CRISIS PREPARED MEETINGS: CRISIS PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOPTION BY MEETING PLANNERS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In August 1999, a tornado ripped through Salt Lake City just as the Outdoor Retailer Convention was completing set up. One person was killed, several hundred were injured, and the convention center suffered a quarter of a million dollars' worth of damage (Mushenko, 2000). In September 2005, a public health crisis erupted at a Las Vegas convention when 26,000 convention attendees were told that they might have been exposed to hepatitis A by an infected convention food service worker (Harasim, 2005). In February 2006, a convention center roof collapsed under the weight of accumulated snow, killing 66 participants in an exposition and injuring another 150 (Bernstein, 2006). In May 2006, a destination management company failed to bring two corporate meeting attendees back from a tour. The two attendees were lost and stranded on an 8,500 foot high mountain without the proper attire or gear for three days. A media storm ensued. (Baraban, 2006). These are just a few of many examples of crises that have occurred at meetings in recent years.

Crisis preparedness and business continuity literature focuses on the need of a business to prepare for crises that occur in the organization. Because most businesses do not move their entire operations on a regular basis, crisis preparedness measures are

typically structured to apply to business operations that occur on an ongoing basis in the same facility, city, and country. Conversely, by their very nature meetings are business operations that are moved on a regular basis. For example, to keep attendees interested and engaged, an annual convention may be intentionally held in a different facility, city, and sometimes country each year. Likewise, a meeting planner may be managing a meeting one week in Atlanta, Georgia and the next week in Athens, Greece. Meeting attendees are particularly vulnerable in a crisis because, like other tourists and business travelers, meeting attendees are often unfamiliar with the facility and destination in which a meeting is held. Faced with this unfamiliarity, meeting attendees are likely to turn to meeting planners and hotel employees for guidance in a crisis (Drabek, 2000).

This chapter provides an overview of the meetings industry and the concept of organizational crises and crisis preparedness. The chapter continues with the purpose and objective of the study, its significance, the research questions, and the hypotheses. The chapter concludes with the assumptions, scope, and limitations of the study as well as definitions of both meetings industry and crisis management terms that will be used throughout the study. To better understand the role of crisis preparedness in meeting planning, one must first understand the meetings industry itself and the importance of crisis preparedness to meetings, meeting planners, and meeting attendees.

Statement of the Problem

Crisis, disaster, and emergency management are relatively new (and growing) research areas, with a bulk of the organizational crisis literature published only in the last few decades. To date, almost none of it has been focused specifically on the meetings industry and what has been published largely lacks an empirical research basis (Kline &

Smith, 2006). There has been research on tourism disasters focused primarily on the tourist destination (see for example Drabek, 1968, 1994, 1995, 1996; Drabek, 2000; Faulkner, 2001). Additionally, there is a body of research focused on hotel safety and security features, but only a small portion of it is written from the meeting planners' perspective (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Weaver & Oh, 1993). In fact, only one empirical study to date has focused on crisis management by meeting planners (Kline & Smith, 2006), despite the fact that it is the meeting planner who is planning meetings and managing them on-site and is thus in the best position to make and monitor crisis preparedness plans.

In spite of the vulnerability of meeting attendees and the likelihood that they will turn to meeting planners for guidance in a crisis, less than half of meeting planners ever prepare a risk management plan for their meetings (Event Solutions, 2007; Kline & Smith, 2006). Those who do prepare a risk management plan are not consistent in doing so. In fact, only 17.6% prepare a risk management plan for every one of the meetings they plan or manage (Event Solutions, 2007).

It is not that meeting planners and attendees do not think crisis preparedness is important. Prior studies have established the importance of safety and security to travelers generally (Himmelberg, 2004; Mariner, 1995), to business men and business women (McCleary, Weaver, & Lan, 1994), to older travelers (defined as over-50) (Wuest, Emenheiser, & Tas, 1998), and to meeting planners (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Weaver & Oh, 1993). These studies have focused primarily on the safety and security features of hotels rather than the crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners themselves.

This research study examines crisis preparedness by meeting planners by first establishing the crisis preparedness measures that meeting planners should be implementing for their meetings. Secondly, the study determines what crisis preparedness measures meeting planners are currently implementing. Third, the study identifies the factors that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of a full complement of crisis preparedness measures. Finally, the study examines how the adoption of crisis preparedness measures is related to the characteristics of both the meeting planners and their meetings.

Overview of the Meetings Industry

Just about everyone has attended a meeting, convention, exhibition, or corporate incentive program. Yet few people think about the people who actually do the months—and sometimes years—of planning and on-site management of these events. There is an unconscious assumption on the part of many meeting attendees that meetings "just happen." Thus meetings are to some degree "a hidden industry" (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 6). The growth and development of the meetings industry over the last 20-30 years is evidenced by the number and size of meetings industry associations and the development of meetings and events curriculum at universities all over the world.

To those working in, teaching in, and researching the hospitality and tourism industries, however, the meetings industry is recognized as a large and important component of overall hospitality and tourism. After all, meetings are held in hotels, attendees spend money in a tourism destination, and often travel by air to arrive at the meeting. In fact, of the $67.92 billion in direct spending on meetings, exhibitions, conventions, and incentive travel programs (collectively, "meetings") in 2004, 35% was

for hotels, 24% for airlines, and 14% was for restaurants and catering (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

Crisis Management

The four elements of crisis management are (1) preparedness, (2) response, (3) recovery, and (4) mitigation (Mileti, 1999). Much of the existing research on crisis management focuses on response or recovery. In the tourism field, recovery is a particularly prevalent area of crisis management research (see for example Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2003). The need for research to focus specifically on what should be done to prepare for crises, however, is established in the literature. Mileti's (1999) suggestion for future research topics includes (1) which preparedness activities are undertaken by private sector organizations and (2) whether some organizational strategies result in more comprehensive preparedness than others. There is also the suggestion that the trend of numerous nearly simultaneous crises over the last 20 years is not a coincidence and is a trend that can be expected to be continued (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). As a practical matter, mainstream crisis and disaster scholars encourage researchers to collaborate with those who put crisis management measures into effect (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Crisis and disaster scholars have remarked that the number of disasters has seemed to increase in the last few decades as the environment has become increasingly "turbulent and crisis prone" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 135). These crises and disasters range from natural disasters to systems failures and human-caused incidents. Mitroff (2002) created a timeline of 36 major worldwide crises during the period just between the years of 1979 and 2002 including several earthquakes, the Tylenol product tampering, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The focus in this study will be on organizational crises,

which are defined as low-probability, high-impact events that threaten the viability of an organization (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Mitroff's (2002) examples of an earthquake, a product tampering, and a nuclear disaster can be used to illustrate the nature of organizational crises. An earthquake may result in loss of life and irreparable damage to equipment or facilities which prevents an organization from continuing operations. Product tampering may cause stock values to drop and may cause customers to stop supporting the company and its product lines, creating a financial crisis. A systems or human failure that results in a nuclear disaster could result in substantial lawsuits, expensive retrofitting, onerous new regulations, and certainly in public suspicion and outcry. At its best, crisis management results in saved lives. At its least, crisis management results in the protection of the ongoing operations of an organization. The focus of this study will be on how crises affect organizations rather than how they affect individual people or communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is four-fold: first, to determine the recommended components of a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. Second, to research the crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners in the U.S. with regard to the meetings they are responsible for planning and/or managing. Third, to identify elements which influence the implementation of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. Finally, to conduct a gap analysis of the actual implementation of crisis preparedness measures relative to the recommended implementation. The information from this study will be instrumental in helping the meetings industry determine what a comprehensive crisis management program for meetings should include

and address the factors that may create barriers to the adoption of crisis management measures by meeting planners.

Objective of the Study

Research Questions

1. What are the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
2. To what extent are meeting planners adopting the measures in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
3. What are the core crisis preparedness measures that should be used by meeting planners?
4. How is the adoption of the core crisis preparedness measures related to the characteristics of both the meeting planner and their meetings?
5. What are the elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
6. What are the core deficits in crisis preparedness program measures currently implemented by meeting planners compared to a recommended program?

Research question 1 yielded a list of comprehensive crisis preparedness measures for meetings as recommended by experts on a Delphi panel.

Research question 2 evaluated the extent to which meeting planner respondents had adopted each of the defined crisis preparedness measures, as indicated by respondents' scores on the 5-point Likert scale survey administered to them. The survey asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they implement each of the identified

crisis preparedness measures [with 1 for "Never" (not for any of the meetings they plan) and 5 for "Always" (for every meeting they plan)].

Research question 3 utilized exploratory factor analysis to identify the dimensions inherent in the core crisis preparedness measures that should be implemented by meeting planners.

Research question 4 used meeting planner professional characteristics as control variables in order to determine if there are significant relationships between these characteristics and the core crisis preparedness measures adopted. Significant differences in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners are expected based on the following professional characteristics: meetings industry segment, size of organization, number of meetings planned per year, size of meetings, years of experience, professional certification, meeting destinations, and prior crisis experience. Where a significant relationship is found to exist, variance will be analyzed.

Research question 5 used an open-ended question to gather factors that influence the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. These open-ended responses were then analyzed through content analysis.

Research question 6 compared the actual adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners with the recommended level of adoption of crisis preparedness measures as determined by the Delphi group. The Delphi panel participants provided a recommendation on the level of implementation of each crisis preparedness measure based on responses to a 3-point sub-set of the Likert scale that was employed with respondents. The comparison of the current implementation of crisis preparedness measures with the recommended implementation resulted in a crisis preparedness index

score that illustrated how prepared meeting planners were. The index scores were then rank ordered to identify deficiencies and over-allocation of resources by meeting planners as well as areas for which meeting planner respondents were performing appropriately.

Significance of the Study

The need for crisis preparedness information in the meetings industry has been established by the limited prior research and by the industry itself. Kline & Smith (2006) found that although 65.6% of meeting planners found it important to have a crisis plan, only 41.5% actually had a plan in place. This finding is supported by less scientific surveys conducted by meetings industry magazines (Event Solutions, 2007; MeetingsFocus, 2006). Kline & Smith (2006) likewise found that only a minority of meeting planners in their study conducted thorough crisis training or had insurance to address crisis recovery. Hinkin & Tracey (2003a) identified hotel security as the highest matter of critical importance to meeting planners regarding the effectiveness of their meetings.

Meeting planners have expressed a need for more information about crisis planning, including plan components, education, training, and case studies (Kline & Smith, 2006). Meeting planners are the appropriate people to survey about crisis preparedness for meetings because meeting planners are the people who are most likely to have to implement a crisis plan if a crisis occurs at a meeting because they are the people most likely to be on-site when it occurs (Drabek, 1994). Meeting planners are also the people who have sufficient technical knowledge about the meetings, meeting facilities, and meeting attendees to help create and implement a crisis plan for a meeting (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Finally, although it has been established that less than half of meeting planners even have a crisis plan (Kline & Smith, 2006), there has been to date no research into the factors that influence the meeting planner's adoption of specific crisis preparedness measures. Therefore, this research breaks new ground in determining the extent to which certain factors both help and hinder meeting planners in their pursuit of crisis preparedness. This information will assist the meetings industry and the organizations for which meeting planners work in creating a crisis prepared environment that enables the meeting planner to plan and prepare for crises appropriately.

Assumptions

It is assumed that respondents answered the questionnaire honestly and accurately, and were knowledgeable enough about the subject of crisis preparedness for their meetings to actually answer the questionnaire. It is assumed that the participants completed the questionnaire objectively, according to their experiences as meeting planners. It is also assumed that the population, meeting planners who are current professional members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), are professional meeting planners representing the demographics of the overall meetings industry.

Scope and Limitations

The population used for this study, meeting planners who were current members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), was selected because it was determined that sampling from PCMA membership would result in diversity in

geographic dispersion as well as other meeting planner demographics such as size of meetings planned, industry segment represented, years of experience, and so on.

The research is limited as follows:

- The study sample is comprised of professional meeting planner members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized beyond this target population.
- Respondents' were biased toward the association industry segment (49.7%), which is representative of PCMA's membership but not the general population of meeting planners.
- Likewise, the crisis preparedness measures indicated in the model were gleaned from the literature and do not represent all of the possible crisis preparedness measures that could be undertaken. There may be other crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings.

Definition of Terms

Business continuity: The ability of an organization to provide service and support for its customers and to maintain its viability before, during, and after a crisis or disaster (Disaster Recovery Journal, 2008).

Convention: An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. There is a secondary exhibit component (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 3).

Crisis: "A low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution,

as well as a belief that decisions must be made swiftly" (also referred to as "organizational crisis") (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 60).

Crisis management: "A systematic attempt by organizational members with external stakeholders to avert crises or to effectively manage those that do occur" (also referred to as "organizational crisis management") (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 61).

Disaster: "Situations where an enterprise is confronted with sudden unpredictable catastrophic changes over which it has little control" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 136).

Effective crisis management: "…minimizing potential risk before a triggering event" (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 61).

Exhibition: 1) An event at which products and services are displayed. The primary activity of attendees is visiting exhibits on the show floor. These events focus primarily on business-to-business (B2B) relationships. 2) Display of products or promotional material for the purposes of public relations, sales and/or marketing (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 3).

Incentive Travel: A travel reward given by companies to employees to stimulate productivity (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 3).

Meeting: An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. There is no exhibit component to this event (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 3).

Meeting organizer: The corporation, association, or government agency that is organizing the meeting. The meeting planner typically works for the meeting organizer.

Meeting planner: The person responsible for planning and/or managing on-site a convention, exhibition, incentive travel program, or meeting.

Meeting professional: A composite term used to refer to both meeting planners and suppliers as representatives of the meetings industry.

Meetings industry: The industry comprised of those who plan and support conventions, exhibitions, incentive travel, and meetings.

Preparedness: "Building a capability before a disaster occurs to facilitate an effective response" (Mileti, 1999, p. 22).

Security: Freedom from risk or danger (also referred to as "safety"); staff hired to facilitate safety.

Supplier: The person or organization responsible for providing goods or services to support or host meetings (e.g., hoteliers, transportation vendors, vendors who sell convention supplies). Purveyor, provider, vendor, contractor offering facilities, products and/or services (Convention Industry Council, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study cannot be understood without first understanding the meetings industry. For that reason, literature explaining the size and scope of the meetings industry will first be discussed. Following this overview of the meetings industry, literature regarding crisis management will be discussed from a broad to a specific perspective. That is, crisis management literature will give a foundation on which to base the specific application of organizational crisis management. Literature that addresses organizational crises in tourism, hospitality, and finally meetings will then be discussed. Finally, literature relating to the theoretical perspective of this study will be introduced to explain the theoretical concept of crisis prepared v. crisis prone organizations and the factors that influence crisis preparedness.

Meetings Industry

The Democratic National Convention, the annual International Council of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE) conference, and the Consumer Electronics Show are all examples of meetings, exhibitions, conferences, and incentive programs that are held in the U.S. Despite the visibility of events like these, many people fail to see or understand the industry that has been created to plan, service, and support meetings, exhibitions, conferences, and incentive programs. There tends to be a

perception that these meetings and events "just happen," when in fact it takes skilled and knowledgeable people to plan and support them. The emergence, growth and development of the meetings industry over the last few decades is evidenced by the growing number and size of meetings industry associations and the development of meetings and events curriculum at universities all over the world.

Even the U.S. government has failed to see the meetings industry as its own industry separate and distinct from travel, tourism, and hospitality. The U.S. Department of Commerce has not assigned the meetings industry a North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code which prevents the meetings industry from being included as an element of the annual calculation of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). A recent economic impact report found that the meetings industry generated an estimated $122.31 billion in direct spending in 2004 which would represent more than 1% of the gross domestic product (GDP) if the meetings industry was included in the GDP as a separate and distinct industry. This would place the meetings industry as the 29th largest contributor to GDP, just above pharmaceutical manufacturing. The meetings industry as a whole produced a total of $21.4 billion in tax revenue in 2004 at the federal, state, and local level (Convention Industry Council, 2005). Thus, despite the fact that the U.S. Department of Commerce does not consider the meetings industry a real "industry," the numbers say otherwise.

As a component of travel expenditures, the $122.31 billion in direct spending for meetings represents 24.3% of domestic travel expenditures and 77.7% of domestic business travel expenditures (Convention Industry Council, 2005). The larger percentage of business travel expenditures underscores the fact that meetings are basically "business

events" as distinguished from special events which often have a non-business orientation such as those that are celebratory, cultural, or social. 35% of the direct spending on meetings in 2004 was for hotels, 24% for airlines, and 14% was for restaurants and catering (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

The meetings industry supports 1.71 million jobs and 32% of all travel and tourism jobs in the U.S. (Convention Industry Council, 2005). The people employed in the meetings industry are commonly divided into two broad categories—meeting planners and suppliers. Meeting planners are the people who work for meeting organizers—the corporations, associations, and government agencies which organize and hold meetings. Association meetings alone represent approximately two-thirds of meetings industry spending, so although non-profit, the association segment is an important part of the meetings industry (Convention Industry Council, 2005). Meeting planners may also be self-employed and work with a variety of organizational client types that organize meetings.

Meeting planners do not always have the title "meeting planner." In fact, sometimes meeting planners do not even have the word "meeting" in their title. Some of the various titles in the meetings industry include Meeting Planner, Meeting Coordinator, and Learning Events Specialist (Event Solutions, 2007). This makes them a difficult group to identify and contact for research, so what research has been done with meeting planners to date has often used as a sample group individuals who self-identify as a meeting planner, subscribe to a meetings industry magazine, attend a meeting targeted toward meeting planners, or belong to a meetings industry association. Meetings industry suppliers are the people or organizations responsible for providing goods or services to

support or host meetings. Suppliers are usually further broken down into categories such as hotel representatives, destination management organizations, transportation vendors, and so on.

The entities that organize meetings often invest a great deal of money into meetings. A recent survey of meeting planners indicated that 20% of the organizations for which the respondents worked had annual convention and meeting budgets of $2.5 million or more. There is clearly a return on this investment for many organizations. A finding from the same survey reveals that income from meetings accounted for one-third of the organization's annual income for respondents, underscoring the financial importance of meetings to organizations (Russell, 2007). This figure has remained relatively constant since 1992 (Connell, 2002). Although meetings vary in size and scope, another indicator of the importance of meetings to organizations is the survey finding that meeting planners expect their organizations to plan an average of 194 different meetings with an average duration of 2.6 days in 2008 (Meeting Professionals International, 2008).

Unfortunately it is difficult to accurately measure the scope of the meetings industry on a global basis because of inconsistent nomenclature and a lack of data (World Tourism Organization, 2006). An indicator of the size and scope of meetings on an international basis is the finding that 50% of corporate meeting planners and 63% of U.S. based association meeting planners indicated that they would hold meetings outside the U.S. in 2006 (Grimaldi, 2006). Additionally, based on the creation of several international meetings industry organizations and the growth of university curriculum on

meetings in Europe and Asia, it can be surmised that meetings are a large and growing industry internationally.

Organizational Crisis Management

One only needs watch the news to be aware of crises that occur around the world. Crises like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina are the largest and most memorable U.S. crises in recent memory. In other countries, earthquakes, tsunamis, plane crashes, and avian flu outbreaks have occurred in the last several years. Some experts believe that the past few decades have been more crisis ridden than prior decades (Faulkner, 2001). This may be partially explained by the phenomena that one crisis may simultaneously trigger additional crises. For example, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 triggered a crisis in the airline industry and in tourism (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003).

The first research on organizational crises may have been the doctoral dissertation of Samuel Prince in 1920 which investigated a shipping explosion that occurred in Halifax in 1917 (Drabek & McEntire, 2003). Research on organizational disasters has, however, increased in prominence in many scholarly disciplines in recent years. The corresponding prevalence and visibility of crises themselves may explain this phenomenon. As the awareness of crises and their impacts becomes more apparent, scholars from political science, business, public administration, and other areas seek to explore and advance the link between crisis theory and practice (Fowler, Kling, & Larson, 2007). As with any topical area, experts and scholars on crisis management have taken a variety of approaches in exploring and contributing to the crisis management literature. Though a comprehensive review of every piece of literature on crises is

beyond the scope of any one study, a brief discussion of the ways that crisis literature is categorized is useful before narrowing the discussion to literature most pertinent to this study.

Crisis and disaster management literature can be categorized in different ways. First, there can be more than a semantic difference between categorization of events as crises, disasters, or emergencies. For example, Faulkner (2001) uses the locus of control to distinguish disaster from crisis and defines disaster as situations where an organization is "confronted with sudden unpredictable catastrophic changes over which it has little control" (p. 136). He distinguishes crises as situations that are somewhat "self-inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 136). However, there are ambiguities around uses of the terms (Elliott & Smith, 2006). For example, Scott & Laws (2005) offer a table including seven different definitions for crisis and five different definitions for disaster. Further complicating this ambiguity, the literature addressing these events sometimes combines discussion of crisis, disaster, and emergency events and sometimes narrowly focuses only on one of the three types of events. For example, this study will focus specifically on crises and within that category, specifically on organizational crises.

Second, scholarly research on crises varies in perspective and theoretical approach. Research can be categorized as psychological, social-political, or technological-structural (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Psychological and socio-political research focuses on the individual's perspective and social aspects of a crisis within organizations (Scott & Laws, 2005). An example of psychological research is the exploration of the role of personality disorders and mental health in organizational crises

(Pauchant & Mitroff, 2002). An example of socio-political research is Turner's (1976) approach to organizational failures due to institutional beliefs and other internal failings. Technological-structural research focuses on the ways that technology and social systems, including social norms and procedures, interact to affect the probability of crises and disasters (Scott & Laws, 2005). An example of the technological-structural approach is the research done on the concept of institutionalized perceptions and values on safety within organizations (Reason, 1998; Wicks, 2001). Pearson & Clair (1998) assert that the failure to integrate all of these perspectives in a systems approach to organizational crises has hindered the advancement of crisis research in management theory.

