

A verse in the “What Will Matter” poem by Michael Josephson says that “Living a life that matters doesn’t happen by accident. It’s not a matter of circumstance but of choice.” In business, bad things happen due to hasty decisions and inactions.

Therefore, decisions should be based on plans and values and on the forever changing circumstances inside and outside the workplace. Using that verse to answer our problem on how to deal with stress, the poet would like to say that we are the narrators of our own story and our choices make up our life.

With that, if we can just make the right choices, we can deal with stress and other problems effortlessly. However, choices should not be random for the purpose of having Band-Aid solutions.

A comprehensively prepared plan based on the company’s vision is needed to direct our actions towards a professional life that matters.

✓ Reflect and Move Forward

Once the stress has been dealt with successfully, expect more of it to come. But next time, you should be able to do things better. In order to do that, a reflection is needed to analyze the circumstances and how you were able to solve it.

Reflect about the things that should be stopped and continued. Also, start making a crisis management plan as a means of preparation for the upcoming challenges. However, make the plan as flexible it can be without compromising its feasibility.

Crisis Management

In crises, managers must make decisions under a great deal of pressure. However, it is possible for crises to be managed well. A strategy for crisis management can be developed beforehand and the mechanisms readied so that if crises do arise, decision makers are prepared.

In two famous cases from the past, Union Carbide’s gas leak in Bhopal, India, killed thousands of people while several people were killed in the cyanide poisonings using the Johnson and Johnson’s Tylenol. The table below outlines the difference in the ways employed by the two companies to handle their crisis.

