Leading People Through Disasters

An Action Guide

Preparing for and Dealing with the Human Side of Crises

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An Excerpt From

Leading People Through Disasters: Preparing for and Dealing with the Human Side of Crises

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Contents

Preface

Do you want to decrease your stress levels, limit trauma, and avoid agony when faced with a disaster at work? We're not talking about the garden-variety disaster you may encounter weekly, such as your computer crashing, your unreasonable deadline being moved up, or your having to fire an employee who doesn't fit with your culture. No, we're talking about dealing with such disasters as floods, murders, riots, bombings, earthquakes, hurricanes, pandemics, and CEO deaths and malfeasance.

Think this doesn't apply to you? Think again. We are anything but disaster fans, junkies, or authorities, but over our working careers we've personally experienced more workplace disasters than we ever imagined possible. In writing this book, we also talked with other HR leaders, communication professionals, operations executives, and other key personnel and listened to their stories. They faced some of the same as well as different disasters at their workplaces.

Why This Book?

We believe the chances are good that many of you will join our ranks before you retire. It's a dangerous world out there. This is not fatalistic thinking; we're just being practical. We'd like you to be disaster survivors too, and we want you to handle the unexpected with relative ease by following the lessons we and others have learned the hard way.

In response to our challenges, we took a range of actions. Many were successful, and some not so, as you'll read. We had to improvise along the way because, for the most part, we had no roadmap to follow. No book like this existed. Instead, we were guided by our courage to act and our commitment to make our employees

safe and secure, to put our businesses back on track, and to restore some sense of normalcy to the workplace, all as soon as possible.

It's all too easy to put the planning on hold, claiming we don't have the time or resources for it, especially when there are so many more pressing issues on our plates at work. And if a plan *does* exist, it tends to focus on business operations, systems, and structural issues and tasks, ignoring the people side. In the years since September 11, 2001, many companies have recognized the need for planning. Also, a large number of guides have become available on how to establish and carry out emergency preparedness/business continuity plans, but they don't deal with the human issues.

In our experiences, the human side requires special care, consideration, and action. Certain emotional and psychological themes run through all of these disasters, whether a hurricane, flood, fire, earthquake, civil disturbance, shooting, terrorist attack, or act of corporate malfeasance. In the aftermath of such disasters, employees and their families are fearful, shocked, dismayed, paralyzed, saddened, angered—sometimes all at the same time, but more often in stages that are difficult to predict. After a time—which can range from hours to years—the affected individuals adopt an attitude of resolve and a desire to return to normalcy—although for them normalcy will never be the same.

Our goals with this book are to:

- Give you a jump-start to make sure you become involved in disaster planning and, when you do, you consider the people issues.
- Inspire you to take charge and lead during a disaster. This means taking an active rather than a passive role in planning the response to a disaster, dealing with the human issues of the disaster, and working to restabilize yourself, your employees, and your organization.
- Sensitize you regarding the people issues, and prepare you to anticipate employees' special emotional and psychological needs so you can deal with them quickly and begin to heal employees' hearts and minds.

The stories in this book cover a 20-year-span, but the same themes emerge. You could say we're getting older but not always better at dealing with the human issues in the wake of a crisis. Consequently, this book also serves as a wake-up call for all of us: the

veterans of one or multiple crises, the planners who have escaped danger to date, and those who have been putting off the inevitable. We need to get actively involved in dealing with the people dimension of disasters.

The Audience for This Book

The "you" we address throughout this book include Human Resource leaders and staff members; communications professionals, including those responsible for employee communications and media relations; managers in general, and in particular those who want to assume a leadership role and build strong relationships with employees and other work colleagues; and employees who want to empower themselves.

You—especially the HR and communications professionals as well as the managers—all play a critical role in dealing with people issues in your day-to-day jobs. Your special skills are even more crucial in disaster preparedness and response efforts.

In times of crises, Human Resources and Public Relations—the two professions that most affect people inside and outside their organizations—need to adopt a special mindset. We need to view ourselves respectively as Human Relations and People Relations. When a disaster strikes, our primary role is to serve as leaders and protect people.