Finally, as with any area of study, literature in this area can be categorized as theoretical, empirical, or practitioner-oriented (Fowler et al., 2007). One of the challenges with crisis research is that much of the existing literature is often based solely on experience rather than on research. Also, most of the articles on crisis management seem to be focused on crisis response and recovery rather than crisis preparedness. This is especially true in the tourism area, where most articles focus on what tourism destinations can do to lure visitors back to their destinations after a crisis has occurred. While there is nothing inherently wrong with practitioner-oriented literature, basing crisis preparedness and management measures purely on what worked for one company or organization is irresponsible at best. Also irresponsible is a reactive approach to crisis management instead of a proactive approach. A systems approach is necessary both to study and to manage crises (Pearson & Clair, 1998; Scott & Laws, 2005). Crisis preparedness has become a visible and critical topic in today's business world. Thus,

there are many opportunities to contribute empirical research to the body of knowledge in this area (Fowler et al., 2007).

The juxtaposition of practical application and research in crisis management is apparent from the literature. It is not enough to talk about preparedness and keeping people, property, and organizations safe. There has to be a bridge between the academic ivory tower and the real world. For this reason, there has been movement in recent years toward establishing standards for crisis planning as a way of ensuring the quality of crisis preparedness (Alexander, 2005). While some guidelines for crisis planning exist, they vary in content and context (see for example Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993; National Fire Protection Association, 2007).

The inconsistency in published standards no doubt contributed to the recent passing of a federal law calling for the establishment of a voluntary private sector preparedness certification program through cooperation of corporate professionals, insurance companies, and others in the private sector (Raisch, 2007). The law calls for the Department of Homeland Security to oversee the development of an all-hazards preparedness and business continuity program certification ("Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007," 2007). The law specifically mentions the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (2007) as an example of "a common set of criteria for preparedness, disaster management, emergency management, and business continuity programs" to be developed [Sec. 524(d)]. It is for this reason that the current study uses the NFPA 1600 as one of the main comparison

documents for developing the list of measures to be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program.

Crisis Preparedness in Tourism and Hospitality

Despite the fact that crises affect not only tourism and hospitality businesses but also the lives and well-being of employees and customers of these businesses, there has not been much systematic research on crises and disasters in tourism (Faulkner, 2001). It is somewhat common sense to expect that people believe that safety and security are important. Several studies in tourism and hospitality literature have focused on the importance of safety and security to travelers in general (Himmelberg, 2004; Mariner, 1994). Other studies have focused on the importance of safety and security to sub-groups such as business men and business women (McCleary, Weaver, & Lan, 1994), older travelers (defined as over-50) (Wuest et al., 1998), and meeting planners (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Weaver & Oh, 1993).

The focus specifically on crises and disasters in tourism and hospitality may be explained at least in part by the fact that tourism and hospitality businesses are often physically located in geographic environments such as coastal areas or mountainous regions that are riskier than other businesses (Murphy & Bayley, 1989). Because meetings rely on tourism and hospitality businesses to provide lodging and other services for meetings, this means that meetings, too, may be riskier than other businesses. Meeting facilities are often located in either downtown areas or resort areas such as coastal regions. Both are part of a meeting facility's appeal to meeting planners and their attendees. Both also create risk. For example, a downtown hotel or convention center is

typically open to the public. This means that the meeting is subject to having strangers in its midst. Typically, this is innocuous or at most, a nuisance. However, in worst case scenarios, the strangers who have access to the meeting, its property, and the meeting attendees may be criminals or terrorists. Likewise, hotels in coastal regions and other geographically remote areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters.

All managers have to deal with internal and external uncertainties in business. In this sense, crisis preparedness is no different from any other type of business planning. Despite the increased riskiness of tourism businesses, however, tourism business managers often fail to use good management skills in drafting and implementing effective crisis and disaster plans (Drabek, 1995). The same is true not only for individual businesses but for overall tourism as well. Crisis planning needs to be integrated into overall tourism planning, marketing, and management (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999). In tourism in particular, an inter-organizational approach is necessary because tourists are rarely under a single roof during their entire visit to a tourism destination (Faulkner, 2001). Ideally, a tourism destination would have a crisis management task force that includes local government officials, tourism professionals and community leaders. This task force could be created as part of a local government entity such as a convention and visitors bureau or a tourism bureau (Sonmez et al., 1999).

Much of tourism and hospitality crisis research focuses on the recovery stage of crises rather than the preparedness stage. For example, Yu, Stafford, & Armoo (2005) examined the operational response of hotel managers in the metro Washington, D.C. area following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. A consistent theme in recovery-oriented research in this discipline is the focus on a tourism destination's ability to

recover from a disaster and to effectively market a tourist destination following a crisis or disaster (see for example Avraham, 2006; Floyd, Gibson, Pennington-Gray, & Thapa, 2003; Ritchie, Dorrell, Miller, & Miller, 2003). Although this type of research on crisis recovery and response focuses on both tourism businesses and their customers, the main focus is on what tourist businesses and destinations can do to influence the behavior of prospective customers once a crisis has already occurred. Conversely, research on crisis preparedness addresses what can be done prior to the occurrence of a crisis to reduce either its likelihood of occurring or its impact on both customers and on business.

Thomas Drabek is perhaps the most prolific researcher in the area of tourism and disasters (see for example Drabek, 1968, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000; 2001; Drabek & McEntire, 2003). Like other tourism crisis researchers, much of his research addresses disaster response (Drabek, 1995, 1999, 2001). However, some studies uniquely focus on answering the question of whether tourists can rely on tourist businesses such as hotels, tour operators, and attractions to be properly crisis prepared. Drabek (1995, 2000) was among the first to record the perceptions and expectations that tourists have of the specific preparedness measures taken by tourist businesses and local governments. In research on lodging establishments and their customers, a significant gap between guests' expectations of the crisis preparedness of hotels and what the hotel managers were willing or able to provide was identified. These studies suggest that tourists believe that tourist businesses need to make changes in crisis and disaster measures like evacuation procedures, warning procedures, information flow, and threat information (Drabek, 1995, 2000). A disparity in the perceptions of crisis preparedness was also revealed in these studies. For example, although most customers believed hotel managers had little or no

commitment to disaster evacuation planning, most hotel managers disagreed (Drabek, 2000). When perception is reality, this type of perceived apathy could affect the business success of hotels. This can easily be analogized to meetings as well. If meeting attendees believe that meeting planners are apathetic about the safety and security of meeting attendees, it is not difficult to imagine that prospective attendees may opt not to attend a meeting or may have a preference for webconferencing or other technological ways of avoiding travel and face to face meetings.

Crisis Preparedness for Events and Meetings

The same crisis can have different connotations depending on perspective. A good example is a major disaster like Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This disaster can be viewed as a catastrophic natural disaster with widespread sociological and geographic impact, a tourism crisis, and an organizational crisis in hospitality and meetings contexts. To some extent, the crisis categorization depends on through whose eyes the crisis is viewed. For example, Extol is a Pennsylvania software company which was forced to cancel a user conference scheduled in New Orleans because of Hurricane Katrina (Kovaleski, 2005). While the hurricane was not life threatening to Extol's employees or meeting attendees, having to cancel and rebook a meeting because of a natural disaster can become a business and financial crisis for organizations in Extol's situation. This is especially true if the organization does not have event cancellation insurance or the meeting planner does not have an effective means for making decisions about the cancellation and rebooking of the meeting in the face of a crisis. A more direct example of an organizational crisis resulting from Hurricane Katrina is the extensive damage to New Orleans hotels and the experience of employees and guests who were caught at the

hotels during the hurricane. Yet meetings industry trade press also focused on the gravity of issues like the 195 meetings that were canceled at the Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans between the hurricane and March 31, 2006, and the lack of staff to run the hotel and support meetings after recovery and renovation was completed (Kovaleski, 2006). All are examples of organizational crises in the various contexts of tourism, hospitality, and meetings industry.

Crisis and disaster research includes a number of case studies of specific crises that have occurred, including major catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. An unfortunate aspect of case studies is that the research is done after a crisis or disaster has already occurred. The goal is to help other businesses and organizations learn from the successes and failures of organizations that have experienced a crisis and emerged on the other side. The limited research done on crisis management in the context of special events has relied largely on case studies. One of the earliest case studies in the event crisis field is an in-depth case study of an explosion that occurred at an ice show in a coliseum (Drabek, 1968, 1994).

Two books on risk management and special events have been published. The first was characterized as a manual for special events planners and was self-published by the author (Berlonghi, 1990). In the second book on risk management and events (coincidentally published shortly after the terrorism crisis of September 11, 2001), the events industry is described as having been charmed by naïveté in the 1990s (Tarlow, 2002). The implication of this statement is that times have changed. Indeed, throughout the book the author emphasizes the professional responsibility of event managers to ensure the safety and security of those attending their events. In addition to these two

books, the governments of Australia and Canada deemed event safety an important enough issue to warrant government publications, though both are geared specifically to mass gatherings or mega events such as festivals (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; Hanna, 1994).

Even within special events, sub-categories of events are delineated such as social events, sports events, product launches, and corporate incentive events. Few of these sub-categories of events have enjoyed the benefit of thorough research into crisis management, with the possible exception of sports events. Sports events have been an area of some crisis management research interest, both in terms of case studies and other types of research. This may be because some sports events have characteristics that may make them seem more crisis prone. For example, sports events are often action oriented, draw large crowds, and are held in outdoor facilities. There are also risky issues of alcohol consumption and crowd psychology to fuel crisis fires. Some of these features also apply to meetings, particularly in a convention or exhibition context. Thus, crisis preparedness for meetings can be informed by analogies to sports event crisis literature. An example of the use of a sports event case study to underscore broader tourism crisis management implications is a study of the safety perceptions of spectator-tourists at the 2004 Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece (Neirotti & Hilliard, 2006).

Another example of a sports event crisis case study is that of the crowd crush incident that occurred at the Hillsborough soccer stadium in 1989. The case study examines the combination of human, technology, and process factors that resulted in the death of 95 spectators and the injury of 170 others (Lewis, Kelsey, Dynes, & Tierney, 1994). The same crisis has also been used as a jumping off point for explaining the

concept of "learning from crises" (Elliott & Smith, 2006). The discussion of changes made in the soccer industry in the U.K. following this and other crises in soccer stadia is again a good corollary to changes that could be made in the meetings industry and facilities if meeting planners and suppliers are able to learn from crises that have already occurred.

Crisis management for meetings has seen significant growth in interest as an area of research and practice interest in the last decade, mostly in response to major crises like the September 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina. Although the Wiley event risk management book published in 2002 contained some information pertinent to meetings, its focus is clearly more events and event tourism. It was not until 2008 that the first book specifically geared toward planning and preparedness for risks for both special events and meetings was published (Silvers, 2008). Prior to the publishing of this text, practical information on crisis management for meetings was limited to single chapters in meeting management books (see for example Hilliard, 2006; Wallace, Mathai, & Heath, 2008), magazine articles, and resources created by professional industry trade associations such as conference presentations and checklists. None of these resources were based on empirical research.

Empirically based literature specific to crisis management and the meetings industry is sparse. What there is focuses primarily on meeting planners' perspectives of hotel safety and security features (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993). To date, there has been only one empirical study on the specific crisis preparedness actions of meeting planners (Kline & Smith, 2006).

Because there is only one such study, a specific recitation of some of the key findings of the groundbreaking research is warranted.

Over 400 meeting planners responded to a survey that was distributed in July 2006. The survey asked about meeting planner and meeting demographics, current crisis plans, specific emergency situations, training, crisis communication and coordination mechanisms, and scenario planning. The survey concluded with open-ended questions about crisis plans. Although the study found that 65.6% of meeting planners believed a crisis plan to be very or extremely important, only 41.5% actually had a plan in place. Likewise, 41% of respondents had comprehensive insurance policies to assist with crisis recovery. The study did not specify whether the same 41% had both a plan and an insurance policy (Kline & Smith, 2006).

Deficiencies in planning identified by the researchers included a lack of training for potential crisis situations and a lack of coordination and communication by meeting planners with external partners like meeting facilities, emergency response personnel, outside security, and insurance companies. A vast majority of respondents indicated that they did not conduct exercises to test their crisis plans (Kline & Smith, 2006). The authors did not suggest a reason for the crisis planning deficiencies, but made recommendations to the professional association that funded the research regarding resources that could be provided to educate and assist meeting planners in developing crisis plans.

Mileti (1999) says that private sector organizations tend to be apathetic about crisis preparedness. Research is an essential basis for assisting the tourism industry to develop strategies for crisis preparedness in the future (Faulkner, 2001). Yet there is no

readily available research-based information to tell meeting planners what they should be doing. Until meeting planners know what they should be doing in terms of crisis preparedness, they are unlikely to be fully crisis prepared.

Theoretical context

Pauchant & Mitroff (1992, 2002) use the term "crisis prone" to describe organizations that contribute to the creation of organizational crises. The opposite of a "crisis prone" organization is a "crisis prepared" organization (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992, 2002). Crisis prone organizations prepare only for a narrow spectrum of crises if they prepare at all (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). Crisis proneness has also been described as "organizational sickness" (Elliott & Smith, 2006, p. 293). Crisis prone organizations may prepare only for high-probability, high-consequence events and be caught completely unprepared if a low-probability, high-consequence event occurs. Conversely, crisis prepared organizations stress the importance of "crisis capabilities over crisis plans" (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003, p. 18). That is, crisis prepared organizations understand the importance of having a comprehensive crisis preparedness program that is adaptable to both expected and unexpected crises rather than just having a written plan that addresses only a few select crisis situations.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993) developed a "Crisis Management Strategic Checklist" with 29 specific crisis preparedness action steps in five categories: strategic, technical and structural, evaluation and diagnostic, communication, and psychological and cultural (p. 58). The elements in this checklist overlap substantially with elements addressed in other crisis preparedness guiding documents such as the FEMA 141 Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry (Federal Emergency Management Agency,

1993) and the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (National Fire Protection Association, 2007). For example, all three documents mention the importance of crisis training, however only NFPA 1600 specifies that the crisis plan should be shared with stakeholders, an important element for meetings because the stakeholders in question may include meeting facilities and attendees. See Table 2.1 for a comparison of the elements from each of these documents.

Table 2.1

Comparison of Crisis Preparedness Program Elements

Pearson & Mitroff (1993)	NFPA 1600	FEMA 141
Strategic Actions		
• Integrate CM into strategic planning. • Integrate CM into statements of corporate excellence. • Include outsiders on the Board of Directors and on CM teams. • Provide training and workshops. • Expose organizational members to simulations. • Create a diversity or portfolio of CM strategies.	• Advisory committee with internal and external representation. • Training and education program. • Exercises to test program elements.	• Establish a training schedule. • Review, train, and revise plan.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993)	NFPA 1600	FEMA 141
Technical and Structural Actions		
• Create a CM team. • Dedicate budget expenditures. • Establish accountabilities for updating policies/manuals. • Computerize inventories of resources (e.g., employee skills). • Designate an emergency command control room. • Establish working relationship with outside experts in CM. • Assure technological redundancy in vital areas (e.g., computer systems).	• Appoint a program coordinator. • Establish a budget and financial procedures. • Establish program goals, objectives, and a method of review. • Establish a method for identifying and inventorying resources (e.g., personnel, equipment, training, etc.). • Establish a primary and alternate emergency operations center. • Document the program in writing. • Establish multiple plans—strategic, prevention, mitigation, response.	• Form an emergency team. • Identify internal resources and capabilities. • Establish an Emergency Operations Center. • Identify external resources. • Create a written plan. • Integrate the plan into operations.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993)	NFPA 1600	FEMA 141
	• Create a mitigation strategy. • Create mutual aid and assistance agreements. • Share the plan with stakeholders. • Develop an incident management system.	
Evaluation and Diagnostic Actions		
• Conduct legal and financial audit of threats and liabilities. • Modify insurance coverage to match CM contingencies. • Conduct environmental impact audits. • Prioritize activities necessary for daily operations. • Establish tracking system for early warning signals. • Establish tracking system to follow up past crises or near crises.	• Conduct risk assessment. • Monitor hazards and adjust the disaster/emergency plan as needed. • Implement a strategy to maintain compliance with	• Identify pertinent codes and regulations; review internal plans and policies. • Conduct an insurance review. • Conduct a vulnerability analysis. • Identify critical products, services, and operations.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993)	NFPA 1600	FEMA 141
	laws and regulations.	
Communication Actions		
• Provide training for dealing with the media. • Improve communication lines with community. • Improve communication with intervening stakeholders (e.g., police).	• Create media materials and process. • Provide information to internal and external audiences. • Establish an emergency communication system.	• Media relations. • Coordinate with outside groups. • Meet with outside groups (governmental). • Process for maintaining internal communications during an emergency. • (External) emergency communications.
Psychological and Cultural Actions		
• Increase visibility of strong top management commitment to CM. • Improve relationships with activist groups • Improve upward communication (including "whistleblowers"). • Improve downward	• Identify stakeholders that need to be notified.	• Establish the authority of the emergency operations team.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993)	NFPA 1600	FEMA 141
communication re CM programs/accountabilities. • Provide training re: human and emotional impacts of crises. • Provide psychological support services (e.g., stress management). • Reinforce corporate memory of past crises/dangers.	• Conduct post-incident reviews.	• Improve lateral communication.
(Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 58)	(National Fire Protection Association, 2007)	(Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993).

80% of companies lacking a crisis plan vanish within two years after experiencing a major crisis (Wrigley, Salmon, & Park, 2003). On a more positive note, some authors believe that a crisis can be a catalyst for positive change in an organization (Elliott & Smith, 2006; Turner, 1976). Hopefully being crisis prepared means that positive change is more likely following a crisis than a solely negative outcome.

Research done by Mitroff & Alpasian (2003) suggested that only 5-25% of organizations are crisis prepared, leaving 75-95% of all organizations crisis prone (p. 19). While Pearson & Mitroff (1993) indicated that they have never found an organization that had adopted all 29 action steps in their checklist, they seem to apply the term "crisis prepared" to organizations that adopt at least one significant action in each of their five

categories. A similar approach may be applied to meeting planners. Though ideally a meeting planner would employ all or nearly all of the actions indicated in the crisis prepared meetings framework, implementing at least one in each of the major categories would contribute significantly to the crisis preparedness of their meetings and thus, to the safety of their attendees, security of their property, and protection of their organizations.

Factors Influencing Crisis Preparedness

Crises can have such severe outcomes as business failure, financial loss, injuries, and death. In spite of this, many people and organizations are less prepared than they should be for crises. Faced with this paradox, it is no surprise that many crisis researchers focus studies on why people and organizations are willing to routinely face major risks rather than prepare for them (Wicks, 2001). Prior research studies have suggested a variety of different factors that may hinder or facilitate the adoption of crisis preparedness measures. Some factors may even have both hindering and facilitating effects. For example, fear of liability has been suggested by different studies both as a factor that discourages crisis preparedness (Drabek, 2000) and as a factor that encourages crisis preparedness (Mileti, 1999). The factors and the literature from which they are drawn is discussed below

The factors below have been grouped roughly into three categories for ease of review. The first group includes those factors which involve a subjective sense of reality rather than an objective sense of crisis risk and impact. This altered sense of reality can lull people into an unwarranted sense of peace of mind. The second category of factors includes resources that must be present to engage in crisis preparedness and which, therefore, if deficient may hinder crisis preparedness. The third and final category

includes those factors that may encourage crisis preparedness. It is only the factors in this third category that are characterized by the authors as possibly having a positive relationship with crisis preparedness.

Faulty rationalizations. Several of the factors that influence crisis preparedness may be characterized as subjective beliefs held by people. For example, Pearson & Mitroff (1993) suggest 32 faulty rationalizations that people have about crises, themselves, and their organizations. In general, these rationalizations give people a peace of mind that in many cases is not warranted by the reality of the circumstances.

The either/or proposition of success and failure. Attitudes toward crisis outcomes may play a significant part in the motivation to prepare for a crisis. When a crisis occurs, there are inevitably some losses, damage, and negative effects on people and organizations even among the most crisis prepared organizations. No organization will be completely effective or completely ineffective in responding to a crisis. Rather, crisis management outcomes should be viewed on a spectrum of relative success and failure (Pearson & Clair, 1998). The goal of crisis preparedness is to facilitate falling further toward the success end of this spectrum. A person who views crisis management success and failure as an either/or proposition will likely be deterred from preparing for a crisis because they may see failure as inevitable.

Fatalism. Related to the attitudes toward crisis outcomes are the attitudes that people have toward crises themselves. For example, some people believe that crisis events are inevitable (Elliott & Smith, 2006). A person's perception of having little control over events has been suggested as having important implications for crisis

preparedness (Sattler, Kaiser, & Hittner, 2000). This quality of fatalism is argued to be a strong indicator of crisis proneness (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992).

Social/institutional norms. In many cases, the organization itself is the hindrance to crisis preparedness. That is, the cultures, norms, and general organizational orientation toward crisis preparedness impedes crisis preparedness (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). For example, an organization that has lax safety practices or frowns on those that share bad news about safety issues create an organizational culture that deters a proactive stance toward crisis preparedness.

The influence of social norms may extend beyond the norms of the organization and its members. The social expectations of the industry may also have an effect on the perceptions of preparedness. The idea that if other people in the same industry aren't doing it, we don't need to do it either has been suggested as a strong deterrent toward crisis preparedness (Mileti, 1999). For the meetings industry, for example, evidence of the social and professional norms regarding crisis preparedness may be demonstrated by industry associations such as the Professional Convention Management Association or Meeting Professionals International. Professionals may turn to these organizations for validation of what should be done. Failing to practice crisis preparedness themselves and to provide resources for members on crisis preparedness may send a message that the topic is unimportant. Likewise, it is suggested that a person whose role in the social group (or profession) is respected can have a significant influence on encouraging adoption of crisis measures (Burton, Kates, & White, 1993). Thus, an influential person in the meetings industry championing the cause of crisis preparedness may have an impact on influencing the adoption of crisis preparedness measures. People are capable

of rapid adoption of changes in social and professional norms when circumstances are favorable (Burton et al., 1993).

Someone else's job. Another factor that may influence crisis preparedness is the perception by one or more individuals that crisis planning is someone else's job. For people who believe crisis preparedness is important, this mental "passing of the buck" may be subconscious and based on the unfounded assumption that someone else must be doing it. Role ambiguity can allow crisis preparedness to fall low on the priority list (Elliott & Smith, 2006). If many people in an organization hold this belief, it may be that no one is doing it at all.