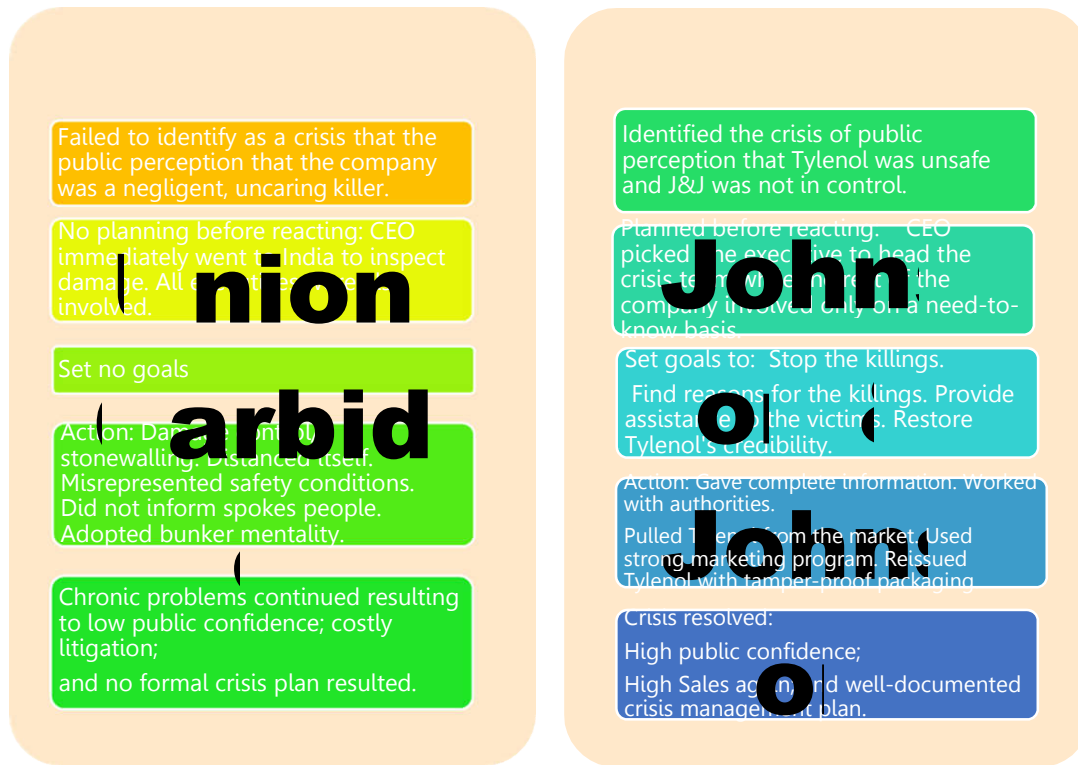


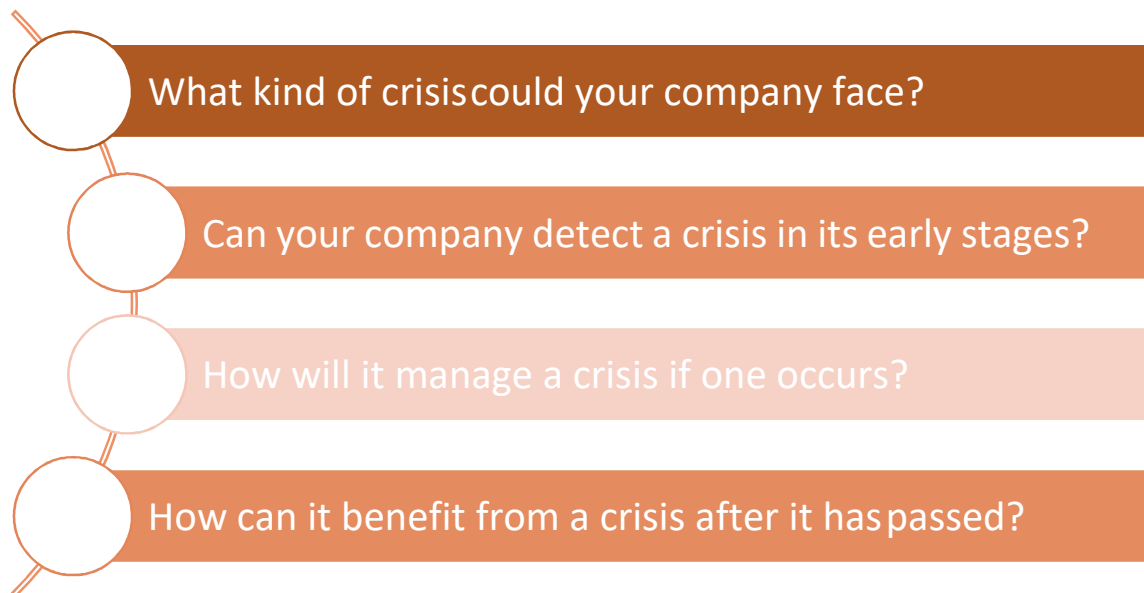
FIG :1.1

Up to the present, Johnson & Johnson is still known for its effective handling of crisis as shown above.

Although many companies do not concern themselves with crisis management, it is imperative that it is on management's agenda. The following elements comprise of an effective crisis management plan:

- Strategic actions - such as integrating crisis management into strategic planning and official policies
- Technical and structural actions - such as creating a crisis management team and dedicating a budget to crisis management
- Evaluation and diagnostic actions - such as conducting audits of threats and liabilities, and establishing tracking systems for early warning signals
- Communication actions - such as providing training for dealing with the media, local communities, police and government officials
- Psychological and cultural actions - such as showing a strong top management commitment to crisis management and providing training and psychological support services regarding the human emotional impacts of crisis.

The following are guiding questions for the management to effectively create a crisis management plan satisfying the above-mentioned criteria:



The last question makes an important point: a crisis that is managed effectively can produce benefits afterwards. For example, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated businesses along the Gulf Coast, but some managers were able to respond effectively.

Michael de la Houssaye, who runs the C&D Agency, an electricity distributor industry, with his father, set up a new office and as soon as possible began communicating with clients through email.

As you can imagine, demand for generators and other equipment was enormous in the months following the storm. De la Houssaye took advantage of the demand to shift the focus to selling generators, rather than meeting with clients to discuss new products.

More important, the agency switched from paper documents to the electronic order processing and communications which yielded greater efficiency. As a result, the C&D Agency operates better than it was before the hurricane.

Clearly, old and new problems can be resolved with effective crisis management. Also, new strategies and competitive advantages may appear and positive changes can emerge.

In addition to that, company and the organization's leaders must not pretend that nothing happened during a crisis like what the managers did at a certain firm after a visitor died in the hallway despite employee's efforts to save him.

It is the leader's duty to communicate and reinforce the organization's values, to be optimistic but brutally honest, and to show emotion but not fear because ignoring problems will not help the company to grow and to learn.

In today's world it is becoming increasingly important to manage one's time and maintain a calm state of mind. The workload that people have is mixed with their own personal problems coming from families, neighbourhoods, friends, and finances cause a lot of stress in their lives.

Adding to this is the feeling that they never have enough time for anything, be it completing their deadlines, or meeting the goals of the company, or personal time to rest and recreate, can no doubt tamper with their inner peace causing them to lose their cool in the smallest of crisis.

In order to work and contribute to the best of our abilities efficiently, a few measures have to be taken to manage our time and stress levels. This would help a person be active and quick enough to avert any crisis that threatens to come their way.

However, in case the organization does undergo a situation that can be termed a crisis, management theories also allow for entrepreneurs to learn the management of crisis.

- **Time Management**

There are only twenty four hours in a day, and it would be ridiculous to expect one to be working during every hour trying to meet their goals. It is important to realize that time management forms the key principle to goal achievement in all aspects of life.

Man needs to put aside some part in the day to tend to his personal needs, as well as the needs of the people around him like his family and friends. By managing his time well, he can make sure that those limited hours are utilized efficiently.

Mismanagement of time means more time spent running from one place to the other and lead to poor work output. The result of such trends is an unhappy feeling that leads to stress. It is vital for a person to realize the meaning of taking time off a busy schedule.

Most employees undergo the training for management of time, but ignore it as they feel it is unimportant. While some deny that they need time management because they don't think that they have a problem managing time. It is evident that time management is mandatory in every aspect of life.

- **Stress and Crisis Management**

Stress that motivates us to work harder is positive and one that makes us feel tired, suffocated, and dejected is negative stress. How we handle the stress is completely up to us. While all the constant pressures in work and personal life can cause an employee to start skipping work, or slacking off or performing poorly, others take it as a challenge and try to overcome it by employing tactics of stress management.

Stress can be easily handled by changing certain habits of our lives. The solutions may seem simple and something that we have heard repeatedly over time, but they work best for avoiding and eliminating the stress in our lives.

The way to combat stress is simplified in today's world. There are many programmes and guides and classes that can help people to keep stress out of their lives.

The recommended methods are: -

- Eating food (nutritional food) at the right time. Eating more fruits and vegetables, and reducing the intake of sugar.
- Exercising regularly.
- Getting a good night's sleep.
- Follow a regular and practical diet.
- Spend the time in between with family or friends or doing activities that induce a smile.
- Only agree to the work that can be done in the given time and avoid excess work.
- Do not think negatively or doubt your progress. In case of criticism take it with a pinch of salt and work harder to improve.
- Manage time and responsibilities well. In case of any failures own up to it truthfully instead of blaming people and circumstances.

These tactics also help one to think clearly and prepare counter strategies during times of crisis. It then enables a person to remain calm, and manage the time in such a way that they can make the elimination of the crisis their first priority.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Crisis Management: First Published 2002 Wiley company: Written by Jack Gottschalk)*
- ✓ *The Everything Stress Management Book: Published December 1st 2001 by Adams Media Corporation (Written by Eve Adamson)*