Despite all the differences between the sorts of disasters we and others have experienced, we have observed many common themes, starting with the number one, absolute requirement: **HR professionals must assume leadership in preparing for disasters and taking action when disasters strike, focusing especially on people issues.**

According to Libby Sartain, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Chief People Yahoo at Yahoo! Inc., in the event of an emergency, HR leaders must be prepared to lead the leaders.[1]

We agree. We also think that others, especially communications professionals, need to be prepared as well. In the face of fear, it's human nature to want to flee. For the sake of employees and the organization, those who want to stay and fight—or those who reluctantly agree to stay and work—must rise to the challenge and deal with the crisis at hand.

One of the key questions that you have to answer for yourself—and this book can help you do that—is whether you have the capabilities for dealing with the dynamic situation a disaster presents, especially the need to remain on the scene and act as a leader.

There's one more point to note before jumping into the book. Many of the individuals who have shared their stories with us come from large companies. As a result, they have resources at their disposal that those of you at smaller organizations might not. That's no excuse for putting off planning or running from a disaster. Instead, you just need to be more creative about how you use outside help, which is often available at no or little cost. Throughout this book, we mention some resources and ideas to consider if you work for a small to mid-size company.

How to Use This Book

This book is an action guide, not a textbook, so use it in any way that will encourage you and help you act. You'll find that subjects such as communications, trauma counseling, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) appear in several chapters rather than being covered comprehensively in individual chapters. We did this because communications, trauma, and the EAP are so intertwined in disaster planning/preparedness and business continuity planning that we wanted to reinforce integrated planning and execution.

The book is divided into three main sections.

Part I: Planning for Disasters

Specifically, this section covers:

- How to adopt the mindset needed to prepare for and deal with disasters, including making sure you have the necessary capabilities to act in the face of fear
- How to include the people perspective in your disaster planning
- What to consider in the creation of contingent HR policies

This section, especially Chapter 2, defines the basic terms used in the book, such as *business continuity plan* and *disaster*.

Part II: Dealing with Disasters

This section addresses:

- How to take care of employees, with the emphasis on their safety
- How to support managers and HR staff
- How to balance employee needs and get back to business
- How to get employees back on track
- How to start the healing process and then gain momentum with it
- Quick steps you can take immediately to help you plan effectively

The Resources Section

This section includes:

- Resources, including articles, books, and websites, to help you along the way
- A business continuity outline that can serve to jump-start your planning efforts
- A sample telephone tree for notifying people
- A sample wallet card detailing the actions to take in the event of a disaster
- Employee emergency response procedures
- Suggestions of what to do at home

Read—or, more realistically—skim the chapters and sections that interest you, in any order you want, with one exception: Start with the Prologue if you question the value of planning for and paying attention to disasters. The deluge of disasters that befell one of the authors in a short period of time should make you a believer in the benefits of disaster planning.

Use the index if you want to find particular topics.

Also check out the book's website at www.leadingpeoplethrough disasters.com, which includes a feedback section. We're interested in your ideas and suggestions and any steps you've taken, especially if they may be of benefit to others. A disaster is daunting enough without having to go it alone.

Principles to Live and Work By

For you to optimize the value of this book and successfully deal with disasters, especially their human aspect, we suggest you adopt these three principles:

1. *Have an emergency preparedness/business continuity plan*. You and your organization must have a comprehensive, multifaceted emergency preparedness/business continuity plan that focuses on the business issues, in addition to dealing with the human issues. No one can predict the type or timing of a disaster, but chances are great that *something* will happen sometime, and sooner than you might think. If you've got a plan, you'll be better able to respond to the situation and recover faster.

2. *Prepare to lead*. You must be prepared to assume a leadership role in planning for and taking action when disasters strike. This means taking the time to develop plans and executing them immediately when needed, without asking permission—especially where people's safety, security, and health are at stake. You need to recognize and remember you are in the best position to deal with the complex, unfolding human side of these events, both short- and long-term. Yet you must also realize you cannot do this alone. You must work closely with individuals from many disciplines, both inside and outside the organization.

3. *Expect the unexpected*. Regardless of how much planning you do, you must appreciate you will still experience the unexpected when a disaster strikes and you will have to adjust your plans on the fly. This may include propping up any of the organization's leaders who can't deliver in a crisis and supporting those who rise to the occasion. And these days it also may mean cleaning up after an executive or team of executives who caused or contributed to a man-made disaster, whether it involves corporate fraud, ethical lapses, insider trading, or some other type of malfeasance.

By adopting these principles and attending to the lessons we and others have learned the hard way, we hope you plan thoroughly, act quickly, and always show courage. Disasters require leaders.