This factor again harkens back to institutional factors within the organization and the industry. Because crisis preparedness is important, a belief may exist that it must be done by a specialized department (Mileti, 1999). Meeting planners who believe that crisis preparedness is important may not be engaging in crisis preparedness because they assume legal or corporate risk management should be doing it rather than the meetings department. Alternatively, meeting planners may believe that crises are an organizational problem and fail to see that a crisis occurring at a meeting would affect them and the meeting attendees. However, as discussed, the traditional organization crisis management plan may not be tailored to the unique characteristics of meetings which are held in different places rather than at the organization's headquarters.

Meeting planners in particular may also believe that crisis preparedness is the job of the hotel or other meeting facilities. There is too much reliance on safety technology with the assumption that technology alone will prevent crises from occurring or having a

serious impact (Pearson & Clair, 1998). One needs only read about the many hotel fires and resulting damage and deaths to know that technology alone is not the solution.

Denial/misplaced optimism. While optimism is generally encouraged, optimistic bias or misplaced optimism about the occurrence or impact of a crisis can be dangerous (Sattler et al., 2000; Wicks, 2001). Some people play down the likelihood of a threat and fail to prepare because they believe a crisis is not likely to happen or, if it does happen, to affect them (Elliott & Smith, 2006). Even people who have experienced a crisis will sometimes erroneously believe that because a crisis has already happened, it won't happen again (Drabek, 1994, 1995). Tourism business executives in particular have been found to exhibit this "we already had our crisis" mentality (Drabek, 1994). People also have short memories and a crisis fades in importance as the memory of a realized crisis fades. An example of this is the finding that while terrorism and war ranked as the number one external trend affecting meetings in 2007, it dropped to tenth place in 2008 as it was replaced by economic concerns (Meeting Professionals International, 2008).

The initial response to any crisis warning is denial. Particularly where crises are infrequent, the denial of the danger can be extreme (Drabek, 1999). Denial may also fuel unfounded beliefs about existing safety management and how people may behave in a crisis (Elliott & Smith, 2006). Finally, denial may be a defense mechanism. Many professionals are under such pressure just to get daily required tasks done that the pressure creates a built-in inertia toward crisis preparedness rooted in denial (Drabek, 1995).

Mindset of invulnerability. Wicks (2001) uses the term "mindset of invulnerability" to describe the distorted perception that prevents an organization and its

members from acting to reduce risks. Because this dysfunctional mindset may be a result of the culture of the organization and the industry, it can be difficult to observe. It may also exist because of individual sensemaking, or a person's attempt to make sense of his or her environment (Pearson & Clair, 1998). A person may also believe that if he survived a prior crisis, he can survive another one (Drabek, 1999). In this sense, the issue is not denial of the crisis itself, but the belief that one is impervious to its impact.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993) identify 32 "faulty rationalizations" that hinder crisis management efforts (p. 55). These faulty rationalizations address the beliefs of people about how an organization will be protected in the event of a crisis due to properties of (1) the organization, (2) the environment, (3) the crisis itself, and (4) prior crisis management efforts. These rationalizations include, for example, things like misplaced reliance on the size of the organization, the belief that someone else will rescue the organization in case of a crisis, confidence in the ability to react without a plan in a crisis, and a belief that only executives need to know crisis plans (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). While the full scope of their faulty rationalizations is not included here, the concept of rationalizing is the underpinning to the subjective reality construct.

Fear of scaring attendees. Drabek (2000) found that although hotel customers expressed a strong preference to have an evacuation brochure in their rooms, hotel managers resisted implementing this policy for various reasons, including fear of scaring customers. This can be analogized to meeting planners and their attendees. Although no studies have explored this yet, it seems likely that meeting planners may share hotel managers concerns about scaring customers, which for meeting planners are meeting attendees. It is also likely that this concern on the part of meeting planners may deter

more crisis preparedness actions than just providing an evacuation brochure in hotel guest rooms. How individuals interpret their professional environment, whether accurate or not, influences their behavior (Wicks, 2001). Meeting planners are known for being hospitable, and the meetings industry is a pleasant and fun one. It may be that meeting planners cannot reconcile the idea of discussing crises and worst-case scenarios with their view of themselves and their industry.

Another group of factors that have been discussed as having an influence on crisis preparedness are tangible factors that address the shortfall or absence of something needed for effective crisis preparedness. Factors discussed below in this category include: insufficient budget, time poverty, lack of knowledge, and poor internal communication.

Insufficient budget. Studies have shown that an individual's level of wealth influences their adoption of crisis mitigation measures (Burton et al., 1993). Likewise, it could be that organizations with more financially at stake are more likely to adopt crisis measures. However, even within an organization, crisis preparedness may vary depending on the department's relative "wealth." For crisis preparedness, this could mean having a departmental budget that will support the necessary expenditures to conduct crisis preparedness training, hire consultants, and implement other crisis preparedness measures.

Mileti (1999) suggests that when it comes to the economic issues of crisis preparedness, organizations prefer easy and inexpensive measures. This may mean that budget plays a larger role than appropriateness or effectiveness in which crisis preparedness measures an organization adopts. Hotel managers have cited cost-

ineffectiveness as one of the reason for not including an evacuation brochure in guest rooms (Drabek, 2000). In that case, it was not just that they were expensive, but the managers believed that no one would read them and thus, it was a waste of valuable budget dollars. Although meeting planners are enjoying an overall budget increase in 2008, the economy and increased costs of holding meetings are also cited as trends that may be making meeting planners cautious about budget allocations (Meeting Professionals International, 2008).

Proactive crisis preparedness is more cost effective in the long run than reactive crisis management. Specifically, the cost of investing in crisis preparedness is much less than the thousands of dollars lost in settling lawsuits after a crisis and the marketing costs that have to be expended to recover from damage to an organization's image following a poor crisis response (Drabek, 1995). Unfortunately, this distinction seems to be lost on many organizations and managers who prefer to take their chances being underprepared for a crisis rather than expend the budget on proactive crisis preparedness.

Time poverty. For many professionals, there is barely enough time in the day to get their regular work done, much less add crisis preparedness to their workload. This perception that crisis preparedness is another thing to do, rather than that it is something to be integrated into regular work tasks, creates an inertia toward crisis preparedness (Drabek, 1995). For meeting planners, they may not yet see how crisis preparedness should be integrated into the planning and on-site management of meetings. It is quite possible that they consciously reject approaching the learning curve of crisis preparedness in favor of hoping for the best.

Lack of knowledge. The less people know about something, the less likely they are to either understand its importance or to engage in actions to support it. Crisis preparedness continues to be a mystery to many meeting planners. When faced with complex choices, such as those involved in making crisis preparedness decisions, people use heuristics. Unfortunately, in doing so, people tend to misremember the frequency of crises (Mileti, 1999). If they read many news stories about one type of crisis, such as hotel fires, they may believe that hotel fires happen frequently or are the only type of crisis for which they need to prepare. The lack of knowledge about an all-hazards approach to planning may be a factor influencing their levels of preparedness. One solution to the lack of knowledge may be having clearinghouses for information about crisis preparedness such as professional associations like the Professional Convention Management Association or Meeting Professionals International. Another possible solution that has been proposed is to offer incentives for preparedness such as sample plans and training or reduced insurance rates (Mileti, 1999).

Poor communication. The quality of communication within an organization can influence preparedness (Wicks, 2001). Within an organization, information may also be dispersed throughout the organization making it difficult to make crisis preparedness decisions (Pearson & Clair, 1998). This may be especially true with meetings because some information about crisis preparedness for a specific meeting may be held by legal counsel, insurance representatives, meeting facilities, or other external stakeholders. Without a concerted effort, the pieces of information and knowledge may remain distributed rather than compiled into an effective crisis preparedness program.

It is possible that this factor could be related to institutional norms. One of the symptoms of poor communication can be blocking or ignoring warnings about imminent dangers (Mitroff, 2002). There are often small pieces of evidence or warning signals that a crisis is about to occur (Kline & Smith, 2006). If these warnings are effectively communicated, the crisis preparedness program should allow a more effective response to be implemented.

Most of the factors enumerated above are construed by scholars as having an inverse or negative relationship with crisis preparedness. That is, as the factors above increase, crisis preparedness decreases. The following factors, however, are construed as having a positive relationship with levels of crisis preparedness. That is, it is higher levels of these factors may result in higher levels of crisis preparedness. The factors included in this category include regulatory compliance, fear of liability, fear of bad publicity, and unique features (of a destination, meeting, or facility for example).

Regulatory compliance. In institutional theory, regulating is seen as interaction with institutions that exist to ensure stability, order, and continuity (Zsidisin, Melnyk, & Ragatz, 2005). As these are also the goals of crisis preparedness, the relationship between regulations and crisis preparedness is somewhat obvious. Commitment to comply with regulations and fear of repercussions resulting from non-compliance may be a factor that contributes to crisis preparedness (Mileti, 1999).

In a study of the UK soccer industry, Elliott & Smith (2006) followed the transition of regulations related to safety from extreme indulgency toward a partially punitive approach to widespread punishment. The increasing level of regulation and consequences may be a testimony to the role of government regulation in ensuring higher

levels of safety and preparedness or it may be a testimony to the willingness of organizations to only be as prepared as required by regulation.

In his study of the perceptions of tourist business managers and their customers, Drabek (2000) found that 91% of customers believed that local governments should require hotels to have a written disaster evacuation plan while only 50% of hotels agreed (p. 54). This suggests that those protected by regulations are in favor of them while those upon whom an obligation to take action is imposed by regulations view them less favorably. However, this does not address whether hotels would be less likely to meet regulatory standards of crisis preparedness if they were imposed by government.

Some suggest that the absence of a regulation or absence of pressure to comply with a regulation may be seen as evidence that the regulated action is unimportant (Elliott & Smith, 2006; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Wicks, 2001). For example, tourist business managers failed to address requirements for disaster planning imposed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Those who did addressed them only with regard to fire hazards (Drabek, 1995).

The government is the key source of regulations, and perhaps the most influential of the regulatory bodies. There are other regulating mechanisms besides government, including key customers, insurance companies, and corporate policies (Zsidisin et al., 2005). For meeting planners, regulatory mechanisms may be put in place by key customers like meeting facilities, general service contractors, and exhibitors. Likewise, insurance companies offering commercial general liability or event cancellation insurance for meetings may regulate specific meeting activities.

Fear of liability. Closely related to regulation is the fear of liability. This is the one factor that may have either a positive or a negative influence on the adoption of crisis preparedness measures. Hotel managers expressed reticence to include a disaster evacuation brochure in guest rooms. One of the reasons for their resistance was fear of potential legal action if the hotel employees did not follow their own written procedures (Drabek, 2000). Conversely, however, it seems likely that in today's litigious environment, liability concerns might also motivate meeting planners to engage in crisis preparedness so that they can use their due diligence as a defense in the event of a lawsuit.

Fear of bad publicity. No organization wants to attract media attention because of how poorly it handled a crisis. In many cases, however, a crisis event may be of such significance that it attracts the attention of the media as well as other external stakeholders such as the government and the public (Elliott & Smith, 2006). Sometimes it is also the visibility of the organization or industry that drives crisis publicity (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Hospitality and tourism tend to be very visible industries because most people have some familiarity with them and they carry a positive connotation—travel, leisure, vacation, fun. Thus, the hospitality industry and related industries like the meetings industry are very likely to be media targets.

In today's always-on media world, crises can become instant news. For example, on January 25, 2008, the Monte Carlo resort in Las Vegas caught fire (Carey, 2008b). Within minutes, links to news video clips of the fire were e-mailed to people in the meetings industry both via individual e-mails as well as via e-mail listservs with thousands of meeting planner subscribers. Unfortunately for the Monte Carlo, a news

story plastered on the front page of a prominent meetings industry magazine carried the story of the experience of one meeting planner whose meeting was being held at the Monte Carlo on the day of the fire. The meeting planner expressed her opinion of the hotel's poor response at length beginning with the unequivocal statement that there was "too much delay in notifying and evacuating her group from the hotel's meeting space" (Carey, 2008, p. 1). Whether the meeting planner has any basis for determining the appropriate timing and timeliness of a mass evacuation was not explored in the article. Instead, meeting planner readers are now all under the impression that the Monte Carlo had, at best, a poor crisis response. This in spite of the fact that no major injuries occurred as a result of the fire, a fact reported more subtly and later in the news timeline (Carey, 2008a).

Unique features. Tourist business located in destinations with unique geographic features noted these unique features as a factor that influenced their implementation of evacuation plans (Drabek, 1995). As an example, hotels on Martha's Vineyard have the unique challenge of being located on an island with only one route to the mainland. The perception of the safety of a destination by a meeting planner may likewise influence their level of preparedness. This may be true not only of specific geographic features like a coastal area that is hurricane-prone, but also less tangible features, such as areas prone to terrorism, high crime rates, or political instability. A meeting planner's level of crisis preparedness for meetings may vary as it is influenced by their perception of the safety of each meeting destination. Likewise, unique features of the meeting itself may influence preparedness. A meeting at which the President of the United States will be speaking is likely to have different risks than one at which a lesser known speaker is speaking, for

example. Likewise, a meeting with a controversial topic may generate different risks than one for which the topic is benign.

Another factor that has been suggested as influencing preparedness is the size of an organization. Larger organizations tend to be more prepared than smaller organizations (Faulkner, 2001). This factor is being treated as a demographic control variable so it is not included in the constructs above.

Rationale for the Present Study

While there has been a great deal of research on crisis management and specifically on the preparedness phase of crisis management, very little of it has been applied in the tourism and hospitality industry sectors. What has been written in tourism tends to focus on crisis recovery for tourism destinations in terms of how to get tourists to return after a crisis has occurred. Likewise, hospitality industry crisis literature has had some focus on safety and security features of hotels and the importance of safety to travelers. While some of this literature can be applied tangentially to the meetings industry, none of it focuses primarily on the meeting planner's or organizer's perspective. It is difficult to apply traditional crisis preparedness literature to meetings, anyway, because unlike traditional business operations, meetings vary in terms of location, facilities, participants, and equipment.

A single empirical study exists that addresses crisis preparedness of meeting planners (Kline & Smith, 2006). Thus, the field of research on crisis preparedness for meetings is virtually wide open to researchers. There have been other publications addressing crisis preparedness, management, response, and recovery for special events, but these publications are mainly in the form of magazine articles, book chapters, and

government manuals. For meetings specifically, there is very little information other than a handful of magazine articles and book chapters to guide the development of research in the area of crisis preparedness for meetings. Most of what has been written is written from a non-empirical experiential basis, so it varies widely in content and recommendations.

The present study aims to take the existing body of scholarly research on crisis preparedness and apply it specifically to the meetings industry. This was done to some extent in the white paper published by Kline & Smith (2006), but the focus of the present study is broader. Rather than asking only about a few crisis preparedness measures such as having a crisis plan, conducting training with staff, and having insurance, the present study begins with a qualitative basis for determining specifically which measures should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program.

The theoretical significance of this study is that it applies the research and practice area of crisis management to meetings, a fairly new and growing area of research and practice itself. By using primarily literature from the crisis management field and marrying it with tourism, hospitality, and meetings industry literature, a new area of research is being developed. The crisis prepared organization framework, for example, has been used and applied primarily to corporations and traditional business operations such as factories. This study will take the crisis prepared framework and customize it and apply it to meetings, a decidedly non-traditional type of business.

The study also has practical significance in that it will help the meetings industry managers and leaders create programs, products, and services to help meeting planners create comprehensive crisis preparedness programs appropriate for their meetings and

their organizations. The practical result of the application of this research is that it may help to protect organizations, property, and people. At best, it could save lives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This two-phase research study examines crisis preparedness for meetings by first establishing the crisis preparedness measures that meeting planners should be implementing for their meetings and then analyzing the current crisis preparedness of meeting planners. Using Pearson & Mitroff's (1993) crisis prone versus crisis prepared theory as a foundation, crisis preparedness measures from several reliable crisis management sources were compiled and modified for meetings using a Delphi panel. The resulting crisis prepared framework for meetings provides a basis for the analysis in this study and may be the first step in overcoming a lack of preparedness by meeting planners who simply don't know what they should be doing.

Second, the study determines which crisis preparedness measures meeting planners are currently implementing. A few of these measures were also studied by Kline & Smith (2006), however the present study goes beyond the measures suggested in that study to expand into a broader analysis. Third, the study attempts to identify the elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of a full complement of crisis preparedness measures. This will contribute new knowledge to the industry. Finally, the

study examines how the adoption of crisis preparedness measures is related to the professional characteristics meeting planners. Thus the present study expands upon the one empirical study that exists on this subject and also creates new knowledge.

This research was supported by the Professional Convention Management Association, which agreed to assist in the administration of the survey to its members.

Objective of the Study

Research Questions

1. What are the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
2. To what extent are meeting planners adopting the measures in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
3. What are the core crisis preparedness measures that should be used by meeting planners?
4. How is the adoption of the core crisis preparedness measures related to the characteristics of both the meeting planner and their meetings?
5. What are the elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
6. What are the core deficits in crisis preparedness program measures currently implemented by meeting planners compared to a recommended program?

Research question 1 yielded a list of comprehensive crisis preparedness measures for meetings as recommended by experts on a Delphi panel.

Research question 2 evaluated the extent to which meeting planner respondents had adopted each of the defined crisis preparedness measures, as indicated by respondents' scores on the 5-point Likert scale survey administered to them. The survey asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they implement each of the identified crisis preparedness measures [with 1 for "Never" (not for any of the meetings they plan) and 5 for "Always" (for every meeting they plan)].

Research question 3 utilized exploratory factor analysis to identify the dimensions inherent in the core crisis preparedness measures that should be implemented by meeting planners.

Research question 4 used meeting planner professional characteristics as control variables in order to determine if there are significant relationships between these characteristics and the core crisis preparedness measures adopted. Significant differences in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners were expected based on the following professional characteristics: meetings industry segment, size of organization, number of meetings planned per year, size of meetings, years of experience, professional certification, meeting destinations, and prior crisis experience. Where a significant relationship is found to exist, variance will be analyzed.

Research question 4 was analyzed based on eight separate hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4_a:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners from different industry segments (association, corporate, government, independent).

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners from different industry segments (association, corporate, government, independent).

Hypothesis 4_b:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on the size of the organization for which a meeting planner works.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on the size of the organization for which a meeting planner works.

Hypothesis 4_c:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on number of meetings planned per year.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on number of meetings planned per year.

Hypothesis 4_d:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on size of meetings planned.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on size of meetings planned.

Hypothesis 4_e:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on years of meeting planning experience.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on years of meeting planning experience.

Hypothesis 4_f:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have earned a professional meetings industry certification and those who have not.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have earned a professional meetings industry certification and those who have not.

Hypothesis 4_g:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who plan meetings outside North America versus those who plan meetings only in North America.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who plan meetings outside North America versus those who plan meetings only in North America.

Hypothesis 4_h:

H_0: There is not a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting and those who have not.

H_A: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting and those who have not.

Research question 5 used an open-ended question to gather factors that influence the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. These open-ended responses were then analyzed through content analysis.

Research question 6 compared the actual adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners with the recommended level of adoption of crisis preparedness measures as determined by the Delphi group. The Delphi panel participants provided a recommendation on the level of implementation of each crisis preparedness measure based on responses to a 3-point sub-set of the Likert scale that was employed with respondents. The comparison of the current implementation of crisis preparedness measures with the recommended implementation resulted in a crisis preparedness index score that illustrated how prepared meeting planners were. The index scores were then rank ordered to identify deficiencies and over-allocation of resources by meeting planners as well as areas for which meeting planner respondents were performing appropriately.

Because Delphi panel members will have agreed by consensus that all of the crisis preparedness measures on the list are important, it would be counter-intuitive for any of them to say that any of the crisis preparedness measures on the list should never or rarely be implemented, so the 5-point Likert scale was reduced to a 3-point scale for this

purpose. While an ideal crisis preparedness program would include always implementing every crisis preparedness measure for every meeting (all 5's on the Likert scale), the reality is that some measures may be recommended only for large conventions, international meetings, or meetings for which a specific risk has a higher probability. The comparison of the current implementation of crisis preparedness measures with the recommended implementation will result in a crisis preparedness index score that illustrates how prepared meeting planners currently are. The index scores were rank ordered to identify the deficiencies or over-allocation of resources in crisis preparedness measures as well as identifying the areas in which meeting planner respondents were performing appropriately.

Delphi Technique

Three resources were used to create the initial list of measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. Pearson & Mitroff (1993) developed a "Crisis Management Strategic Checklist" with 29 specific crisis preparedness action steps in five categories: strategic, technical and structural, evaluation and diagnostic, communication, and psychological and cultural (p. 58). As illustrated in Table 1, the elements in this checklist overlap substantially with elements addressed in other crisis preparedness guiding documents such as the FEMA 141 Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993) and the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (National Fire Protection Association, 2007). The action steps from these three sources were compared, combined, and modified for a meetings context. This resulted in a unique list of action steps that may be

contained in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. The resulting list of crisis preparedness program actions was submitted to a Delphi panel of meetings industry professionals in order to validate it and ensure that it was both appropriate and tailored to meetings versus more traditional business operations.

The Delphi technique is designed not to determine "what is," but "what should be" (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1). Because there is no empirically based framework for crisis preparedness for meetings to guide this research, the use of the Delphi technique in this study is a particularly appropriate starting point. Although there are no exact criterion for the selection of Delphi participants, subjects generally share a related background and experience regarding the study issue (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). In the current study, the panel members were selected based on experience in the meetings industry as well as demonstrated interest in crisis preparedness or overall strategic meeting management. The panel included meeting planners as well as those who work with meeting planners such as hotel representatives, convention and visitors bureau representatives, and consultants. The final list of crisis preparedness measures for meetings as modified and agreed on by consensus of the Delphi participants can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Comprehensive Crisis Preparedness Program Framework for Meetings

Strategic Actions
1. Integrate crisis management into meetings department statements of purpose.
2. Include crisis management as part of the organization's strategic meetings management program.

