



Strategic Crisis Management: Planning for Unexpected Challenges

30 August – 3 September 2027
Vienna (Austria)



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Introduction

Strategic Crisis Management: Planning for Unexpected Challenges prepares leaders to navigate and respond to unpredictable disruptions. This course explores frameworks and decision-making models to build organizational resilience. Participants will understand every phase of a crisis lifecycle — from early warning and risk assessment to response, recovery, and lessons learned. It emphasizes strategic foresight, stakeholder coordination, and crisis communication under pressure. The program also fosters ethical leadership and high-performance team structures during emergencies. Through case studies and simulation, learners sharpen their ability to act decisively in volatile, uncertain environments.

Targeted Groups

This Strategic Crisis Management: Planning for Unexpected Challenges course targets professionals seeking specialized knowledge and skills:

- Senior executives responsible for organizational resilience
- Risk managers and business continuity professionals
- Crisis response team leaders and members
- Public relations and communications managers
- Emergency preparedness officers in the public or private sectors
- Compliance, security, and governance professionals

Course Objectives

Participants will achieve the following objectives by completing the Strategic Crisis Management: Planning for Unexpected Challenges course:

- Learn to design and implement a robust crisis management strategy aligned with organizational goals.
- Understand how to form, structure, and lead a Crisis Management Team CMT in high-pressure situations.
- Develop crisis communication protocols and reputation-management techniques.
- Build business continuity and recovery plans that activate during emergencies.
- Analyze real-world crisis case studies to extract lessons and improve readiness.
- Enhance decision-making under uncertainty and stress.
- Establish mechanisms for post-crisis evaluation and continuous improvement.

Targeted Competencies

Participants will gain the following competencies during the program:

- Strategic risk assessment and vulnerability analysis
- Crisis leadership, including team coordination and command structure
- Crisis communications and stakeholder engagement
- Emergency operations planning and business continuity design
- Decision-making under pressure and ambiguity
- After-action review and lessons-learned integration
- Strategic mindset toward resilience and adaptive planning
- Cross-functional coordination and crisis governance

Studying Scenarios

In this training, participants will develop their skills through the analysis of the following scenarios:

- A multinational company is facing a sudden cyber-attack that threatens its reputation and operations.
- Natural disaster e.g., flood or earthquake disrupting key supply chains and staff safety.
- Reputational crisis involving social media backlash or stakeholder protest.
- Coordinated multi-agency emergency e.g., public health crisis or industrial accident requiring interdepartmental response.
- Post-crisis review of a failed response to identify gaps, lessons learned, and recovery strategies.

Course Content

Unit 1: Understanding Crisis & Strategic Foundations

- Defining crisis, incident, and disaster in modern organizations.
- Exploring the strategic role of crisis management in governance.
- Mapping the crisis lifecycle: warning, response, recovery.
- Risk identification: internal and external vulnerabilities.
- Early warning systems and predictive indicators.
- Ethical leadership and decision-making dilemmas under pressure.
- Psychological dynamics: denial-curve, groupthink, and escalation.

Unit 2: Crisis Management Structure & Team Design

- Forming a Crisis Management Team CMT: roles, responsibilities, authority.
- Command structure: operational, tactical, strategic levels.
- Choosing and securing alternate command locations.
- Crisis coordination with other business units and external partners.
- Designing crisis governance and decision-making protocols.
- Training and exercising the CMT.
- Succession planning and resilience of leadership.

Unit 3: Strategic Crisis Planning & Business Continuity

- Developing a crisis management strategy aligned with organizational goals.
- Building contingency plans for key scenarios.
- Business continuity planning BCP and business impact analysis BIA.
- Mutual aid and interagency cooperation.
- Pre-crisis coordination with emergency services and agencies.
- Planning multi-agency exercises and roleplays.
- Validating and updating plans: checklists, reviews, and drills.

Unit 4: Crisis Communication & Reputation Management

- Designing a crisis communication strategy and policy.
- Stakeholder analysis: mapping internal and external audiences.
- Media engagement: press conferences, interviews, social media.
- Applying situational crisis communication theory SCCT under reputational threat.
- Scenario-based communication simulation.
- Internal communication and staff morale during a crisis.
- Post-crisis disclosure, transparency, and rebuilding trust.

Unit 5: Response, Recovery & Continuous Improvement

- Activation of crisis response plans: first 24 hours.
- Incident operations: managing the emergency operations center EOC.
- Post-crisis recovery: short-term stabilization and long-term recovery.
- Conducting after-action reviews, debriefs, and hot & cold debriefs.
- Learning from historical and contemporary case studies.
- Embedding lessons learned into updated policies and structures.
- Building organizational resilience and continuous improvement loops.
- Future-proofing: scenario planning for emerging risks e.g., AI, cyber, cross-border crises.



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Final Insights & Key Takeaways

Participants will leave with the strategic frameworks and tools to lead through uncertainty and design effective crisis response systems. They will gain not just reactive skills, but a proactive, resilience-driven mindset to plan for unexpected challenges and recover stronger.