Top Five Actions to Take:
Suggestions from a Veteran Incident Commander

If you aren't able to do anything else, veteran Incident Commander Jack Armstrong suggests focusing on these five actions:

- Having an effective emergency response plan
- Having secure backup, and an alternative download location for all essential electronic data
- Having a system for immediately contacting all customers and a plan for managing their needs
- Ensuring that you have home contact information for all employees
- Knowing the options for relocating your business

Authors' note: We hope you take the time to focus more on the human side.

Part I

Planning for Disasters

This section discusses the following topics:

- The roles and responsibilities of Human Resources managers, line managers, communications staff members, and others in the planning effort and when faced with a disaster; the leadership capabilities one needs in order to lead a business continuity planning effort, and those needed when one is facing a disaster.
- How to prepare for and lead the business continuity planning effort; where to go for basic information; what should be included, and what pieces of the plan small companies should concentrate on in their planning efforts; and how to protect the plan against failure.
- What policies the planning team should consider when developing the business continuity plan. By having policies in place before a disaster, those responding to a disaster will save an enormous amount of time and will be free to make critical decisions on the fly.

Chapter 1

Preparing to Lead in the Face of Fear

This chapter covers four topics:

When planning for a disaster:
- Identifying the players as well as their roles and responsibilities for planning
- Recognizing the competencies (such as skills, knowledge, and attributes) that can help you be an effective leader

When dealing with a disaster:
- Reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the various players
- Understanding what leadership competencies are necessary in the face of fear, especially in a disaster situation

Overview

On a scale of 1 to 10, how prepared are you to deal with a disaster befalling your organization? Are you ready to lead your employees through it? Are you geared up to deal with a hurricane, fire, flood, tornado, murder, chemical spill, act of corporate malfeasance, flu pandemic, terrorist attack, or some other type of disaster?

On second thought, maybe you'd prefer to close this book and take a pleasure trip. How about a cruise down the Mississippi River, where you'll end up in New Orleans? You'll find yourself in the state of Louisiana, which in August 2005 was actually "the state of denial," according to Charles Pizzo and Gerard Braud, two crisis communications experts and Hurricane Katrina victims.

"And if you're not thinking about or planning what you might do in a crisis situation now, you're in a state of denial too. There are just too many risks out there," Pizzo warns.

One good sign that you're not in the state of denial is that you have this book open. We hope you're ready for the challenge. Our goal is to excite you to action so you will take a leadership role within your organization and prepare for the worst, with the hope that nothing bad actually happens. However, the odds are that you will face some kind of minor or major crisis in the course of your work life.

Preparing for a Disaster
Identifying the Players and Their Roles and Responsibilities

In business continuity planning, one of the critical leadership tasks is defining the roles and responsibilities of the key members of management who will be involved in planning for and managing a disaster. This section details the processes to be carried out by individuals in the roles of CEO, CFO, Human Resources Director, Communications Officer, and other selected members of the management team. The job titles and organizational structure of your company may differ from the generic positions described here, but this summary will give you an idea of the division of responsibilities.

Most senior executive: Chief Executive Officer/ General Manager/other title

- Mandates the development and implementation of a business continuity plan
- Appoints the core team, announcing and expressing confidence in its members and emphasizing their delegation to a high level of independent thinking
- Meets with the core team from time to time for updates and to offer advice and counsel

Incident Commander

- Reports to the CEO
- Develops the Incident Command System, which specifies who will do what tasks in the case of an incident (emergency, crisis, disaster, catastrophe, etc.)

- Takes charge in case of a disaster and is the sole contact with emergency responders, such as firefighters, police, and hazmat (hazardous materials) team
- Addresses the media on-site covering the disaster, as he or she is on the line and has the most up-to-date information on the situation, unless another individual is designated to be the spokesperson

Chief Financial Officer/Controller/other title for financial executive

- Works with the core team to develop the *business case* for planning, including the return on investment. Consider the costs of planning, such as:
  a. Possible use of an outside expert on emergency preparedness or business continuity planning
  b. Downtime (i.e., time away from job duties, spent in meetings, information gathering, etc.; or due to dislocation of work or loss of property) and its impact on the profitability or viability of the business
  c. Materials, equipment, and supplies, including food and water, cots, blankets, radiophones, walkie-talkies, satellite phones, extra cell phones, 800 number for an employee "cool line," and special website
  d. Possible off-site space for an emergency operations center (see Chapter 2)
  e. Backup information technology and telecommunications systems
  f. Trauma counseling or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (see Prologue and Chapter 8) and returning employees to reasonable levels of productivity