3. Form a crisis management external advisory committee including people from outside the organization (e.g., meeting destination and facility representatives, consultants, attorney, insurance representative, law enforcement, etc. as appropriate).
4. Establish a crisis management training and education program for meetings department staff, executive staff, and other organizational staff who will be on-site at meetings.
5. Test the crisis management plan with simulations (e.g., tabletop exercises).
Technical and Structural Actions
6. Form a crisis management team, including both long-term and event-specific internal personnel as indicated by the threat and vulnerability assessment.
7. Dedicate a budget to crisis management activities as needed.
8. Review, evaluate, and update the crisis plan as needed (e.g., before each meeting, to reflect changes in regulations or laws, after crises have occurred).
9. Identify and inventory internal resources and capabilities (e.g., personnel skills, equipment, training, etc.).
10. Designate an on-site crisis operations center and an alternate crisis operations center for each meeting.
11. Establish a working relationship with outside experts and consultants in crisis management as needed to supplement internal resources.
12. Ensure that there is an off-site data back-up system and data privacy program for critical meeting data.
13. Create a written crisis management plan for each meeting.
14. Integrate crisis management into the planning and management process for meetings.
15. Create a strategy for minimizing the impact of a crisis on meetings.
16. Discuss crisis preparedness and response capabilities with meeting facilities, destination representatives, and other suppliers and address these in event facility documents, such as RFPs, site selection checklists, and contracts.
17. Develop and coordinate the meeting crisis management plan with key external stakeholders such as meeting facilities and vendors.
18. Develop methods to inform meeting attendees about appropriate crisis prevention and response measures (e.g., emergency contact information, collecting medical emergency information on registration forms, posting and announcing evacuation routes, etc.).
19. Develop an incident command system supported by a staff organizational chart to direct, control, and coordinate crisis response (ICS includes command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration roles).
20. Ensure that the crisis plans for meetings properly integrate into any crisis and/or business continuity plans for the entire organization.

Evaluation and Diagnostic Actions
21. Review internal meeting documentation and procedures (e.g., such as registration forms, travel policies, RFP processes, etc.) and modify as needed to include crisis preparedness.
22. Conduct a legal and financial threat, vulnerability, and capability audit for each meeting.
23. Review insurance with insurance representative and modify coverage as needed to address crisis contingencies.
24. Conduct a threat and vulnerability assessment for each meeting.
25. Conduct a capability assessment to determine the external resources available in the meeting destination and venue to respond to a crisis.
26. Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities and have a system for addressing early warning signals.
27. Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises.
Communication Actions
28. Conduct media training with meeting and executive staff.
29. Communicate information about large meetings with local law enforcement and emergency response entities (e.g., police, fire, etc.) as well as the destination representative (e.g., convention and visitors bureau, tourism bureau).
30. Establish an emergency communication system for communication within staff (on-site and at the office), and with vendors, venue, and destination representatives to be used in the event of a crisis.
31. Establish a communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis (e.g., with members, meeting participants, their families, etc.)
Psychological and Cultural Actions
32. Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management.
33. Establish or improve relationships with oppositional or risky groups (e.g., activist, striking, or picketing groups), as appropriate.
34. Improve crisis management communication to top management.
35. Improve crisis management communication to all staff in the meetings department as well as those outside the meetings department who will be on-site.
36. Communicate the importance of crisis management to all staff in the organization.
37. Improve crisis management communication to meeting participants.
38. Provide training to the organization's staff regarding the human and emotional impacts of crises.

39. Identify appropriate psychological services for staff and/or attendees to call upon in the event of a crisis (e.g., grief counseling, stress/anger management).
40. Conduct post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders as part of an overall crisis preparedness program evaluation.

Population and Sampling Method

The population used in this study was professional meeting planners, defined as those people who plan meetings, conventions, and conferences as a primary part of their job. Because some meeting planners do not have the title "meeting planner" and because some meeting planners plan meetings in addition to other responsibilities such as marketing or administration, it is difficult to identify them in the general population. It would also be impossible to survey every meeting planner in the country. For these reasons, a convenience sample of the current members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) was chosen.

The Professional Convention Management Association was founded in 1956 and has a current membership of approximately 6,000 people. Not all of the members of PCMA are meeting planners as the membership also includes meetings industry suppliers, faculty, and students. Approximately 54% of PCMA's nearly 6,000 members are Professional members, including but not limited to meeting planners (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). The Professional Convention Management Association agreed to support this research by providing member e-mail addresses and assisting in the distribution of e-mails to members.

Survey Instrument

A questionnaire was created from the literature review and Delphi panel. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The sections of the questionnaire were (1) professional characteristics, (2) implementation of crisis preparedness measures, and (3) factors influencing the adoption of crisis preparedness measures.

The first section of the questionnaire contains questions about meeting planners' professional characteristics and the meetings that they plan. This section of the survey was composed of closed questions with a number of defined choices intended to help categorize respondents based on the following criteria: meetings industry segment, years of experience, professional certification, size of organization, number of meetings planned per year, size of meetings, geographic location of meetings, and prior crisis experience. These professional characteristic questions were drawn from categorizations used by meetings industry magazines when qualifying meeting planners for free subscriptions. The question about size of organization was added based on the literature review. These professional characteristics were used as control variables to determine whether they explained the variance in implementation of crisis preparedness measures.

The second section of the questionnaire included the 40 crisis preparedness measures identified through the literature review as modified by the Delphi panel. This section included a 5-point Likert scale for respondents to indicate how often they implement each of the crisis preparedness measures with 1 being Never (not for any of the meetings they plan) and 5 being Always (for every meeting they plan). Because many meeting planners plan several meetings a year, it is possible that they implement certain crisis preparedness measures for only some of their meetings.

The third and final section of the questionnaire included an open-ended question which asked respondents to identify the factors that influence their adoption of crisis preparedness measures for meetings. Although the literature review suggests several factors that may influence adoption, it was determined to be better to ask meeting planners to identify these factors themselves at this stage of research. A content analysis of the responses was done and future studies may employ quantitative methods to further analyze these elements.

Survey Administration

Because the members of the sample were widely dispersed geographically, the survey was administered in several ways. First, the survey was administered in person at the PCMA Leadership Conference in Los Angeles which was attended by approximately 200 meeting planners. The survey was also be administered electronically using a web-based subscription survey program. Prospective respondents were informed that the survey was the same one that was administered at the PCMA Leadership Conference and asked not to complete it a second time if they attended that conference. The members who meet the sample criteria (Professional members who are meeting executives, meeting managers, or meeting+) were culled from the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) most current membership database. PCMA sent these members an e-mail cover letter with a link to the online survey. Members of the sample were asked to complete and submit the survey online. Non-respondents were sent two follow up e-mails until an adequate response was received.

According to the PCMA website, 63% of the 3,240 Professional members self-identify as meeting executives, meeting managers, or plan meetings as a major

component of their positions (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). Thus 2,041 people were included in the initial sample. Additionally, the survey was sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of meeting planners. Of the 564 total surveys that were ultimately collected, 89 were deleted due to insufficient response. This resulted in 475 usable surveys.

Data Analysis

The demographic data from the first section of the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations. This data was analyzed using SPSS, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences ("Statistical Package for Social Sciences," 2008).

The second section of the questionnaire on the frequency of respondents' adoption of specific crisis measures was analyzed in three different ways. First, exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying dimensions of the different crisis measures, or core crisis preparedness measures. Second, an index of crisis preparedness was created that compares the crisis preparedness of respondents with the recommended crisis preparedness program levels. The resulting ratios allow a rank order and a comparison of the crisis preparedness index scores by demographic as well as overall. Third, an analysis of variance and t-tests were performed to explore the differences in frequency of implemenation between groups based on professional characteristics in the first section. A post-hoc comparison was conducted to determine which groups were significantly different.

The data collected in the third section of the questionnaire from the answers to the open-ended question on the factors that influence the adoption of crisis preparedness measures were analyzed using content analysis.

Pilot testing, validity and reliability tests

The questionnaire was pilot tested using an appropriate number of meeting planners to test the clarity of the content of the questionnaire and estimate of completion time. Meeting planners for the pilot test were drawn from meeting planner colleagues known to the researcher. Every effort was made to ensure diversity of demographics among pilot study participants. For example, participants with different levels of experience and representing different meetings industry segments were selected. Revisions to the questionnaire were made based on feedback from the pilot test participants.

Validity addresses the issue of whether the survey instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The content of the questionnaire used in this study was developed using elements gleaned from literature. It was further pilot tested with a sample from the population. Both of these measures assist with assuring validity. Reliability refers to the stability or consistency of the data. That is, reliability ensures that the survey instrument will measure the same thing consistently. Cronbach's alpha will be used in the analysis to determine internal consistency of the scales used in the questionnaire.

Summary

The final framework for crisis prepared meetings developed in this study through literature review and the Delphi panel is not a plug-and-play sample crisis preparedness

program in its entirety. Rather, it is intended to identify the dimensions of crisis preparedness that meeting planners need to adopt and implement if their meetings are to be crisis prepared and not crisis prone. The quantitative data analysis further examines the extent to which the recommended crisis measures are currently being adopted by meeting planners, the elements that influence their adoption, and the relationship of meeting planners' professional characteristics to the implementation of specific crisis measures. While there are ample opportunities for additional data collection, this unique study provides a foundational basis for future studies as well as valuable guidance for meeting planners to immediately assess their crisis preparedness.

CHAPTER 4

CORE CRISIS PREPAREDNESS MEASURES ADOPTED BY MEETING PLANNERS

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study was to determine the core crisis preparedness measures that meeting planners should adopt and those that they actually adopt for their meetings.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey was administered to meeting planners to determine how frequently they implemented each of 40 identified crisis preparedness measures for the meetings that they plan. Principal component analysis was used to reduce the number of variables to a more manageable number for future analysis.

Findings – 475 usable surveys were collected. Overall indications were that meeting planners do not consistently implement crisis preparedness measures for their meetings. Principal component analysis extracted five core crisis preparedness measures accounting for 66.6% of the variance: procedural/technical, relationship-oriented, resource allocation, internal assessment, and expert services.

Research limitations/implications – While respondent characteristics varied, nearly half of respondents were association meeting planners. Most meetings planned by respondents are in North America.

Practical implications - The findings demonstrated the lack of consistent crisis preparedness by meeting planners and a need for further research.

Originality/value – The findings of this study should be of interest to meeting planners and those who provide education and training to meeting planners. The need for crisis preparedness in today's world has never been clearer and yet meeting planners are not proactive.

Key words – Meeting planner, crisis preparedness, meeting, crisis, safety

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Introduction

Crisis, disaster, and emergency management are relatively new (and growing) research areas, with a bulk of the organizational crisis literature published only in the last few decades. To date, almost none of it has focused specifically on the meetings industry and what has been published largely lacks an empirical research basis (Kline & Smith, 2006). Research on tourism disasters focuses primarily on the tourist destination (see for example Drabek, 1968, 1994, 1995, 1996; Drabek, 2000; Faulkner, 2001). Additionally, there is a body of research focused on hotel safety and security features, but only a small portion of it is written from the meeting planners' perspective (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Weaver & Oh, 1993). In fact, only one empirical study to date focused on crisis management by meeting planners (Kline & Smith, 2006), despite the fact that meeting planners plan the

meetings and managing them on-site and are thus in the best position to make and monitor crisis preparedness plans.

In spite of the vulnerability of meeting attendees and the likelihood that they will turn to meeting planners for guidance in a crisis, less than half of meeting planners ever prepare a risk management plan for their meetings (Event Solutions, 2007; Kline & Smith, 2006). Those who do prepare a risk management plan are not consistent in doing so. In fact, only 17.6% prepare a risk management plan for every one of the meetings they plan or manage (Event Solutions, 2007).

It is not that meeting planners and attendees do not think crisis preparedness is important. Prior studies have established the importance of safety and security to travelers generally (Himmelberg, 2004; Mariner, 1995), to business men and business women (McCleary et al., 1994), to older travelers (defined as over-50) (Wuest et al., 1998), and to meeting planners (Hilliard & Baloglu, in press; Hinkin & Tracey, 2003a, 2003b; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Weaver & Oh, 1993). However, these studies focused primarily on the safety and security features of hotels rather than the crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners themselves.

Overview of the Meetings Industry

Nearly everyone has attended a meeting, convention, exhibition, or corporate incentive program. Yet few people think about the people who actually do the months—and sometimes years—of planning and on-site management of these events. There is an unconscious assumption on the part of many meeting attendees that meetings "just happen." Thus meetings are to some degree "a hidden industry" (Convention Industry Council, 2005, p. 6). The growth and development of the meetings industry over the last

20-30 years is evidenced by the number and size of meetings industry associations and the development of meetings and events curriculum at universities all over the world.

To those working in, teaching in, and researching the hospitality and tourism industries, however, the meetings industry is recognized as a large and important component of overall hospitality and tourism. After all, meetings are held in hotels, attendees spend money in a tourism destination, and often travel by air to arrive at the meeting. Of the $67.92 billion in direct spending on meetings, exhibitions, conventions, and incentive travel programs (collectively, "meetings") in 2004, 35% was for hotels, 24% for airlines, and 14% was for restaurants and catering (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

Organizational Crisis Management

One only needs watch the news to be aware of crises that occur around the world. Crises like the terrorist attacks on the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower and Oberoi Trident Hotels in Mumbai, India and the 7.9-magnitude earthquake in Chengdu, China are two of the most memorable and devastating crises in recent memory. Some experts believe that the past few decades have been more crisis ridden than prior decades (Faulkner, 2001). This may be partially explained by the phenomena that one crisis may simultaneously trigger additional crises. For example, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 triggered a crisis in the airline industry and in tourism (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). Because of the impacts these and other crises have had on organizations and people alike, there has been movement in recent years toward establishing standards for crisis planning as a way of ensuring the quality of crisis preparedness (Alexander, 2005). While some guidelines for crisis planning exist, they vary in content and context (see for example

Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993; National Fire Protection Association, 2007).

The inconsistency in published standards no doubt contributed to the recent passing of a U.S. federal law calling for the establishment of a voluntary private sector preparedness certification program through cooperation of corporate professionals, insurance companies, and others in the private sector (Raisch, 2007). The law calls for the Department of Homeland Security to oversee the development of an all-hazards preparedness and business continuity program certification ("Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007," 2007). The law specifically mentions the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (2007) as an example of "a common set of criteria for preparedness, disaster management, emergency management, and business continuity programs" to be developed [Sec. 524(d)]. It is for this reason that the current study uses the NFPA 1600 as one of the main comparison documents for developing the list of measures to be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program.

As independent research areas, both the nature of meetings and organizational crisis preparedness have been researched and analyzed from various perspectives. As an empirical step toward encouraging crisis preparedness for meetings as a research area, this study sought to combine the constructs of crisis preparedness and meeting management. As a practical step toward providing assistance to meeting planners in becoming better prepared for crises, this study sought to establish a baseline of what meeting planners should do to make their meetings crisis prepared.

Research Approach / Survey Design

The purpose of this study was to determine the core crisis preparedness measures adopted by meeting planners. The three research questions identified were:

1. What crisis preparedness measures should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?
2. To what extent are meeting planners adopting the measures in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for the meetings that they plan?
3. What are the core crisis preparedness measures being used by meeting planners?

This research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase a comprehensive crisis preparedness program was developed using both a literature review and Delphi techniques. Research question one was answered using this methodology. The detail of the methodology used is described in the next section.

The second phase was to develop a survey to administer to a sample of meeting planners. The first part of the survey collected information about the professional characteristics of the respondents and the meetings that they plan. The second part of the survey asked respondents to indicate the frequency with which they implement the 40 distinct crisis preparedness measures identified in the study. This portion of the survey included a five-point Likert scale [1 = Never (not for any meetings) to 5 = Always (for every meeting)].

Research Question One – What Crisis Preparedness Measures Should be Included in a Comprehensive Crisis Preparedness Program for Meetings?

To determine what crisis preparedness measures should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings, a conceptual framework was developed using key resources from industry literature and modified using a Delphi panel.

Pearson & Mitroff (1993) developed a "Crisis Management Strategic Checklist" with 29 specific crisis preparedness action steps in five categories: strategic, technical and structural, evaluation and diagnostic, communication, and psychological and cultural (p. 58). The elements in this checklist overlap substantially with elements addressed in other crisis preparedness guiding documents such as the FEMA 141 Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993) and the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (National Fire Protection Association, 2007). For example, all three documents mention: the importance of crisis training, the use of exercises or simulations for testing the plan, use of a crisis team, inventorying internal resources, establishing a crisis operations center, conducting a risk assessment, managing the media, consulting with outside groups, and learning from past crises. Only NFPA 1600, however, mentions using an incident command system, a mitigation strategy, and mutual aid and assistance plans. These unique elements are probably due to its unique application to fire protection. NFPA 1600 (2007) is also the only one that specifies that the crisis plan should be shared with stakeholders, an important element for meetings because the stakeholders in question may include meeting facilities and attendees (National Fire Protection Association, 2007). Other crisis preparedness elements were mentioned in two of the three documents.

Delphi panel. Combining the overlapping and unique elements from Pearson & Mitroff (1993), NFPA 1600 (National Fire Protection Association, 2007), and FEMA 141 (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993) yielded 38 unique crisis preparedness measures. These measures were then rephrased to relate to meetings and were submitted to a Delphi panel of meetings industry and risk management experts for review and revision. Through the Delphi process, a final list of 40 crisis preparedness measures were gleaned and organized into the five general areas provided by Pearson & Mitroff (1993) (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Comprehensive Crisis Preparedness Program Framework for Meetings

Strategic Actions
1. Integrate crisis management into meetings department statements of purpose.
2. Include crisis management as part of the organization's strategic meetings management program.
3. Form a crisis management external advisory committee including people from outside the organization (e.g., meeting destination and facility representatives, consultants, attorney, insurance representative, law enforcement, etc. as appropriate).
4. Establish a crisis management training and education program for meetings department staff, executive staff, and other organizational staff who will be on-site at meetings.
5. Test the crisis management plan with simulations (e.g., tabletop exercises).
Technical and Structural Actions
6. Form a crisis management team, including both long-term and event-specific internal personnel as indicated by the threat and vulnerability assessment.
7. Dedicate a budget to crisis management activities as needed.
8. Review, evaluate, and update the crisis plan as needed (e.g., before each meeting, to reflect changes in regulations or laws, after crises have occurred).
9. Identify and inventory internal resources and capabilities (e.g., personnel skills, equipment, training, etc.).
10. Designate an on-site crisis operations center and an alternate crisis operations center for each meeting.
11. Establish a working relationship with outside experts and consultants in crisis management as needed to supplement internal resources.

12. Ensure that there is an off-site data back-up system and data privacy program for critical meeting data.
13. Create a written crisis management plan for each meeting.
14. Integrate crisis management into the planning and management process for meetings.
15. Create a strategy for minimizing the impact of a crisis on meetings.
16. Discuss crisis preparedness and response capabilities with meeting facilities, destination representatives, and other suppliers and address these in event facility documents, such as RFPs, site selection checklists, and contracts.
17. Develop and coordinate the meeting crisis management plan with key external stakeholders such as meeting facilities and vendors.
18. Develop methods to inform meeting attendees about appropriate crisis prevention and response measures (e.g., emergency contact information, collecting medical emergency information on registration forms, posting and announcing evacuation routes, etc.).
19. Develop an incident command system supported by a staff organizational chart to direct, control, and coordinate crisis response (ICS includes command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration roles).
20. Ensure that the crisis plans for meetings properly integrate into any crisis and/or business continuity plans for the entire organization.
Evaluation and Diagnostic Actions
21. Review internal meeting documentation and procedures (e.g., such as registration forms, travel policies, RFP processes, etc.) and modify as needed to include crisis preparedness.
22. Conduct a legal and financial threat, vulnerability, and capability audit for each meeting.
23. Review insurance with insurance representative and modify coverage as needed to address crisis contingencies.
24. Conduct a threat and vulnerability assessment for each meeting.
25. Conduct a capability assessment to determine the external resources available in the meeting destination and venue to respond to a crisis.
26. Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities and have a system for addressing early warning signals.
27. Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises.
Communication Actions
28. Conduct media training with meeting and executive staff.
29. Communicate information about large meetings with local law enforcement and emergency response entities (e.g., police, fire, etc.) as well as the destination representative (e.g., convention and visitors bureau, tourism bureau).
30. Establish an emergency communication system for communication within staff (on-site and at the office), and with vendors, venue, and destination representatives to be used in the event of a crisis.
31. Establish a communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis (e.g., with members, meeting participants, their families, etc.)
Psychological and Cultural Actions
32. Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management.

33. Establish or improve relationships with oppositional or risky groups (e.g., activist, striking, or picketing groups), as appropriate.
34. Improve crisis management communication to top management.
35. Improve crisis management communication to all staff in the meetings department as well as those outside the meetings department who will be on-site.
36. Communicate the importance of crisis management to all staff in the organization.
37. Improve crisis management communication to meeting participants.
38. Provide training to the organization's staff regarding the human and emotional impacts of crises.
39. Identify appropriate psychological services for staff and/or attendees to call upon in the event of a crisis (e.g., grief counseling, stress/anger management).
40. Conduct post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders as part of an overall crisis preparedness program evaluation.

These 40 crisis preparedness measures comprised the second section of the survey. The survey was administered to meeting planner respondents who were Professional (meeting planner) members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Of the 3,240 Professional members of PCMA, 63% self-identify as meeting executives, meeting managers, or plan meetings as a major component of their positions (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). Additionally, it was sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of meeting planners. Of the 564 total surveys that were ultimately collected, 89 were deleted due to insufficient response. This resulted in 475 usable surveys.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Nearly half (49.7%) of the survey respondents were association meeting planners, while the other half were divided between corporate (18.3%), government (12.4%), and independent meeting planners (19.4%). The large proportion of association meeting planners is likely due to PCMA's membership which is reputed to be predominately

association meeting planners. In other characteristics, respondents represented a range of experience, professional characteristics, and meeting experience. Respondents were nearly evenly split with approximately half (47.2%) having 10 years or less experience and 50.3% having more than 10 years of experience. Likewise, 48.8% of respondents have no professional meetings industry certification, meaning the other half of respondents have one or more certifications.

A large number of respondents (49.5%) work for small organizations (<50 employees), which likely means they have fewer resources available for crisis preparedness and planning. The number of meetings they plan per year varies widely, with approximately half (47.7%) planning more than 20 meetings per year. The largest meeting planned by nearly half (49.2%) of respondents includes more than 1000 people. Respondents plan meetings mainly in North America. This is likely because PCMA is largely a national (rather than international) organization, so its members may be less likely to plan meetings outside North America than members of some other internationally based organizations. Of the respondents, 38.9% have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting. Further characteristics are compiled in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Respondent Characteristics Statistics (n=475)

Characteristic		Frequency	%
Organization type			
	Association/non-profit	236	49.7
	Corporation	87	18.3
	Government	59	12.4
	Independent/third-party or consultant	92	19.4
	Missing data	1	.2
		475	100%
Years of meetings industry experience			
	1-5 years	95	20.0
	6-10 years	129	27.2
	11-15 years	90	18.9
	16-20 years	65	13.7
	20 or more years	85	17.7
	Missing data	12	2.5
	Total		100%
Professional certification (may hold more than one)			
	None	232	
	CMP	184	
	CMM	21	
	CSEP	0	
	CEM	4	
	Other	17	
Size of organization (number of employees)			
	Less than 10	111	23.4
	11-50	107	22.5
	51-100	63	13.3
	101-1000	101	21.3
	More than 1000	91	18.2
	Missing data	2	.4
		475	100%
Number of off-site meetings per year			
	Fewer than 10	121	25.5
	10-20	119	25.1
	21-55	109	22.9
	56 or more	118	24.8
	Missing data	8	1.7
		475	100%
Size of largest meeting			
	1-400 people	126	26.5
	401-1000 people	110	23.2
	1001-3275 people	117	24.6
	3276 or more people	117	24.6
		5	1.1
		475	100%
Location of meetings			
	North America	470	
	Europe	129	
	South or Latin America	91	

	Asia-Pacific	72	
	Other	6	
Previously experienced a crisis at a meeting			
	No	288	60.0%
	Yes	185	38.9%
	Missing data	2	.4%
		475	100%

Research Question 2 – To What Extent are Meeting Planners Adopting the Measures in a Comprehensive Crisis Preparedness Program for Meetings?

The mean frequency of implementation by respondents of each of the 40 crisis preparedness measures was analyzed (see Table 4.3). Only one measure was found to have a mean greater than 3 (which was the middle of the five-point Likert scale between 1=Never and 5=Always), suggesting that meeting planners do not consistently implement any of the crisis preparedness measures for all of their meetings. That off-site data back-up and data privacy is the most frequently implemented may reflect a proactive stance by an organization's IT department rather than by meeting planners themselves.

Table 4.3

Frequency of Adoption of Crisis Preparedness Measures by Meeting Planners

Crisis Preparedness Measures Meeting Planners Are Adopting	
Crisis Preparedness Measures	Mean 1=Never and 5=Always
Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	3.24
Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	2.90
Address crisis preparedness in event facility documents	2.90
Review insurance	2.89
Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	2.86
Communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to all staff in the organization	2.80
Legal and financial audit for each meeting	2.76
Crisis management as part of strategic meeting management program	2.73
Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	2.68
Review internal meeting documentation and procedures for crisis preparedness	2.67
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-	2.65

site staff	
Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	2.63
Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	2.58
Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	2.54
Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	2.52
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	2.51
Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	2.50
Inform local law enforcement and destination representative about meeting	2.48
Inventory internal resources and capabilities	2.46
Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	2.46
Written crisis management plan for each meeting	2.37
Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	2.37
Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	2.36
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	2.34
Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	2.34
Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	2.33
Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	2.29
Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	2.26
Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	2.25
Ongoing crisis management training and education for staff	2.15
Crisis management team	2.08
Media training for meeting and executive staff	2.07
Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	2.06
Crisis management advisory committee	2.00
Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	1.98
Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	1.89
Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	1.86
Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	1.85
Crisis management budget	1.78
Test crisis management plan with simulations	1.52
Overall Mean	**2.4**

Research Question 3 – What are the Core Crisis Preparedness Measures Being Used by Meeting Planners?

Principal component analysis. In order to identify the *core* crisis preparedness measures for meetings, a principal component analysis of the frequency of implementation of the 40 crisis preparedness measures was run. Data were first explored for possible entry errors and outliers as well as significant violations of normal distribution. Factor analysis, employing principal component analysis with varimax

rotation, was performed to reduce the number of crisis preparedness measures into meaningful dimensions. Like factor analysis, principal component analysis attempts to produce a smaller number of linear combinations of the original variables to explain most of the variability in the components analysis. In principal component analysis, "components" reflect the common and unique variance of the all of the variables, while in factor analysis a mathematical model is used to analyze only the shared variance. The terms are often used interchangeably (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Two statistical measures were used to determine whether the data was suitable for this analysis: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) determines if the sample is adequate and Barlett's test of sphericity tests for correlations among variables. The Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p<.05$) for the principal component analysis to be considered appropriate. The KMO index should be at least 0.6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In the final analysis, Bartlett's was significant at $p<.001$ and KMO was 0.967.

A factor with an eigenvalue greater than one was the basis for determining which factors were retained. In the initial analysis, three of the 40 measures did not load on any factor: (29) communication with law enforcement, (16) discuss crisis preparedness with facilities and destinations, and (9) identify and inventory internal resources. An additional two measures loaded on two different factors with eigenvalues greater than one: (6) form a crisis management team and (2) integrate crisis management as part of the organization's strategic meeting management program (SMMP). Ultimately, these five measures were omitted because they did not significantly change the explained variance (65.59% in the first analysis, 66.7% in the second analysis). However, these five measures may be important as recommended measures. The principal component

analysis was run on the 35 remaining characteristics. Five factors were retained that explained 66.6% of the variance explained from principal component analysis (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Principal Component Analysis Results

Crisis Preparedness Measures	*F1*	*F2*	*F3*	*F4*	*F5*	*E*
Technical						
Ongoing crisis management training and education for staff	**.517**	.327	.476	.175	.074	
Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	**.723**	.090	.448	.160	.116	
Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	**.740**	.159	.245	.139	.204	
Written crisis management plan for each meeting	**.780**	-.022	.296	.235	.096	
Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	**.753**	.074	.317	.323	.189	
Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	**.609**	.149	.345	.382	.254	
Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	**.584**	.177	.317	.411	.112	
Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	**.544**	.311	.038	.222	.311	
Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	**.710**	.313	.297	.138	.164	
Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	**.548**	.325	.395	.165	.310	
Review internal meeting documentation and procedures for crisis preparedness	**.515**	.234	.219	.364	.334	
Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	**.620**	.283	.066	.176	.338	
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	**.534**	.427	.205	.409	.034	
Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	**.689**	.294	.148	.154	.187	
Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	**.551**	.356	.238	.461	.033	

Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	**.612**	.453	.167	.412	.079	
Communicate the importance of crisis management to all staff	**.624**	.444	.089	.322	.148	
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-site staff	**.714**	.411	.116	.310	.060	*17.60*
Relationship-oriented						
Media training for meeting and executive staff	.152	**.570**	.239	.126	.304	
Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	.138	**.540**	.231	.308	.049	
Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	.285	**.750**	.245	.176	.039	
Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	.178	**.776**	.202	-.002	.141	
Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	.275	**.630**	.257	.332	.052	*1.88*
Resource Allocation						
Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	.431	.194	**.543**	.052	.139	
Crisis management advisory committee	.281	.208	**.630**	.168	.093	
Test crisis management plan with simulations	.164	.405	**.708**	.126	-7.871E-5	
Crisis management budget	.166	.121	**.672**	.285	.147	
Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	.263	.318	**.617**	.159	.142	*1.503*
Internal Assessment						
Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	.314	.144	.272	**.716**	.245	
Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	.418	.164	.194	**.579**	.259	
Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	.367	.288	.160	**.668**	.243	
Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	.287	.240	.199	**.676**	.247	*1.276*
Expert Services						
Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	.300	.092	.017	.010	**.709**	
Legal and financial audit for each meeting	.032	.099	.174	.248	**.700**	
Review insurance	.235	.082	.120	.261	**.721**	*1.065*
Total variance explained = 66.6%	50.3	5.4	4.3	3.6	3.0	

Loading greater than .5 are in bold.
E = eigenvalue

Principal component analysis yielded five factors described as (1) procedural/technical, (2) relationship-oriented, (3) resource allocation, (4) internal assessment, and (5) expert services. The first factor extracted, "procedural/technical," included 17 of the crisis preparedness measures and accounted for 50.3% of the 66.6% variance explained. The second factor extracted, "relationship-oriented," included five of the crisis preparedness measures and accounted for 5.4% of the 66.6% variance explained. The third factor extracted, "resource allocation," included five of the crisis preparedness measures and accounted for 4.3% of the 66.6% variance explained. The fourth factor extracted, "internal assessment," included four of the crisis preparedness measures and accounted for 3.6% of the 66.6% variance explained. "Expert services" was the final factor and included three of the crisis preparedness measures and accounted for 3.0% of the 66.6% variance explained.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the core crisis preparedness measures adopted by meeting planners. Overall implementation of the suggested 40 item program is poor with an average implementation of only 60% (mean = 2.4, on a 1 to 5 scale). Among the core crisis preparedness measures identified in the study, the meeting planners are implementing expert services at the rate of approximately 24% higher than the average implementation for all suggested programs. Similarly, procedural/technical issues are implemented about 5% more than the average. However, the relationship-oriented and resource allocated related programs, on an average, are being implemented

about 20% less than the mean for all implementation. Internal assessment is implemented at the same rate as the overall average. This indicates that a great deal more effort should be placed on communication, which is a major element of the relationship-oriented measure, and effort in both time and money, as part of resource allocation.

Future research should analyze the extent to which meeting planners should be implementing these measures and comparing the recommended program with the actual implementation by meeting planners. With the five core factors now identified, future studies can be undertaken to explore how meeting planner and meeting characteristics influence the adoption of crisis preparedness measures. Additionally, from a practical standpoint, these five factors can also be used to begin to develop educational materials for meeting planners so that they can improve their crisis preparedness, thereby improving the safety and security of their meetings and meeting attendees.

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CHAPTER 5

ELEMENTS THAT INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRISIS PREPAREDNESS MEASURES BY MEETING PLANNERS

Abstract

This study sought to determine how crisis prepared meeting planners are for meetings and determine the elements that influence the implementation of core crisis preparedness measures. Professional meeting planners were surveyed and the differences in crisis preparedness based on characteristics of their organization, experience and meetings were analyzed. Significance differences were found. Additionally, ten categories of elements influencing the adoption of crisis preparedness measures were identified, as were ten categories influencing the failure to adopt. The findings of this study should be of interest to organizations and meeting planners in identifying and overcoming gaps in their crisis preparedness programs.

Key words – Meeting planner, crisis preparedness, meeting, crisis

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Introduction

In August 1999, a tornado ripped through Salt Lake City just as the Outdoor Retailer Convention was completing set up. One person was killed, several hundred were injured, and the convention center suffered a quarter of a million dollars' worth of damage (Mushenko, 2000). In February 2006, a convention center roof collapsed under the weight of accumulated snow, killing 66 participants in an exposition and injuring another 150 (Bernstein, 2006). In May 2006, a destination management company failed to bring two corporate meeting attendees back from a tour. The two attendees were lost and stranded on an 8,500 foot high mountain without the proper attire or gear for three days. A media storm ensued (Baraban, 2006). These are just a few of many examples of crises that have occurred at meetings in recent years.

Crisis preparedness and business continuity literature focuses on the need of a business to prepare for crises that occur in the organization. Because most businesses do not move their entire operations on a regular basis, crisis preparedness measures are typically structured to apply to business operations that occur on an ongoing basis in the same facility, city, and country. Conversely, by their very nature meetings are business operations that move on a regular basis. Meeting attendees are particularly vulnerable in a crisis because, like other tourists and business travelers, meeting attendees are often unfamiliar with the facility and destination in which a meeting is held. Just as hotel guests are likely to look to hotels for guidance in a crisis (Drabek, 2000), meeting attendees are likely to turn to meeting planners.

Meeting Planners

The Democratic National Convention, the annual International Council of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE) conference, and the Consumer Electronics Show are all examples of meetings. Despite the visibility of events like these, many people fail to see or understand the industry that has been created to plan, service, and support meetings, exhibitions, conferences, and incentive programs.

A recent economic impact report found that the meetings industry generated an estimated $122.31 billion in direct spending in 2004. The meetings industry supports 1.71 million jobs and 32% of all travel and tourism jobs in the U.S. (Convention Industry Council, 2005). Association meetings alone represent approximately two-thirds of meetings industry spending in the U.S., so although non-profit, the association segment is a particularly important part of the meetings industry (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

The entities that organize meetings often invest a great deal of money into meetings. A recent survey of meeting planners indicated that 20% of the organizations for which the respondents worked had annual convention and meeting budgets of $2.5 million or more. There is clearly a return on this investment for many organizations. A finding from the same survey reveals that income from meetings accounted for one-third of the organization's annual income for respondents, underscoring the financial importance of meetings to organizations (Russell, 2007). This figure has remained relatively constant since 1992 (Connell, 2002). Although meetings vary in size and scope, another indicator that meetings are big business is the survey finding that meeting

planners expect their organizations to plan an average of 194 different meetings with an average duration of 2.6 days in 2008 (Meeting Professionals International, 2008).

Crisis Management

The four elements of crisis management are (1) preparedness, (2) response, (3) recovery, and (4) mitigation (Mileti, 1999). Much of the existing research on crisis management focuses on response or recovery. In the tourism field, recovery is a particularly prevalent area of crisis management research (see for example Hall et al., 2003). The need for research to focus specifically on what should be done to prepare for crises, however, is established in the literature. Mileti's (1999) suggestion for future research topics includes (1) which preparedness activities are undertaken by private sector organizations and (2) whether some organizational strategies result in more comprehensive preparedness than others. There is also the suggestion that the trend of nearly simultaneous crises over the last 20 years is not a coincidence and is a trend that can be expected to be continued (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). As a practical matter, mainstream crisis and disaster scholars encourage researchers to collaborate with those who put crisis management measures into effect (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Crisis and disaster scholars have remarked that the number of disasters has seemed to increase in the last few decades as the environment has become increasingly "turbulent and crisis prone" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 135). These crises and disasters range from natural disasters to systems failures and human-caused incidents. Mitroff (2002) created a timeline of 36 major worldwide crises during the period just between the years of 1979 and 2002 including several earthquakes, the Tylenol product tampering, and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The focus in this study was on organizational crises, which

are defined as low-probability, high-impact events that threaten the viability of an organization (Pearson & Clair, 1998). At its best, crisis management results in saved lives. At its least, crisis management results in the protection of the ongoing operations of an organization.

Crisis Preparedness for Events and Meetings

The same crisis can have different connotations depending on perspective. An example is a major disaster like Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This disaster can be viewed as a catastrophic natural disaster with widespread sociological and geographic impact, a tourism crisis, and an organizational crisis in hospitality and meetings contexts. To some extent, the crisis categorization depends on through whose eyes the crisis is viewed. For example, Extol is a Pennsylvania software company which was forced to cancel a user conference scheduled in New Orleans because of Hurricane Katrina (Kovaleski, 2005). While the hurricane was not life threatening to Extol's employees or meeting attendees, having to cancel and rebook a meeting because of a natural disaster can become a business and financial crisis for organizations in Extol's situation. This is especially true if the organization does not have event cancellation insurance or the meeting planner does not have an effective means for making decisions about the cancellation and rebooking of the meeting in the face of a crisis. A more direct example of an organizational crisis resulting from Hurricane Katrina is the extensive damage to New Orleans hotels and the experience of employees and guests who were caught at the hotels during the hurricane. Yet meetings industry trade press also focused on the gravity of issues like the financial impact of the 195 meetings that were canceled at the Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans between the hurricane and March 31, 2006, and the lack of staff to

run the hotel and support meetings after recovery and renovation was completed (Kovaleski, 2006). All are examples of organizational crises in the various contexts of tourism, hospitality, and meetings industry.

Considering the value that we as a society place on human life and wellness, it is not surprising that there is a body of research on crisis preparedness and management. Considering the financial and business importance of meetings to organizations, it is surprising that more research has not been done on what organizations do to ensure the success of meetings and the safety and well-being of meeting attendees. This study attempted to provide one of the first forays into what elements influence the level of crisis preparedness meetings are with the practical hope that this knowledge could begin to fill the gaps in preparedness.

Research Approach/Survey Design

The purpose of this study was to analyze the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. Two research questions were identified:

1. How is the adoption of the core crisis preparedness measures related to the characteristics of meeting planners and their meetings?
2. What are the elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?

To address these research questions, a survey was developed to assess the current crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners. The crisis preparedness measures in the survey were determined through a review of the literature and then submitted to a Delphi panel for modification (see Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, Palakurthi,

Leong, & Johnson, 2009). The final list of measures included 40 items which were organized into the five categories of Pearson & Mitroff's (1993) "Crisis Management Strategic Checklist." The first part of the survey collected professional information about the meeting planner respondents and the meetings they plan, the second part of the survey asked respondents to identify the frequency with which they implement each of the identified crisis preparedness measures for their meetings (1=Never to 5=Always). The final part of the survey included two open-ended questions, asking respondents to identify the elements that contributed to their adoption or lack of adoption of a full complement of crisis preparedness measures.

The survey was administered to meeting planner respondents who were Professional (meeting planner) members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Of the 3,240 Professional members of PCMA, 63% self-identify as meeting executives, meeting managers, or plan meetings as a major component of their positions (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). Thus there were approximately 2,041 people included in the sample. The survey was then sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of 1,500 meeting planners. Two-hundred and forty surveys were returned from PCMA and 324 were returned from MiForum. Of the 564 total surveys that were ultimately collected, 89 were eliminated due to insufficient information. This resulted in 475 usable surveys.

The differences in the means of the implementation levels of the core crisis preparedness measures (research question 1) between specific meeting planner characteristics and the characteristics of the meetings they plan were evaluated using descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and ANOVA. Then, the elements that influence

the adoption (or lack of adoption) of the full complement of crisis preparedness program measures by respondents (research question 2) was evaluated using content analysis of the open-ended questions.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Nearly half (49.7%) of the survey respondents were association meeting planners, while the other half were divided between corporate (18.3%), government (12.4%), and independent meeting planners (19.4%). The large proportion of association meeting planners is likely due to PCMA's membership which is reputed to be predominately association meeting planners. In other characteristics, respondents represented a range of experience, professional characteristics, and meeting experience. Respondents were nearly evenly split with approximately half (47.2%) having 10 years or less experience and 50.3% having more than 10 years of experience. Likewise, 48.8% of respondents have no professional meetings industry certification, meaning the other half of respondents have one or more certifications.

A large number of respondents (49.5%) work for small organizations (<50 employees), which likely means they have fewer resources available for crisis preparedness and planning. The number of meetings they plan per year varies widely, with approximately half (47.7%) planning more than 20 meetings per year. Likewise, the size of meetings ranges widely. The largest meeting planned by nearly half (49.2%) of respondents includes more than 1000 people. Respondents plan meetings mainly in North America. This is likely because PCMA is largely a national (rather than international) organization, so its members may be less likely to plan meetings outside

North America than members of some other internationally based organizations. 38.9% have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting.

Research Question 1 – Relationship between Crisis Preparedness and Meeting Planner Characteristics

In a previous article, the 40 crisis preparedness measures used in this study were reduced to five factors using principal component analysis in order to identify the *core* crisis preparedness measures for meetings (Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, & Palakurthi, 2009). Factor analysis, employing principal component analysis with varimax rotation, was performed to reduce the number of crisis preparedness measures into meaningful dimensions. Bartlett's was significant at $p < .001$ and KMO was 0.967. A factor with an eigenvalue greater than one was the basis for determining which factors were retained. Five factors were retained that explained 66.6% of the variance explained from principal component analysis (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Core Crisis Preparedness Measures Based on Principal Component Analysis

Crisis Preparedness Measures	*F1*	*F2*	*F3*	*F4*	*F5*	*E*
Technical						
Ongoing crisis management training and education for staff	**.517**	.327	.476	.175	.074	
Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	**.723**	.090	.448	.160	.116	
Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	**.740**	.159	.245	.139	.204	
Written crisis management plan for each meeting	**.780**	-.022	.296	.235	.096	
Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	**.753**	.074	.317	.323	.189	
Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	**.609**	.149	.345	.382	.254	

Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	**.584**	.177	.317	.411	.112	
Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	**.544**	.311	.038	.222	.311	
Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	**.710**	.313	.297	.138	.164	
Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	**.548**	.325	.395	.165	.310	
Review internal meeting documentation and procedures for crisis preparedness	**.515**	.234	.219	.364	.334	
Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	**.620**	.283	.066	.176	.338	
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	**.534**	.427	.205	.409	.034	
Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	**.689**	.294	.148	.154	.187	
Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	**.551**	.356	.238	.461	.033	
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	**.612**	.453	.167	.412	.079	
Communicate the importance of crisis management to all staff	**.624**	.444	.089	.322	.148	
Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-site staff	**.714**	.411	.116	.310	.060	*17.60*
Relationship-oriented						
Media training for meeting and executive staff	.152	**.570**	.239	.126	.304	
Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	.138	**.540**	.231	.308	.049	
Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	.285	**.750**	.245	.176	.039	
Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	.178	**.776**	.202	-.002	.141	
Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	.275	**.630**	.257	.332	.052	*1.88*
Resource Allocation						
Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	.431	.194	**.543**	.052	.139	
Crisis management advisory committee	.281	.208	**.630**	.168	.093	
Test crisis management plan with simulations	.164	.405	**.708**	.126	-7.871E-5	

Crisis management budget	.166	.121	**.672**	.285	.147	
Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	.263	.318	**.617**	.159	.142	*1.503*
Internal Assessment						
Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	.314	.144	.272	**.716**	.245	
Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	.418	.164	.194	**.579**	.259	
Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	.367	.288	.160	**.668**	.243	
Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	.287	.240	.199	**.676**	.247	*1.276*
Expert Services						
Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	.300	.092	.017	.010	**.709**	
Legal and financial audit for each meeting	.032	.099	.174	.248	**.700**	
Review insurance	.235	.082	.120	.261	**.721**	*1.065*
Total variance explained = 66.6%	50.3	5.4	4.3	3.6	3.0	

Loading greater than .5 are in bold.
E = eigenvalue

Following is an analysis of the influences regarding how the adoption of these five *core* crisis preparedness measures are related to the characteristics of both the meeting planners and their meetings. A one-way between groups ANOVA was used to analyze the influence of (1) industry segments, (2) organization size, (3) number of meetings planned per year, (4) size of largest meeting planned, and (5) number of years of meeting planning experience (see Table 5.2). Because of the dual nature of the variables, an independent samples t-test was used to analyze the influence of (1) professional certification, (2) domestic versus international meetings, and (3) experience with a previous crisis at a meeting (see Table 5.3).