Core team
The core team will develop the strategies and policies that will be used to develop contingency plans for a short business interruption (e.g., a few hours); a disaster, where business is interrupted for a few days; and a major catastrophe, where

business is interrupted for the foreseeable future, with no identifiable end date. Core team members and their responsibilities are:

Human Resources
- Working with the core team to identify the Incident Commander and others who will take charge in case of a disaster
- Defining roles and responsibilities for the various individuals who will staff the Emergency Operations Center (see Chapter 2)
- Developing contingency plans for the relocation of employees under a variety of scenarios
- Instructing the core team about Human Resources philosophy and how the organization can care for its workforce through contingent HR policies, as well as developing contingency HR policies (explained in Chapter 3)
- Developing the executive emergency contact list, which specifies who gets alerted and when
- Arranging for the contingent use of external behavioral health consultants or an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (see Chapter 8)
- Developing a telephone tree or other electronic notification system along with collateral materials so that employees at all levels of the organization know whom to call, where to go, when to stay home, and what other actions to take
- Ascertaining the need to deploy staff in other parts of the United States or the world to keep the business running

Safety Officer or security (if applicable)
- Developing a variety of scenarios that could result in business interruption and coordinating these scenarios with communications facilities
- Developing evacuation procedures as well as specific procedures for such disasters as a fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, chemical spill, or explosion, and setting up a "shelter in place" (i.e., a place in the facility where employees can go for shelter rather than leaving the facility and risking exposure)

Operations/production (if applicable)

- Developing contingency plans for inventory, manufacturing, distribution, and other functions in case of evacuation
- Identifying a location to borrow or rent space
- Determining the feasibility of moving the warehouse, production, and distribution functions
- Analyzing the consequences of a short- or medium-term inability to deliver products/services to customers

Communications

- Creating a crisis communications plan that dovetails with the business continuity plan and includes key messages for each scenario in the business continuity plan
- Developing a media strategy for minor and major crises
- Working closely with the Incident Commander to determine who will serve as the company spokesperson, depending on the situation, and clarify who speaks, when, and to whom, internally and externally; also, providing advance media training for these individuals, if needed
- Maintaining ongoing good relations with the press, especially the radio and TV newscasters in the local markets, and preparing press releases and organizing press conferences as necessary
- Developing employee communication templates and determining the best distribution system for the communications under different disaster scenarios
- Working with the Safety Officer to develop response plans for a variety of disaster scenarios (e.g., short- or long-term power outage, explosion, chemical spill, or other foreseeable event, given the type of business) and coordinating closely with other core team members as well as with the entire planning team
- Coordinating closely with HR and Safety officers when a disaster strikes

Business continuity planning team

This team develops detailed business continuity plans and tactics for each major function in the organization. For an outline of the

topics to be considered, refer to the Resources section on page 141. Depending on the management structure, functions also may include:

Information technology
- Developing system backup plans and arranging for backup sites for data storage
- Developing backup plans for all telecommunications devices, including instructions on how phone lines are to be redirected to other sites and the establishment of toll-free numbers
- Developing IT network backup plans and testing protocols

Engineering, marketing, sales, and customer relations
- Developing specific business continuity plans
- Agreeing to take direction from the Incident Commander initially, when disaster strikes, and until the Incident Commander returns control to the management hierarchy
- Confirming that functional managers have made appropriate plans and have the necessary supplies to take care of employees

Legal
- Ensuring that the plan complies with federal and state safety and security regulations
- Verifying that workplace laws and regulations have been addressed (provisions for disabled employees, confidentiality of records, etc.)

Competent Business Planning Leadership

Leadership qualities for business continuity planning, as for any other aspect of business, start with the basics: *your self-image* and *your attitude* about what you know and what you can do. Do you see yourself as a leader or a follower? Do you take the initiative or do you suffer from the "dancing school syndrome," waiting to be asked?

The self-assessment grid starting on page 28 offers a good starting point for you to take stock of your leadership skills.

What drives leaders?