Influence of the Industry Segments

Four groups were identified according to the type of organization for which they plan meetings (association, corporation, government, independent). There was a statistically significant between groups difference at the $p < .05$ for four of the five core crisis preparedness measures: procedural and technical measures [$F(3, 356)=6.521$, $p=.001$], resource allocation[$F(3, 356)=5.589$, $p=.04$], internal assessment [$F(3, 356)=4.043$, $p=.03$], and expert services [$F(3, 356)=6.615$, $p=.001$]. The effect size was small for each, with eta squared ranging from 3 to 5%. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD and Scheffe' tests specified the group differences as highlighted in Table 5.2.

Influence of the Organization Size

The survey contained five categories for identifying the number of employees of the organization for which the meeting planner worked (Group 1= Less than 10 employees, Group 2= 11-50 employees, Group 3= 51-100 employees, Group 4= 101-1000 employees, Group 5= More than 1000 employees). A statistically significant between groups difference was found at the $p < .05$ level in the means for three of the five core crisis preparedness measures: resource allocation [$F(4, 354)=2.489$, $p=.043$], internal assessment [$F(4, 354)=2.530$, $p=.04$], and expert services [$F(4, 354)=4.046$, $p=.003$]. Although there were statistically significant differences, the effect size was small for each, as indicated by eta squared, 3 to 4%. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD and Scheffe' tests indicated that there was a statistically significant between groups differences as highlighted in Table 5.2.

Influence of the Number of Meetings Planned per Year.

The number of meetings planned per year was used as a basis for identifying four groups (Group 1= Fewer than 10 meetings, Group 2= 10-20 meetings, Group 3= 21-55

meetings, Group 4= 56 or more meetings). There were no statistically significant between groups differences at the p =.05 level in any the five core crisis preparedness measures: procedural and technical measures, relationship-oriented measures, resource allocation, internal assessment, and expert services (see Table 5.2).

Influence of the size of the meetings planned.

Four groups were identified according to the number of attendees at the largest meeting they plan (Group 1= 1-400 attendees, Group 2= 401-1000 attendees, Group 3= 1001-3275 attendees, Group 4= more than 3275 attendees). There was a statistically significant between groups difference at the p =.05 level in the means for four of the five core crisis preparedness measures: procedural and technical measures [$F(3, 354)=11.626$, $p=.001$], resource allocation[$F(3, 354)=2.722$, $p=.044$], internal assessment [$F(3, 354)=3.668$, $p=.013$], and expert services [$F(3, 354)=8.038$, $p=.001$]. The effect size was small to moderate, 2 to 9%, as indicated by eta squared. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD and Scheffe' tests indicated the group differences highlighted in Table 5.2.

Influence of the number of years of meeting planning experience.

The number of years of experience in meeting planning was used to divide respondents into four groups (Group 1= 0-6 years, Group 2= 7-11 years, Group 3=12-19 years, Group 4= 20+ years). There were no statistically significant between groups differences at the p =.05 level for any of the five core crisis preparedness measures: procedural and technical measures, relationship-oriented measures, resource allocation, internal assessment, and expert services (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Analysis of Variance and Post Hoc Comparisons on Meeting Characteristics

I. Industry Segment	**F**	***p***	**η^2**	**Post hoc comparison**
Procedural and technical measures	6.521	*.043*	0.05	Independent > Corporation; *Association > Corporation**
Relationship oriented measures	2.245			-
Resource allocation	5.589	*.04*	0.04	Independent > Association; Independent > Corporation
Internal assessment	4.043	*.03*	0.03	Corporation > Association; Independent > Association
Expert services	6.615	*.001*	0.05	Association >Corporation; Association>Government

**Difference identified by Tukey, but not Scheffe'*

II. Size of Organization	**F**	***p***	**η^2**	**Post hoc comparison**
Procedural and technical measures	1.585			-
Relationship oriented measures	1.969			-
Resource allocation	2.489	*.043*	0.03	*Less than 10 employees > more than 1000 employees**
Internal assessment	2.530	*.04*	0.03	*More than 1000 employees > 11-50 employees**
Expert services	4.046	*.003*	0.04	*11-50 employees > 51-100 employees*;* 11-50 employees > 101-1000 employees; 11-50 employees > More than 1000 employees

**Difference identified by Tukey, but not Scheffe'*

III. Number of Meetings	**F**	***p***	**η^2**	**Post hoc comparison**
Procedural and technical measures	1.160			-
Relationship oriented measures	1.373			-
Resource allocation	1.042			-
Internal assessment	0.110			-
Expert services	0.680			-

No significance at p<.05

IV. Size of Meetings	F	*p*	η^2	Post hoc comparison
Procedural and technical measures	11.626	*.001*	0.09	Over 3275 attendees > 1-400 attendees; Over 3275 >400-1000 attendees; Over 3275 attendees>1001-3275 attendees
Relationship oriented measures	2.352			-
Resource allocation	2.722	*.044*	0.02	No significant group differences indicated by post hoc test
Internal assessment	3.66	*.013*	0.03	1-400 attendees > 401-1000 attendees
Expert services	8.038	*.001*	0.06	*401-1000 attendees >1-400 attendees**; 1001-3275 attendees > 1-400 attendees; Over 3275 > 1-400 attendees **Difference identified with Tukey, but not Scheffe'*

V. Years Experience	F	*p*	η^2	Post hoc comparison
Procedural and technical measures	2.006			-
Relationship oriented measures	0.745			-
Resource allocation	2.048			-
Internal assessment	1.791			-
Expert services	1.961			-

No significance at p<.05

Note: Dashes indicate that it was not necessary to perform a post hoc comparison.

Of particular interest is the fact that the independent planner group had a higher mean than some of the other groups on procedural/technical measures and resource allocation. It may be tempting to explain this difference by citing the fact that it is more experienced planners who typically start their own independent planning business, however years of experience was not significant. Instead, it could be that independent planners offer a myriad of services to their clients upon request and in some sense have to offer a "higher" level of service than in-house meeting planners, so they are prepared to better implement these measures if needed.

Regarding the size of the organization, it is interesting that small organizations (11-50 employees) have a higher mean for the core crisis preparedness category of expert services than almost all of the other categories. This may be because they are large enough to know they need these specialized services, but not large enough to have someone in-house to assist with them.

Finally, it is somewhat common sense that the largest meetings (over 3275 attendees) have a higher mean than meetings of other sizes when it comes to implementing procedural/technical measures. Although crises can occur at any size meeting, more "moving parts" and people at larger events could increase the likelihood or of a crisis if crisis preparedness measures are not put into place.

Influence of professional meetings industry certification

An independent-samples t-test was used to identify significant differences in the implementation of relationship-oriented crisis preparedness measures by those with a certification (M=2.060, SD= 1.216) and those without a certification [M=1.828, SD=1.108; $t(8)=2.148$, $p<.05$]. Significant differences were also found in the

implementation of resource allocation crisis preparedness measures by those with a certification (M=1.994, SD= 1.218) and those without a certification [M=1.848, SD=1.081; t(8)=1.066, $p<.05$]. The eta squared for these factors ranged from 4% to 12%, indicating a moderate effect size (see Table 5.3).

Influence of destination of meetings planned

No significant differences were identified from an independent-samples t-test comparing the implementation of core crisis preparedness measures for meeting planners who plan international meetings (outside North America) with those who do not plan international meetings.

Influence of past crisis experience

Finally, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the implementation of core crisis preparedness measures for meeting planners who had previously experienced a crisis at a meeting with those who had not previously experienced a crisis at a meeting. As with the t-test based on professional certification, a significant difference was found in both relationship-oriented measures and resource allocation measures. Significant differences were found in the implementation of relationship-oriented crisis preparedness measures by those who have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting (M=2.116, SD=1.256) and those who have not previously experienced a crisis at a meeting [M=1.836, SD=1.101; t(8)=1.806, $p<.05$]. Significant differences were also found in the implementation of resource allocation crisis preparedness measures by those who have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting (M=2.066, SD= 1.212) and those who have not previously experienced a crisis at

a meeting [M=1.842, SD=1.103; t(8)=2.055, *p<.05*]. The effect size was large as the eta squared for both of these factors was 35% (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Independent samples t-test adoption of core crisis preparedness measures by characteristic

Professional Certification Status		With Certification		No Certification		t-value
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1	Procedural and technical measures	2.703	1.330	2.362	1.288	8.119
2	Relationship oriented measures	2.060	1.216	1.828	1.108	2.148*
3	Resource allocation	1.994	1.218	1.848	1.081	1.066*
4	Internal assessment	2.615	1.338	2.200	1.198	2.964
5	Expert services	3.160	1.450	2.813	1.458	43.375
International Meetings Planned		International meetings		No international meetings		t-value
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1	Procedural and technical measures	2.703	1.314	2.402	1.315	301
2	Relationship oriented measures	2.024	1.156	1.906	1.179	-5.130
3	Resource allocation	2.094	1.196	1.840	1.116	3.175
4	Internal assessment	2.600	1.289	2.272	1.279	32.800
5	Expert services	3.160	1.427	2.860	1.463	-8.333
Previous Crisis Experience		Experienced a previous crisis		Has not experienced a previous crisis		t-value
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1	Procedural and technical measures	2.771	1.343	2.335	1.280	6.921
2	Relationship oriented measures	2.116	1.256	1.836	1.101	1.806*
3	Resource allocation	2.066	1.212	1.842	1.103	2.055*
4	Internal assessment	2.672	1.356	2.207	1.216	3.321
5	Expert services	3.160	1.454	2.837	1.446	40.375
*Significant at p < .05						

Research Question 2 – Elements Influencing Adoption of Crisis Preparedness Measures

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Based on the assumption that no respondent implemented all 40 crisis preparedness measures for all of their meetings, respondents were asked to identify the elements that influenced their adoption (or lack of adoption) of crisis preparedness measures for meetings. A review of the literature suggested several elements that might encourage the implementation of crisis preparedness measures: regulatory compliance (Zsidisin et al., 2005), fear of liability (Drabek, 2000), fear of bad publicity (Elliott & Smith, 2006; Pearson & Clair, 1998), and unique features (of a destination, meeting, or facility for example) (Drabek, 1995).

Content analysis was used to code and analyze the responses to these open-ended questions (Krippendorff, 1980). Ten categories of elements influencing adoption and 10 categories of elements influencing lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures were identified (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5). Of those suggested by the literature, "specific risk or threat" may conform to Drabek's (1995) idea of unique features and "fear of financial or legal repercussions" clearly mirrors Drabek's (2000) fear of liability.

Table 5.4

Elements influencing adoption of crisis preparedness measures

Element	Frequency	%
Specific risk or threat	59	12.1
It is the right thing to do/best practices	48	9.9
Location of event destination or venue	42	8.6
Client or management requires crisis planning	35	7.2
Size or duration of event	34	7.0
Awareness of what other organizations do or have experienced	19	3.9
Past experience with crisis or crisis planning	16	3.3
Fear of financial or legal repercussions	11	2.3
Preparedness of the venue	10	2.1
Other • Industry experts • Security personnel • Effectiveness of program • Efficient use of resources • Size of organization • Communications • Organizational continuity	2	.4

A review of the literature also suggested several elements that might discourage or be a deterrent to the implementation of crisis preparedness measures. Among those suggested by scholars are role ambiguity (it is someone else's job) (Elliott & Smith, 2006), misplaced optimism or denial (Sattler et al., 2000; Wicks, 2001), expense (Burton et al., 1993; Mileti, 1999), a perceived or actual lack of time (Drabek, 1995) or lack of knowledge (Mileti, 1999). Each of these is reflected in the categories gleaned from content analysis of the answers to the question of which elements influence the meeting planners' failure to adopt the full complement of crisis preparedness measures.

Table 5.5

Elements influencing lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures

Element	Frequency	%
Lack of time or staff	93	19.1
Not required by management or client	68	14
Never experienced a crisis, see no reason to	62	12.7
Lack of budget	56	11.5
Lack of crisis preparedness knowledge, how to prepare	33	6.8
Size of the meeting	33	6.8
Apathy / Crisis preparedness not a priority	33	6.8
Someone else handles crisis preparedness	28	5.7
Location of the meeting	13	2.7
Other • Unaware that I need to • Contracts/waivers will protect us • Negativity/will scare attendees • Fear of liability • Venues are uncooperative	17	3.5

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the implementation of crisis preparedness measures for meetings and determine the elements that influence the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. Meetings can be critical to an organization for revenue generation, visibility, or other business purposes. From the organization's perspective, one poorly-managed crisis can result in loss of revenue, damage to reputation and image, or even failure of an organization. For this reason, those who manage or own organizations that hold meetings should consider the findings of this study part of the road map to organizational risk management.

Meeting planners have only in recent years begun to consider crisis management part of their jobs. In some organizations (such as hotels), there may be internal departments responsible for crisis management. The tendency of meeting planners has

for many years been to let the hotel or the risk management department handle these matters. Meeting professionals, however, are beginning to understand that everyone at a meeting has a role in crisis management. Understanding some the characteristics that influence crisis preparedness should alert both meeting planners and those who provide services for meetings to at least ask the right questions about crisis preparedness. This will open the dialogue to identifying gaps in crisis preparedness for meetings so that they can be overcome.

Not only are organizations at risk, but the people who attend meetings are at risk. Professionalism in the meetings industry demands that meeting planners be proficient in the area of crisis preparedness. Understanding the relationship between meeting planner characteristics and preparedness illuminates where professional educational programs and resources may need to be targeted.

This study does not claim to fully explain why meeting planners do not implement a full complement of crisis preparedness measures despite constant reminders via the news of the impacts of major crises and disasters and sadly frequent examples of the vulnerability of the hospitality and meetings industries. However, it is a start to unraveling the mystery of why meeting planners, who are responsible for planning events for hundreds and sometimes thousands of people, are not always putting the safety and well-being of those people first.

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CHAPTER 6

DEFICITS IN CRISIS PREPAREDNESS BY MEETING PLANNERS

Abstract

This study sought to identify the gaps in meeting planners' crisis preparedness programs. Meeting planners were surveyed to determine the frequency with which they implement each of 40 measures in a core crisis preparedness program for meetings. Respondents' implementation was then compared with the recommended frequency of implementation as determined by a Delphi panel and index scores were calculated. The most significant deficiencies by meeting planner respondents were budgets, post-event and post-crisis reviews, and integration into the organization's business continuity plan. Meeting planners exceeded the recommended frequency of implementation on insurance and financial and legal review.

Key words – Meeting planner, meeting, disaster, crisis prone, crisis prepared

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Introduction

Tourism and hospitality businesses are particularly vulnerable to crises and disasters because they are often physically located in geographic environments such as coastal areas or mountainous regions that are riskier than other businesses (Murphy & Bayley, 1989). They may also often be more susceptible to man-made crises and disasters in part because of the significant impact targeting tourists creates in the media. For example, Marriott hotels were among those targeted in the bombings in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2003 as well as in Islamabad, Pakistan and Mumbai, India in 2008 (Kahn, Ono, Fowler, Choudury, & Waller, 2008).

Because meetings rely on tourism and hospitality businesses to provide lodging and other services for meetings, this means that meetings, too, may be riskier than other businesses. Meeting facilities are often located in either downtown areas or resort areas such as coastal regions. Both are part of a meeting facility's appeal to meeting planners and their attendees. Both also create risk. For example, a downtown hotel or convention center is typically open to the public. This means that the meeting is subject to having strangers in its midst. Typically, this is innocuous or at most, a nuisance. However, in worst case scenarios, the strangers who have access to the meeting, its property, and the meeting attendees may be criminals or terrorists. Likewise, hotels in coastal regions and other geographically remote areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters or may make it difficult for an injured or ill meeting attendee to get the medical care he needs.

Crisis Preparedness

Much of the existing research on crisis management focuses on response or recovery. In the tourism field, recovery is a particularly prevalent area of crisis management research (see for example Hall et al., 2003). The need for research to focus specifically on what should be done to prepare for crises, however, is established in the literature. Mileti's (1999) suggestion for future research topics includes (1) which preparedness activities are undertaken by private sector organizations and (2) whether some organizational strategies result in more comprehensive preparedness than others. There is also the suggestion that the trend of numerous nearly simultaneous crises over the last 20 years is not a coincidence and is a trend that can be expected to be continued (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). As a practical matter, mainstream crisis and disaster scholars encourage researchers to collaborate with those who put crisis management measures into effect (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

For these reasons, this study focused on crisis preparedness by meeting planners rather than crisis response. Kline & Smith (2006) found that less than half of meeting planners ever prepare a risk management plan for their meetings. Those who do prepare a risk management plan are not consistent in doing so. Another study found that only 17.6% prepare a risk management plan for every one of the meetings they plan or manage (Event Solutions, 2007). Thus, determining what meeting planners should be doing to be crisis prepared and comparing what they are doing to be crisis prepared provides a helpful starting point for crisis management scholars and practitioners to help meeting planners implement best practices in crisis preparedness.

The Meetings (MICE) Industry

The U.S. meetings (MICE) industry would represent more than 1% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the U.S. if the meetings industry was included in the GDP as a separate and distinct industry. As a component of travel expenditures, the $122.31 billion in direct spending for meetings represents 24.3% of domestic travel expenditures and 77.7% of domestic business travel expenditures (Convention Industry Council, 2005). The larger percentage of business travel expenditures underscores the fact that meetings are basically "business events" as distinguished from special events which often have a non-business orientation such as those that are celebratory, cultural, or social. Thirty-five percent of the direct spending on meetings in the U.S. in 2004 was for hotels, 24% for airlines, and 14% was for restaurants and catering (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

Unfortunately it is difficult to accurately measure the scope of the meetings industry on a global basis because of inconsistent nomenclature and a lack of data (World Tourism Organization, 2006). Confronted with the difficulty of establishing the global scope and impact of the meetings industry, the World Tourism Organization (2006) commissioned a study that resulted in recommendations regarding consistent nomenclature, data collection, and analysis by tourism organizations worldwide. Until such consistent standards are met, the scope of the meetings industry worldwide has to be extrapolated from data from individual countries. For example, the finding that 50% of corporate meeting planners and 63% of U.S. based association meeting planners indicated that they would hold meetings outside the U.S. in 2006 may be an indicator of the size and scope of meetings on an international basis (Grimaldi, 2006). Likewise, a

Canadian study found that 70.2 million people attended 671,000 meetings that were held in 1,517 venues in Canada in 2006 generating 32.2 billion in spending (Meeting Professionals International Foundation Canada, 2008). Additionally, based on the creation of several international meetings industry organizations and the growth of university curriculum on meetings in Europe and Asia, it can be surmised that meetings are a large and growing industry internationally.

In practical terms, this means that thousands and perhaps millions of people worldwide are traveling to attend meetings every day. When a crisis occurs at a meeting, in proximity to a meeting, or even while traveling to a meeting, it is the meeting planner's job to be prepared to respond swiftly and authoritatively to ensure that meeting attendees are kept safe, informed, and out of harm's way.

Crisis Prone Organizations

Pauchant & Mitroff (1992, 2002) use the term "crisis prone" to describe organizations that contribute to the creation of organizational crises. The opposite of a "crisis prone" organization is a "crisis prepared" organization (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992, 2002). Crisis prone organizations prepare only for a narrow spectrum of crises if they prepare at all (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003). Crisis proneness has also been described as "organizational sickness" (Elliott & Smith, 2006, p. 293). Crisis prone organizations may prepare only for high-probability, high-consequence events and be caught completely unprepared if a low-probability, high-consequence event occurs. Conversely, crisis prepared organizations stress the importance of "crisis capabilities over crisis plans" (Mitroff & Alpasian, 2003, p. 18). That is, crisis prepared organizations understand the importance of having a comprehensive crisis preparedness program that is adaptable to

both expected and unexpected crises rather than just having a written plan that addresses only a few select crisis situations.

Research done by Mitroff & Alpasian (2003) suggests that only 5-25% of organizations are crisis prepared, leaving 75-95% of all organizations crisis prone (p. 19). While Pearson & Mitroff (1993) indicated that they have never found an organization that had adopted all of the 29 action steps in their "Strategic Crisis Management Checklist," they seem to apply the term "crisis prepared" to organizations that adopt at least one significant action in each of their five categories: strategic, technical and structural, evaluation and diagnostic, communication, and psychological and cultural. Perhaps a similar standard could be applied to meeting planners. While ideally a meeting planner would employ all or nearly all of the actions indicated in the crisis prepared meetings framework, implementing at least one in each of the major categories would contribute significantly to the crisis preparedness of their meetings and thus, to the safety of their attendees, security of their property, and protection of their organizations.

80% of companies lacking a crisis plan vanish within two years after experiencing a major crisis (Wrigley et al., 2003). On a more positive note, some authors believe that a crisis can be a catalyst for positive change in an organization (Elliott & Smith, 2006; Turner, 1976). Hopefully being crisis prepared means that positive change (e.g., a change in travel policies, more thorough site inspections of meeting venues, etc.) is more likely following a crisis than a solely negative outcome.