There is nothing more exhilarating than to be in the presence of great leaders. They motivate you to go where you did not even know you wanted to go. They inspire a shared vision, model the way, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.[1] What is it within people that enables them not just to lead well in normal times but, when faced with a crisis, to quickly overcome their own fear and shock and rise to the occasion, leading their people through the difficulty that is facing them?

What competencies (i.e., skills, knowledge attributes, and abilities) constitute leadership? Are different sets of skills and behaviors required for preparing and leading, versus responding in the face of a disaster? What does it take to face your own fear and, in spite of it, lead others through the crisis to the successful conclusion and beyond?

Wayne Brockbank is a partner with David Ulrich and others in charge of the 30,000-case Human Resource Competency model, which is featured in Ulrich's *Human Resource Champions* (1997) and Brockbank and Ulrich's *Competencies for the New HR* (2003). Dr. Brockbank spent some time with us to answer the question "What capabilities does one need to lead the business continuity planning and preparation phase?" He suggested that the following competencies are needed in the planning process:

Competency	Abilities and attributes
Strategic decision making*	Ability to: ■ Identify problems that are central to the business strategy ■ Lead strategic planning efforts ■ Set the direction of change ■ Have a vision for the future of the business Attributes ■ Self-confidence ■ Risk taking

Culture management	Ability to: ■ Help the organization define the culture required to meet the demands of external customers ■ Define the culture that is necessary to make the business strategy work ■ Build the culture that excites employees to action ■ Align HR practices (e.g., staffing, development, rewards and compensation) to the culture, for both regular business and pre-planning for a disaster
Market-driven connectivity	Ability to: ■ Disseminate customer information on a large scale ■ Leverage customer information in integrating the functional organization ■ Build the customer-focused workforce environment ■ Reduce information that inhibits focus on the customer
Fast change	Ability to: ■ Manage quickly and make fast decisions ■ Facilitate change processes ■ Ensure resource availability for change efforts ■ Measure the effectiveness of change ■ Adapt learning about change to new change initiatives ■ Determine when and how to modify a change in direction, both in regular operations and in a disaster

***Strategic decision making** is an area where many HR and communications professionals don't believe in their own power; instead they sit back and wait to be asked. (And then some complain that they are not getting asked to the table!) The Society for Human Resource Management, the American Society for Training and Development, the American Management Association, the University of Michigan, the RBL Group, and the Center for Creative Leadership all offer outstanding courses in leadership skill building.

Dealing with a Disaster
Roles and Responsibilities

Your worst fears have been realized: Your organization is facing a disaster—a flash flood, chemical spill, or, even worse, an explosion and building collapse—that occurred late at night, so only the security guards were on the premises and, luckily, none of them was injured. What must be done and who will do it?

CEO

- Works with the Incident Commander, who has ordered the opening of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC, discussed in Chapter 2) in a space off-site
- May be relocated to the EOC to be able to continue to resolve business issues
- Provides the media with information developed by the Communications Officer
- Is accessible to employees to provide reassurance and demonstrate decisive leadership

Incident Commander

- Takes charge of managing the incident (crisis, disaster, etc.)
- Contacts emergency responders and solely provides direction
- May assign a second-in-command to run the EOC while he or she is at the site of the disaster
- Runs the disaster team, including representatives from operations, safety, Human Resources, and communications
- Provides instantaneous, up-to-date, and accurate public information to the media from an on-site vantage point
- Returns managing responsibilities to the management hierarchy as soon as practicable

Chief Financial Officer

- May be assigned to the EOC as a team member

Head of operations/production

- May be assigned to the EOC as a team member

Human Resources

- May have a department member assigned to the EOC

- HR leader assesses the situation with Incident Commander and CEO, and makes recommendations regarding employee needs
- Depending on the severity of the situation, HR leader recommends implementation of contingent policies (discussed in Chapter 3)
- Assigns staff to 24-hour coverage of telephone "cool line" and other electronic communications to answer employee questions, assuage fears, and the like

A "cool line" is a specific 800 number that employees can access for honest answers to their questions; it also serves as a "rumor control" center. This frees up the emergency hotline to disseminate directions for what to do, when, and where.