Research Approach / Survey Design

The purpose of this study was to identify the deficits in crisis preparedness program measures implemented by meeting planners compared to a recommended

program. To address this research question, a survey was developed to assess the current crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners. The crisis preparedness measures in the survey were determined through a review of the literature and then submitted to a Delphi panel for modification (see Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, Palakurthi et al., 2009). The final list of measures included 40 items which were organized into the five categories of Pearson & Mitroff's (1993) "Crisis Management Strategic Checklist." The first part of the survey collected professional information about the meeting planner respondents and the meetings they plan, the second part of the survey asked respondents to identify the frequency with which they implement each of the identified crisis preparedness measures for their meetings (1=Never to 5=Always).

The survey was administered to meeting planner respondents who were Professional (meeting planner) members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Of the 3,240 Professional members of PCMA, 63% self-identify as meeting executives, meeting managers, or plan meetings as a major component of their positions (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). Thus there were approximately 2,041 people included in the sample. The survey was then sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of 1,500 meeting planners. Two-hundred and forty surveys were returned from PCMA and 324 were returned from MiForum. Of the 564 total surveys that were ultimately collected, 89 were eliminated due to insufficient information. This resulted in 475 usable surveys.

In addition to collecting survey responses from the respondents, the Delphi panel members (N=10) were each asked to complete the second portion of the respondent survey, indicating on a Likert scale the frequency with which each crisis preparedness

program measure should be implemented (1 = Never to 5 = Always). This provided the basis of determining what meeting planners *should* be doing regarding crisis preparedness. The deficits in the crisis preparedness measures implemented by meeting planners were identified first by conducting independent t-tests comparing the means of the recommended frequency of implementation of each crisis preparedness measure (as recommended by the Delphi panel) with the actual implementation by respondents.

Index scores representing overall implementation by meeting planner respondents for each crisis preparedness measure were created and compared to the index scores of the Delphi panel. A gap analysis was conducted to compare the index scores of the respondents with the index scores of the Delphi panel to identify the areas of crisis preparedness in which the respondents are lacking and where they should allocate resources in order to raise their index scores. This analysis also revealed areas in which the respondents may be allocating too many resources or too much time, which is an opportunity cost that may prevent them from implementing the full complement of crisis preparedness measures.

Results and Discussion

In a previous article, the 40 crisis preparedness measures used in this study were reduced to five factors using principal component analysis in order to identify the *core* crisis preparedness measures for meetings (Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, & Palakurthi, 2009). There was a significant difference in the frequency of implementation of all 40 of the crisis preparedness measures as recommended by the Delphi panel (see Table 6.1). Meeting planner respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they implemented each of the 40 measures for their meetings (1=Never to 5=Always). The

Delphi panel was also asked to complete this section of the survey with the slightly different instruction to identify how frequently a meeting planner *should* implement each of the identified crisis preparedness measures. Means for each of the 40 crisis preparedness measures were calculated for both the respondent group and for the Delphi group (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Deficiencies in crisis preparedness ranked

Crisis Preparedness Measures		Delphi Panel		Respondents		Mean Difference
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
40	Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	4.60	.843	2.06	1.264	2.54
7	Crisis management budget	4.30	.823	1.78	1.104	2.52
20	Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	4.70	.675	2.29	1.290	2.41
1	Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	4.70	.675	2.36	1.303	2.34
4	Ongoing crisis management training and education for staff	4.40	.699	2.15	1.258	2.25
24	Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	4.40	.843	2.25	1.250	2.15
2	Crisis management as part of strategic meeting management program	4.80	.632	2.73	1.340	2.07
31	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	4.40	.699	2.34	1.187	2.06
25	Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	4.50	.850	2.45	1.273	2.05
14	Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	4.70	.675	2.68	1.348	2.02
3	Crisis management advisory committee	4.00	.816	2.00	1.243	2.00
15	Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	4.60	.699	2.63	1.308	1.97
13	Written crisis management plan for each meeting	4.30	.949	2.37	1.393	1.93
6	Crisis management team	4.00	.816	2.08	1.288	1.92
8	Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	4.40	.966	2.50	1.377	1.90
5	Test crisis management plan with simulations	3.40	.516	1.51	.909	1.89
27	Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	4.20	.919	2.33	1.339	1.87
21	Review internal meeting documentation and procedures for crisis preparedness	4.50	.707	2.66	1.305	1.84

35	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	4.30	.949	2.51	1.297	1.79
26	Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	4.30	.823	2.52	1.306	1.78
32	Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	4.30	.823	2.54	1.321	1.76
33	Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	4.00	.816	2.25	1.236	1.75
36	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-site staff	4.40	.843	2.65	1.346	1.75
11	Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	3.70	.823	1.98	1.195	1.72
17	Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	4.30	.949	2.58	1.328	1.72
16	Address crisis preparedness in event facility documents	4.60	.699	2.90	1.308	1.70
34	Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	3.50	.850	1.85	1.091	1.65
38	Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	3.50	.707	1.86	1.070	1.64
39	Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	3.50	.850	1.89	1.167	1.61
30	Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	4.50	.850	2.90	1.375	1.60
19	Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	3.90	.738	2.34	1.345	1.56
10	Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	3.90	.876	2.37	1.397	1.53
29	Inform local law enforcement and destination representative about meeting	4.00	.943	2.48	1.411	1.52
12	Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	4.70	.675	3.24	1.549	1.46
9	Inventory internal resources and capabilities	3.80	.632	2.46	1.230	1.34
28	Media training for meeting and executive staff	3.40	.516	2.07	1.268	1.33
18	Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	4.20	.919	2.87	1.378	1.33
37	Communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to all staff in the organization	4.10	.876	2.80	1.350	1.30
22	Legal and financial audit for each meeting	3.70	.949	2.76	1.420	0.94
23	Review insurance	3.60	.699	2.89	1.402	0.71
	Overall Means	**4.18**	**0.790**	**2.40**	**1.290**	**1.78**

Independent t-tests were conducted and significant differences were found for all of the 40 measures (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Independent t-tests crisis preparedness measure implementation by Delphi panel and respondents

Crisis Preparedness Measures		Respondents		Delphi Panel		t-value*
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1	Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	2.36	1.303	4.70	.675	-3.726
2	Crisis management as part of strategic meeting management program	2.73	1.340	4.80	.632	-2.924
3	Crisis management advisory committee	2.00	1.243	4.00	.816	-4.684
4	Ongoing crisis management training and education for staff	2.15	1.258	4.40	.699	-4.025
5	Test crisis management plan with simulations	1.51	.909	3.40	.516	-3.987
6	Crisis management team	2.08	1.288	4.00	.816	-4.068
7	Crisis management budget	1.78	1.104	4.30	.823	-8.968
8	Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	2.50	1.377	4.40	.966	-4.623
9	Inventory internal resources and capabilities	2.46	1.230	3.80	.632	-2.241
10	Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	2.37	1.397	3.90	.876	-2.937
11	Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	1.98	1.195	3.70	.823	-4.624
12	Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	3.24	1.549	4.70	.675	-1.670
13	Written crisis management plan for each meeting	2.37	1.393	4.30	.949	-4.347
14	Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	2.68	1.348	4.70	.675	-3.001
15	Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	2.63	1.308	4.60	.699	-3.235
16	Address crisis preparedness in event facility documents	2.90	1.308	4.60	.699	-2.791
17	Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	2.58	1.328	4.30	.949	-4.538
18	Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	2.87	1.378	4.20	.919	-2.898
19	Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	2.34	1.345	3.90	.738	-2.570
20	Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	2.29	1.290	4.70	.675	-3.919
21	Review internal meeting documentation and	2.66	1.305	4.50	.707	-3.080

	procedures for crisis preparedness					
22	Legal and financial audit for each meeting	2.76	1.420	3.70	.949	-1.996
23	Review insurance	2.89	1.402	3.60	.699	-2.000
24	Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	2.25	1.250	4.40	.843	-5.282
25	Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	2.45	1.273	4.50	.850	-4.846
26	Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	2.52	1.306	4.30	.823	-3.685
27	Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	2.33	1.339	4.20	.919	-4.452
28	Media training for meeting and executive staff	2.07	1.268	3.40	.516	-1.769
29	Inform local law enforcement and destination representative about meeting	2.48	1.411	4.00	.943	-3.248
30	Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	2.90	1.375	4.50	.850	-3.048
31	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	2.34	1.187	4.40	.699	-4.221
32	Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	2.54	1.321	4.30	.823	-3.534
33	Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	2.25	1.236	4.00	.816	-4.167
34	Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	1.85	1.091	3.50	.850	-6.846
35	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	2.51	1.297	4.30	.949	-5.143
36	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-site staff	2.65	1.346	4.40	.843	-3.479
37	Communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to all staff in the organization	2.80	1.350	4.10	.876	-2.743
38	Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	1.86	1.070	3.50	.707	-4.518
39	Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	1.89	1.167	3.50	.850	-5.079
40	Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	2.06	1.264	4.60	.843	-6.033
	*All t-tests were significant at $p < .05$					

Although all t-tests were significant at the $p < .05$ level, the magnitude of the differences in the means varied with eta-squared (η^2) ranging from .003 to .14. The crisis preparedness measures with the largest effect sizes were (7) crisis management budget (η^2=.14), (24) conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting (η^2=.055), (34) establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups (η^2=.088), and (40) post-event

and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders (η^2=.07). Mileti (1999) suggests that when it comes to the economic issues of crisis preparedness, organizations prefer easy and inexpensive measures. This may help to explain why there is such a disparity between the Delphi panel's recommendations regarding having a crisis budget and the actual allocation of budget dollars to crisis preparedness by meeting planners. Each of the other three measures with moderate effect sizes (.05 to .088) all address crisis preparedness measures that go beyond the typical meeting management process. This perception that crisis preparedness is another thing to do, rather than that it is something to be integrated into regular work tasks, creates an inertia toward crisis preparedness (Drabek, 1995).

To determine index scores for the recommended implementation of crisis preparedness programs, the Delphi panel mean for each of the 40 crisis preparedness program measures was divided by the overall mean for all of the crisis preparedness program measures and multiplied by 100, resulting in an index score for each measure. The same process was done with the respondents' responses (see Table 6.3)

Table 6.3

Index Scores of Crisis Preparedness Measures Delphi Panel and Respondents

	Crisis Preparedness Measures	Delphi Index Score (x)	Respondents Index Score (y)	Index Score Differences
Crisis Measure	Deficiencies (Bottom Right quadrant)			
7	Crisis management budget	102	74	-28
40	Post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders	110	85	-25
20	Integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization	112	95	-17
4	Ongoing crisis management training and	105	89	-16

	education for staff			
1	Crisis management part of meetings department statement of purpose	112	98	-14
24	Conduct a threat and vulnerability analysis for each meeting	105	94	-11
31	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meeting participants prior to meeting and on-site	105	97	-8
13	Written crisis management plan for each meeting	102	98	-4
27	Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises	100	97	-3
	Deficiencies Average:	**106**	**92**	**-14**
	Over-allocation of Resources (Top Left Quadrant)			
23	Review insurance	86	120	34
22	Legal and financial audit for each meeting	88	115	27
9	Communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to all staff in the organization	98	116	18
29	Inventory internal resources and capabilities	90	102	12
37	Inform local law enforcement and destination representative about meeting	95	103	8
	Over-allocation of Resources Average:	**91**	**111**	**20**
	Important Measures, Appropriate Performance (Top Right Quadrant)			
25	Conduct a capability assessment of destination and venue	107	102	-5
2	Crisis management as part of strategic meeting management program	114	113	-1
14	Integrate crisis management into meeting planning and management	112	111	-1
15	Create strategy for minimizing crisis impact on meetings	110	109	-1
8	Review, evaluate, and update crisis plan	105	104	-1
12	Off-site data back-up and data privacy program	112	135	23
18	Inform meeting attendees about crisis preparedness and response measures	100	119	19
30	Establish emergency communication system for staff and suppliers	107	120	13
16	Address crisis preparedness in event facility documents	110	120	10
36	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to meetings staff and other on-site staff	105	110	5
17	Coordinate crisis management plan with facilities, vendors, and suppliers	102	107	5

21	Review internal meeting documentation and procedures for crisis preparedness	107	111	4
26	Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities	102	105	3
32	Crisis communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis	102	105	3
35	Communicate crisis preparedness measures to executive management	102	104	2
	Important Measures, Appropriate Performance Average:	**106**	**112**	**5**
	Less Important Measures, Appropriate Performance (Bottom Left Quadrant)			
5	Test crisis management plan with simulations	81	63	-18
3	Crisis management advisory committee	95	83	-12
6	Crisis management team	95	86	-9
34	Establish relationships with oppositional or risky groups	83	77	-6
38	Training for organization staff regarding human and emotional impacts of crises	83	77	-6
11	Establish relationship with outside experts and consultants	88	82	-6
39	Identify psychological services for staff and attendees	83	78	-5
33	Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management	95	93	-2
28	Media training for meeting and executive staff	81	86	5
10	Designate on-site crisis operations center and alternate	93	98	5
19	Develop and implement an incident command system (ICS)	93	97	4
	Less Important Measures, Appropriate Performance Average:	88	84	-5

Focusing particularly on the deficiencies (those measures that the Delphi group believed should be implemented more frequently but which the respondents implemented less frequently than recommended), the greatest differences in index scores was found for (7) crisis management budget (with an index score of -28, the Delphi group recommended that this measure should be implemented at a 28% higher level than respondents were implementing it). Thus, if meeting planners want to

improve their overall crisis preparedness, more consistent allocation of budget dollars is needed. Other measures with serious deficiencies were (40) post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders (index score difference -25), (20) integrate crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for organization (index score difference -17), (4) ongoing crisis management training and education for staff (index score difference -16). With the exception of training and education, these crisis preparedness measures would not seem to require a budget allocation to be remedied, although they each would require time and communication.

The other problem area is the crisis preparedness measures for which meeting planner respondents may be over-allocating resources. Interestingly, the two measures for which the greatest index score difference exists (indicating that they may be implementing these crisis preparedness measures too frequently) are (23) review insurance (index score difference 34), (22) legal and financial audit for each meeting (index score difference 27). It is highly unlikely that the Delphi panel was suggesting that insurance, legal, and financial crisis preparedness measures lack importance. More likely, the Delphi panel, being experts in the field, recognize that not all meetings require insurance. For example, meeting organizers often find it not cost-effective to purchase event cancellation insurance for small meetings. Likewise, many of the Delphi panel meeting planner and consultant members are likely to review and negotiate their own contracts, and thus may believe a review by an attorney or accountant superfluous for some meetings.

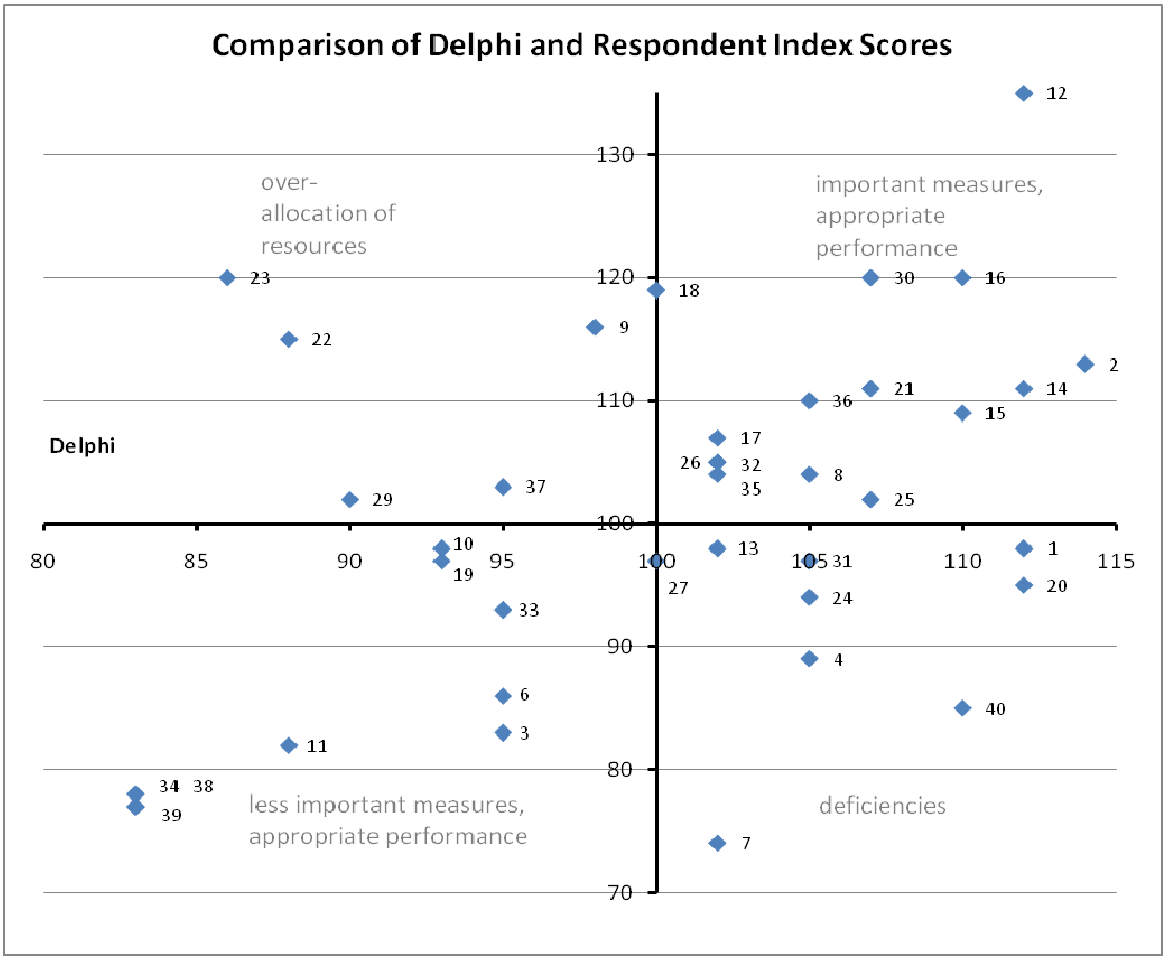
The third highest index score difference in this over-allocation category is for (9) communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to all staff in the organization

(index score difference 18). Comparing this with the deficiencies, it may be that while meeting planner respondents communicate the importance of crisis preparedness to staff in the organization, they neither integrate the crisis preparedness plan for the meeting into the organization's plan nor institute crisis preparedness training and education. This relationship may bear further study.

The index scores were then plotted on a graph, with the Delphi index scores representing points along the x-axis and the respondents' index scores representing points along the y-axis. The resulting graph provides a visual gap analysis (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1

Index Score Gap Analysis



Legend: Crisis preparedness measures by number			
1	Integrate crisis management into department statement of purpose	21	Review documents and procedures
2	Include crisis management in a strategic meeting management program	22	Legal and financial audit
3	Form external crisis management advisory committee	23	Review insurance
4	Crisis training and education program	24	Threat and vulnerability assessment
5	Plan testing through simulations	25	Capability assessment
6	Crisis team	26	Monitor threats and vulnerabilities
7	Crisis management budget	27	Track and learn from crises
8	Review and update crisis plan	28	Media training
9	Inventory internal resources and capabilities	29	Communicate with law enforcement
10	On-site crisis operations center	30	Emergency communications
11	Using outside experts	31	On-site crisis preparedness communications
12	Off-site data backup	32	Communicating the crisis plan externally
13	Written crisis plan for each meeting	33	Visibility of meeting department crisis

			management
14	Crisis management part of meeting planning	34	Establish relationships with risky groups
15	Strategy for minimizing impact	35	Crisis communications with executives
16	Discuss with facility/destination	36	Crisis communications with meeting and on-site staff
17	Develop crisis plan with facility/vendors	37	Crisis communications with all staff
18	Inform attendees	38	Training on human impacts
19	Incident command system	39	Psychological services
20	Integrate with organization's business continuity plan	40	Post crisis evaluation and review

Points in the lower left quadrant of the graph indicate crisis preparedness program measures that the Delphi panel indicated needed less frequent implementation (<100) and that the respondents in fact implemented less frequently. Likewise, the top right quadrant indicates crisis preparedness program measures that the Delphi panel indicated should be implemented more frequently (>100) and that, in fact, respondents are implementing more frequently. The problem areas are the top left and bottom right. The top left represents crisis preparedness program measures that the Delphi panel believe should be implemented less frequently (<100) and that the respondents are implementing more frequently. These points represent measures for which meeting planners may be allocating too many resources. The bottom right quadrant represents crisis preparedness program measures that the Delphi panel believe should be implemented more frequently (>100) and that respondents are implementing less frequently, so these points represent gaps or deficiencies in the meeting planners' crisis preparedness for meetings.

Conclusion

It is easy to say that meeting planners should be more crisis prepared, but the business reality is that resources like time and money are limited. Thus, a need to better determine where to allocate resources is needed. Using a Delphi panel, this study

identified recommended frequencies for the implementation of 40 defined crisis preparedness measures for meeting. By creating index scores of both the recommended frequency of implementation and the actual frequency of implementation by meeting planners, specific gaps in crisis preparedness were identified so that they can be targeted by meeting planners, professional associations, and others who provide resources and education on crisis preparedness to meeting planners.

Deficiencies identified in the gap analysis would seem to suggest that meetings and meeting organizers are to some extent the types of organizations that Pauchant & Mitroff (1992, 2002) deem "crisis prone." Perhaps not surprisingly, the crisis preparedness measure for which there was the largest deficiency and for which the t-test had the largest effect size was the crisis management budget. Studies have shown that an individual's level of wealth influences their adoption of crisis mitigation measures (Burton et al., 1993). Likewise, it could be that organizations with more financially at stake are more likely to adopt crisis measures. However, even within an organization, crisis preparedness may vary depending on the department's relative "wealth." For crisis preparedness, this could mean having a departmental budget that will support the necessary expenditures to conduct crisis preparedness training, hire consultants, and implement other crisis preparedness measures. Part of the education for meeting planners and meeting organizers needs to address the fact that proactive crisis preparedness is more cost effective in the long run than reactive crisis management. Specifically, the cost of investing in crisis preparedness is much less than the thousands of dollars lost in settling lawsuits after a crisis and the marketing costs that have to be expended to recover from damage to an organization's image following a poor crisis response (Drabek, 1995).

Other deficiencies suggested a tendency for meeting department staff to isolate rather than to address the crisis management issue as a strategic and ongoing part of the overall organization's operations. For example, integrating a crisis management plan for meetings into the organization's business continuity plans is a strategic action, as is conducting a post-event and post-crisis review. There is a long-standing concern in the meetings industry that meeting planners tend to be tactical and focus on logistics rather than strategic and holistic. These deficiencies may be indicative of that.

The measures for which meeting planner respondents over-allocated resources (which presumably could be allocated elsewhere) may also be indicative of the logistical and habitual nature of meeting management. For example, the large index score differences relating to insurance, financial and legal audits may indicate a methodical habit of procuring insurance and submitting a contract to a lawyer and getting budget approval from an accountant. While no one would ever suggest that these types of professional experts are not needed for meetings, the lower Delphi panel index score for these measures may indicate the recommendation that meeting planners think strategically about contract negotiations, budgeting, and insurance before treating all meetings the same. This issue may bear further research.

Meeting planners have a professional and ethical duty—and in some cases, a legal duty—to ensure the safety of the people who attend their meetings. Yet crisis management for meetings is a topic that has barely been studied by researchers and is a topic for which resources for meeting planners are scarce. From this study, it is apparent that meeting planners fail to prepare fully for the crises, disasters, and risks that <u>will</u> occur. The findings from this study may be help to identify where resources, education, and training

should best be allocated to move meeting organizers from crisis prone organizations to crisis prepared organizations.

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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was four-fold: first, to determine the recommended components of a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. Second, to research the crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners in the U.S. with regard to the meetings they are responsible for planning and/or managing. Third, to identify elements which influence the implementation of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. Finally, to conduct a gap analysis of the actual implementation of crisis preparedness measures relative to the recommended implementation. In practical terms, the purpose was to determine what meeting planners should be doing with regard to crisis preparedness, determine what they are doing, and determine why they aren't doing all they should be doing.

This study was based on six distinct but related research questions:

Research Question 1

The first research question in this study was: what crisis preparedness measures should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 1

Before any attempt could be made to determine how crisis prepared meeting planners were, some basis for what they should be doing to prepare for crises at their

meetings had to be determined. By combining three of the lists of crisis preparedness measures that seemed to represent best practices, or at least widely accepted practices, a preliminary list of crisis preparedness measures was identified. The three documents used were: FEMA 141 Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1993), Pearson & Mitroff's (1993) Crisis Management Strategic Checklist, and the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (National Fire Protection Association, 2007). Refining this list through the Delphi panel for applicability to meetings created a list of crisis preparedness measures that appears to be the first such comprehensive list of crisis preparedness measures for meetings. These measures formed the basis upon which to explore the other research questions in this study and may also help to provide a foundation upon which future research on crisis preparedness for meetings can be based.

Research Question 2

The second research question in this study was: to what extent are meeting planners adopting the measures in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for the meetings that they plan?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 2

The findings indicated that although the overall mean of implementation of the crisis preparedness measures by meeting planner respondents was 2.4 (on a scale of 1 to 5), the only crisis preparedness measure with a mean higher than the mid-scale mark was off-site data back-up and data privacy program. This finding suggests that either respondents' IT departments are proactive company-wide or perhaps that the Internet

provides easy solutions to data issues by having online data back-up sites and SSL-encrypted web pages. The least frequently implemented crisis preparedness measure was testing the crisis management plan with simulations with a mean of 1.52. Requiring expertise and time, this suggests that what crisis preparedness measures meeting planners do have in place are not tested until a crisis actually occurs.

As with any professional, meeting planners have a finite amount of time to devote to crisis preparedness. That they are not implementing any of the crisis preparedness measures on a regular basis suggests that they need assistance in determining which measures are most appropriate for certain meetings and destinations. Risk and capability assessment and analysis education would be helpful in training meeting planners to think critically about crisis preparedness.

Research Question 3

The third research question in this study was: what are the core crisis preparedness measures being used by meeting planners?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 3

This research question was particularly important to this study because it required reducing the 40 individual crisis preparedness measures into a smaller, more manageable number of factors representing the *core* crisis preparedness measures for meetings. Crisis preparedness is daunting and falls outside what most meeting planners seem to do on a regular basis, so reducing the crisis preparedness measures that meeting planners are implementing into core factors makes the findings of this study somewhat easier to apply in a practical context. While the procedural/technical factor explained the greatest

amount of variance, relationship-oriented, resource allocation, internal assessment, and expert services were also determined as factors. This finding provide a good framework for education and resources for meeting planners and also gives organizations an idea of the different types of crisis preparedness activities that will require an allocation of time, personnel, and resources.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question in this study was: how is the adoption of the core crisis preparedness measures related to the characteristics of meeting planners and their meetings?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 4

Research question 4 was analyzed based on eight separate hypotheses. Each hypothesis and the major findings and implications for each are below.

Hypothesis 4_a: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners from different industry segments (association, corporate, government, independent).

The study supported this hypothesis, finding differences between groups in each of the five core crisis preparedness areas except relationship-oriented measures. A post-hoc comparison identified the specific industry segment differences. It is interesting to note that there were no significant differences found with regard to the relationship-oriented category of crisis preparedness measures, which includes crisis preparedness measures like media training, establishing relationships with risky groups, training on human and emotional impacts for staff, psychological services for staff, and post-crisis

reviews. This might be explained by the fact that these person-oriented measures apply to the people at any type of organization, but are more likely explained by the fact that some of these factors had the lowest mean implementation rate among the 40 original crisis preparedness measures.

Hypothesis 4_b: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on the size of the organization for which a meeting planner works.

The results of the study partially supported this hypothesis, finding differences based on the size of the organization in three of the core crisis preparedness measures: resource allocation, internal assessment, and expert services. While the effect size of these differences was small, the post hoc comparisons suggest that in particular smaller organizations implement expert services significantly differently than larger organizations. To some extent, this is understandable since smaller organizations do not have the expertise in-house and would need to use outside experts to implement any crisis preparedness measures they adopt.

Hypothesis 4_c: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on number of meetings planned per year.

This hypothesis was not supported by the findings of this study. There were no significant differences in any of the core crisis preparedness measures based on the number of meetings planner per year by a meeting planner.

Hypothesis 4_d: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on size of meetings planned.

The findings of this study supported this hypothesis for each of the core crisis preparedness measures except relationship oriented measures. The largest effect size for this portion of the study (9%) was found for this characteristic and procedural/technical measures. In the post hoc comparison, the largest meeting size (over 3275 participants) was found to be significantly different than all of the other three categories. This is logical since very large events require more advance planning and are perhaps more prone to crises than smaller events. This issue is ripe for further research.

Hypothesis 4_e: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners based on years of meeting planning experience.

Interestingly, the findings of this study did not support this hypothesis. No significant differences were found in any of the core crisis preparedness measures based on the meeting planner's years of experience.

Hypothesis 4_f: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have earned a professional meetings industry certification and those who have not.

This hypothesis was partially supported by the findings of this study. Significant differences between groups were found in relationship-oriented measures and resource allocation. This may be explained by the fact that the importance of crisis preparedness is to some extent addressed in the study materials for professional certifications like the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. Thus, meeting planners with a

professional certification may have a greater awareness of the importance of crisis preparedness.

Hypothesis 4_g: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who plan meetings outside North America versus those who plan meetings only in North America.

The findings of this study did not support this hypothesis. There were no significant differences between respondents who plan meetings outside North American and those who plan meetings only in North America. Although there was a relative balance of respondents from both categories, this finding may bear further research based on specific locations. For example, it would be expected that meeting planners specializing in meetings in higher risk destinations like Latin America or Africa may differ significantly than meeting planners who plan meetings in western Europe.

Hypothesis 4_h: There is a significant difference in the core crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners who have previously experienced a crisis at a meeting and those who have not.

The findings of this study partially supported this hypothesis. As with professional certification, significant differences were found in two of the five core crisis preparedness measures: resource allocation and relationship-oriented measures. While these differences may be attributed to a personal knowledge of the impacts of a crisis, it is somewhat surprising that there were not also significant differences in the core crisis preparedness category procedural/technical measures. This suggests that although meeting planners who have experienced a crisis are willing to allocate resources and

address impacts on people involved, they may not be changing their meeting planning and management practices to incorporate crisis preparedness at every step.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question in this study was: What are the elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of the crisis preparedness measures that should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 5

Elements that influence adoption. The study gleaned 10 categories of elements of that influence adoption of crisis preparedness measures as well as 10 categories of elements that influence the lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures. Many of these elements were suggested by the literature. For example, some of the elements that might encourage the implementation of crisis preparedness measures suggested by the literature were: regulatory compliance (Zsidisin et al., 2005), fear of liability (Drabek, 2000), fear of bad publicity (Elliott & Smith, 2006; Pearson & Clair, 1998), and unique features (of a destination, meeting, or facility for example) (Drabek, 1995). Of those suggested by the literature, "specific risk or threat" may conform to Drabek's (1995) idea of unique features and "fear of financial or legal repercussions" clearly mirrors Drabek's (2000) fear of liability.

Unfortunately, these elements suggest that meeting planners are only likely to engage in crisis preparedness some of the time rather than as a regular part of their jobs. Although nearly 10% of respondents indicated that they were influenced to adopt crisis preparedness measures because it was the right thing to do or represented best practices.

Most of the other elements required some motivation by fear or requirement, such as the meeting client requiring crisis planning, a specific risk or threat, and fear of financial or legal repercussions.

Elements that influence lack of adoption. A review of the literature also suggested several elements that might discourage or be a deterrent to the implementation of crisis preparedness measures. Among those suggested by scholars are role ambiguity (it is someone else's job) (Elliott & Smith, 2006), misplaced optimism or denial (Sattler et al., 2000; Wicks, 2001), expense (Burton et al., 1993; Mileti, 1999), a perceived or actual lack of time (Drabek, 1995) or lack of knowledge (Mileti, 1999). Each of these is reflected in the categories gleaned from content analysis of the answers to the question of which elements influence the meeting planners' failure to adopt the full complement of crisis preparedness measures.

The common thread running through the elements that influence meeting planners' lack of adoption is "lack." It seems that meeting planners lack time, resources, knowledge, or motivation to engage in crisis preparedness. Thus, it appears to be up to the meetings industry to emphasize the importance of crisis preparedness to not only meeting planners, but also to the organizations for which they work so that the appropriate resources are allocated when meeting planners are ready to engage in crisis preparedness.

Research Question 6

The sixth and final research question in this study was: what are the core deficits in crisis preparedness program measures currently implemented by meeting planners compared to a recommended program?

Discussion & Implications – Research Question 6

By comparing the frequency with which the Delphi panel recommended each crisis preparedness measure be implemented with the actual implementation by meeting planners, a gap analysis was conducted to determine exactly where meeting planners may be mis-allocating or under-allocating resources. This was important to the study because knowing the specific areas in which meeting planners lack preparedness gives a road map to planners, professional associations, and meeting organizers about where additional resources and education are needed.

The greatest deficits in crisis preparedness were found in the following crisis preparedness measures: having a crisis management budget, conducting post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders, integrating crisis management plan for meetings into business continuity plans for the organization, and conducting ongoing crisis management training and education for staff. These findings indicate a lack of allocation of resources to crisis preparedness—both in terms of budget and in terms of time. This may suggest that either meeting planners or the organizations for which they work (or both) do not believe in the importance of crisis preparedness, perhaps preferring to rely on the "hope nothing goes wrong" method of risk management.

Interestingly, the two measures for which the study found that meeting planner respondents implemented too frequently compared to the Delphi panel's recommendation were: review insurance and legal and financial audit for each meeting. This may give the misconception that these measures are unimportant. More likely, it indicates that the Delphi panel—comprised of highly experienced meeting professionals—recognizes that not all meetings require insurance. It may also reflect the fact that the Delphi panel members are likely to review and negotiate their own contracts, and thus may believe a review by an attorney or accountant superfluous for some meetings. Further research on the frequency of these specific measures may be warranted to determine, for example, how to determine when insurance is appropriate for a meeting.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that meeting planners are not yet engaging in crisis preparedness on a regular basis. In fact, this study suggests that not only are meeting planners uncertain about what to do to engage in crisis preparedness for meetings, but they also lack the resources and in some cases the motivation to learn and ask for the resources they need.

Although there are some significant differences in the level of preparedness based on different characteristics of meeting planners and the meetings that they plan, the over-arching finding of this study is that very few meeting planners are as prepared as they should be for the crises, disasters, and emergencies that will occur. The practical implications of this on the low end of the scale are that the professionalism of the meeting

planner may be called into question. On the high end of the scale, the implications and impacts are that people attending meetings, conventions, and exhibitions are less likely to be safe at meetings because preparedness is not a major issue on the radar of most meeting planners. As is apparent from the media, crises and disasters like natural disasters, bombings, and widespread illness are becoming unfortunately regular events. The "hope for the best" approach to crisis preparedness is not sufficient.

The findings of this study should be used by meetings industry researchers, faculty, and industry representatives to educate not only meeting planners but the organizations for which they work on the importance of crisis preparedness for meetings. A badly managed crisis can reflect badly on the meeting planner, but can also have devastating effects on the organization for which the meeting planner works. This is why the entire field of business continuity has been developed. With the recent stock market crash, the importance of protecting organizations as well as people should be at the forefront of people's minds. Crisis preparedness is part of a business discipline and should be part of the meeting planner's everyday business operations.

Recommendations and Future Research

It has been well established in trade press that meeting planners are not as crisis prepared as they should be (Event Solutions, 2007; MeetingsFocus, 2006). The one empirical study that has been done with meeting planners and crisis preparedness verified this (Kline & Smith, 2006). However, to date there has been no clear definition of what meeting planners *should do* to be crisis prepared. Practitioners have often taken a singular focus – lawyers say they should focus on minimizing liability, insurance agents say they should focus on coverage for specific occurrences, disaster recovery

professionals say they should focus on protecting data. One of the most valuable aspects of this study is the definition of what measures should be included in a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. A limitation is that the measures used in this study do not represent all possible crisis preparedness measures that may be taken. Although this aspect of the study can certainly be tested and refined, it provides a foundation upon which to build. In particular, future researchers might want to refine the crisis preparedness measures both in name and to what kinds of meetings or meeting planners each may be applicable.

This study has also attempted to determine what meeting planners are currently doing in terms of crisis preparedness. Research with a larger more diverse sample would substantially refine the findings of this study. A stratified random sample might be particularly useful in making comparisons between groups. Future research might also focus not just on meeting planners but also the crisis preparedness activities of those essential supplier-partners with which meeting planners work—facilities, vendors, and the like.

Finally, in determining why meeting planners are not implementing all of the crisis preparedness measures proposed, open-ended questions were used. The categories of elements influencing both the adoption and lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures is a valuable start in determining the *why* of crisis preparedness. However, future studies could benefit from using qualitative methods to further flesh out these elements or testing the elements identified in this study through quantitative methods. The over-arching goal of this study has all along been to create a safer environment for meeting participants by helping meeting planners do the right thing. Hopefully, this

study will provide a basis upon which scholars and practitioners alike can develop practical resources to guide the development of crisis preparedness program materials and consider offering the training programs that meeting planners need both for general education as well as for the practical “how to.”

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Questionnaire

APPENDIX B. Delphi Panel

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Meeting Planner Crisis Preparedness Survey

Thank you for completing this short survey (approximately 5-10 minutes). Only planners of meetings, conventions, and exhibitions (including independent or third-party planners) should respond to the survey.

For purposes of this survey, "crisis" refers to any unexpected high-impact event that threatens the viability of an organization. This includes not only natural disasters and terrorism acts, but crisis events like a widespread medical emergency (e.g., food poisoning), a political coup, a media crisis of bad publicity, etc.

Part I – Meeting Planner Demographics

1. **Where is you're the organization for which you currently work headquartered?**

   City _____ State/Province _____ Country _____

2. **For what type of organization do you plan meetings? (please check the option that best describes your current role)**

   ◻ Association/non-profit ◻ Government

   ◻ Corporation ◻ Independent/third-party or consultant

3. **For how many years have you been employed in the meetings industry?** _____ years

4. **Please indicate any meeting or hospitality industry certification that you currently hold:**

   ◻ None ◻ CMP ◻ CMM ◻ CSEP ◻ CEM ◻ Other _____

5. **Approximately how many employees does your current organization have?**

   ◻ Less than 10 ◻ 11-50 ◻ 51-100 ◻ 101-1000 ◻ More than 1000

6. **How many meetings does your organization hold off-site per year?** _____

7. **Approximately how many people (attendees, exhibitors, speakers, etc.) attend the largest meeting that you plan?** _____

8. **Please indicate areas where your current organization has held meetings in the last two years or plans to hold meetings in the next two years (please check all that apply):**

   ◻ North America
   - ◻ U.S.
   - ◻ Canada
   - ◻ Mexico
   - ◻ Caribbean

   ◻ Europe

   ◻ South or Latin America

   ◻ Asia-Pacific

   ◻ Other (please specify) _____

9. Have you previously experience a crisis, emergency, or disaster at a meeting?

□ No □ Yes If yes, what kind(s) of crises? _____

Part II – Crisis Preparedness Measures

Please indicate how frequently you implement the following crisis preparedness measures for the meetings you plan.
1 = Never (not for any of the meetings you plan) to 5 = Always (for every meeting you plan).

		Never				Always
10.	Integrate crisis management into meetings department statements of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Include crisis management as part of the organization's strategic meetings management program.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Form a crisis management external advisory committee including people from outside the organization (e.g., meeting destination and facility representatives, consultants, attorney, insurance representative, law enforcement, etc. as appropriate).	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Establish a crisis management training and education program for meetings department staff, executive staff, and other organizational staff who will be on-site at meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Test the crisis management plan with simulations (e.g., tabletop exercises).	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Form a crisis management team, including both long-term and event-specific internal personnel as indicated by the threat and vulnerability assessment.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Dedicate a budget to crisis management activities as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Review, evaluate, and update the crisis plan as needed (e.g., before each meeting, to reflect changes in regulations or laws, after crises have occurred).	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Identify and inventory internal resources and capabilities (e.g., personnel skills, equipment, training, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Designate an on-site crisis operations center and an alternate crisis operations center for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Establish a working relationship with outside experts and consultants in crisis management as needed to supplement internal resources.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Ensure that there is an off-site data back-up system and data privacy program for critical meeting data.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Create a written crisis management plan for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Integrate crisis management into the planning and management process for meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Create a strategy for minimizing the impact of a crisis on meetings.	1	2	3	4	5

25.	Discuss crisis preparedness and response capabilities with meeting facilities, destination representatives, and other suppliers and address these in event facility documents, such as RFPs, site selection checklists, and contracts.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Develop and coordinate the meeting crisis management plan with key external stakeholders such as meeting facilities and vendors.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Develop methods to inform meeting attendees about appropriate crisis prevention and response measures (e.g., emergency contact information, collecting medical emergency information on registration forms, posting and announcing evacuation routes, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Develop an incident command system supported by a staff organizational chart to direct, control, and coordinate crisis response (ICS includes command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration roles).	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Ensure that the crisis plans for meetings properly integrate into any crisis and/or business continuity plans for the entire organization.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Review internal meeting documentation and procedures (e.g., such as registration forms, travel policies, RFP processes, etc.) and modify as needed to include crisis preparedness.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Conduct a legal and financial threat, vulnerability, and capability audit for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Review insurance with insurance representative and modify coverage as needed to address crisis contingencies.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Conduct a threat and vulnerability assessment for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Conduct a capability assessment to determine the external resources available in the meeting destination and venue to respond to a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Monitor meeting threats and vulnerabilities and have a system for addressing early warning signals.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Implement a process for tracking and learning from past crises or near crises.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Conduct media training with meeting and executive staff.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Communicate information about large meetings with local law enforcement and emergency response entities (e.g., police, fire, etc.) as well as the destination representative (e.g., convention and visitors bureau, tourism bureau).	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Establish an emergency communication system for communication within staff (on-site and at the office), and with vendors, venue, and destination representatives to be used in the event of a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Establish a communication plan for external communication in the event of a crisis (e.g., with members, meeting participants, their families, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Increase visibility of meetings department's commitment to crisis management.	1	2	3	4	5

42.	Establish or improve relationships with oppositional or risky groups (e.g., activist, striking, or picketing groups), as appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Improve crisis management communication to top management.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Improve crisis management communication to all staff in the meetings department as well as those outside the meetings department who will be on-site.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Communicate the importance of crisis management to all staff in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
46.	Improve crisis management communication to meeting participants.	1	2	3	4	5
47.	Provide training to the organization's staff regarding the human and emotional impacts of crises.	1	2	3	4	5
48.	Identify appropriate psychological services for staff and/or attendees to call upon in the event of a crisis (e.g., grief counseling, stress/anger management).	1	2	3	4	5
49.	Conduct post-event and post-crisis reviews with staff and other stakeholders as part of an overall crisis preparedness program evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5

Part III – Factors Influencing Adoption of Crisis Preparedness Measures

50. What factors influence your adoption (or lack of adoption) of crisis preparedness measures for meetings?

To Adopt	Not To Adopt

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX B

DELPHI PANEL

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VITA

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Scope and Method of Study:

The purpose of this study was four-fold: first, to determine the recommended components of a comprehensive crisis preparedness program for meetings. Second, to research the crisis preparedness measures taken by meeting planners in the U.S. with regard to the meetings they are responsible for planning and/or managing. Third, to identify elements which influence the implementation of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. Finally, to conduct a gap analysis of the actual implementation of crisis preparedness measures relative to the recommended implementation. A Delphi panel was used to identify the crisis preparedness measures that meeting planners should be implementing. These measures became the basis of a survey. Members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) and the MiForum e-mail list completed the survey, the results of which were analyzed using quantitative analysis.

Findings and Conclusions:

2,041 people were included in the initial sample of PCMA members. Additionally, the survey was sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of meeting planners. Of the 564 total surveys that were ultimately collected, 89 were deleted due to insufficient response. This resulted in 475 usable surveys. The findings that meeting planners are not implementing crisis preparedness measures consistently for all of the meetings that they plan, that there are some significant differences in implementation based on meeting planner characteristics, and that there are significant gaps between the recommended implementation and the actual implementation. The study also suggested some reasons for the lack of consistent implementation of crisis preparedness measures for meetings.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: _____