- May recommend all-hands meeting(s) to reassure employees and give them up-to-the-minute information
- May recommend individual or group counseling or screening depending on the severity of the situation (more on this in Chapter 8)

Communications Officer
- Works with the Incident Commander and CEO to make sure the organization speaks with one voice and delivers a message that is consistent and clear
- Prepares and distributes appropriate communications pieces for external audiences, including media, customers, vendors/ suppliers, and investors
- Partners with HR to refine and distribute employee communications appropriate for the severity and duration of the disaster

Planning team members
- Put the detailed plans spelled out in the official business continuity document into operation
- As required, may be assigned to the EOC or to other duties as spelled out in the plan

Employees
- Follow the instructions given, ideally on their emergency response wallet card
- Stay in touch via the "cool line," website, or other telecommunications vehicle, or go to predetermined location for printed materials in case of a community power outage

Facing a Disaster Head On

What if the disaster you prepared for—or, the more likely scenario, another type of disaster—rocks your world? Do different leadership competencies come into play during a crisis? Probably not, but you will face a situation colored with emotion, and how you deal with this is what separates effective and successful leaders from those who stumble.

Richard E. Boyatzis,[2] co-author of *Resonant Leadership* and *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, and Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, identifies three competencies that are key in times of crisis:

- *Mindfulness*
    Emotional awareness
    Empathy
    A keen sense of one's surroundings
- *Self-awareness*
- *Self-control*

People will be looking to you for leadership, so Dr. Boyatzis says you need both self-awareness and self-control to:

- Think quickly.
- Remain somewhat dispassionate, at least on the surface.
- Instill hope through verbal and nonverbal means.

This is not the time for that "deer in the headlights" look.

Taking a Look at Yourself

We've created a simple self-assessment grid that combines the ideas of Wayne Brockbank and Richard Boyatzis, as well as definitions from other competency models. We encourage you to jot down the assessments of your strengths and then note what you might do to further improve your capabilities.

Are You Ready to Lead?

Behavioral attributes:
Those qualities that come from within and have an impact on your behavior

Competency	How satisfied am I with my strengths in this area?	What can I do about it?
Initiative: Readiness to act and seize opportunities		
Relationship management: Inspirational leadership, influence, catalyst for change, conflict management, networking, teamwork and collaboration		
Self-awareness: Awareness of your emotions and their impact, knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses, sense of self-confidence		
Self-control: Ability to control emotions, maintain objectivity, be empathetic, attain a degree of dispassion		
Innovation: Creativity, tangential or peripheral thinking		

Skills, knowledge, and abilities that you learn

Competency	How satisfied am I with my strengths in this area?	What can I do about it?
Strategic planning: Creating a vision; mission and key strategies to move the business forward		
Tactical planning and organizing: Developing action plans, structure, and staffing so that the strategies can come to life		
Communication and interpersonal skills: Getting your message across to others; building relationships; remaining open to others' input		
Project management: Leading others in the execution of a short-term project; understanding PERT and Gantt charting; task and staff scheduling; critical path analysis		

If there are areas in the self-assessment grid where you feel you need some professional development, check the Leadership readings in the Resources section starting on page 136.

Using the Power of Denial to Face the Crisis

Often, the human reaction to a crisis is "This cannot be happening. This is unreal!" People may be stunned by what they are seeing or experiencing. It's as if the mind stops trying to comprehend the shock or horror of the event. In some cases, people run away, an instinct known as "fight or flight," because we as humans are compelled to seek safety or refuge when faced with danger.

In other cases, we decide to tough it out, to fight back, to gain control of the situation as best we can. For example, when he witnessed the horror of September 11, 2001, occurring right across the street from his office, William Nickey, the Northeast Region Human Resources Director at Deloitte & Touche USA, says,

> My first reaction to this event—in my heart—was that I had to get home to Long Island to be with my family. But then my mind took over, and I told myself I had a job to do. Looking back, I realize now that I was in shock for the first 48 hours, but I made it through, not only playing my role as HR Director but also becoming a Disaster Recovery Project leader. Deloitte and Touche began immediately to make contact with all of our people, and miraculously, we lost only one employee who had not made it out of the World Trade Center.

In a crisis, we are compelled to act out of fear, confronted by the immediate threat of the situation. Mory Framer, a pioneer in trauma counseling, says that this inner resource is actually denial and that through denial we can regain control over the situation. What irony! Those who are effective in leading in the face of a disaster are in denial too. But because they encounter the denial at this stage, rather than doing so earlier and consequently avoiding the planning phase, they are able to help their organizations as opposed to putting them at undue risk.

Dr. Framer says, "The human condition gives great impetus to action through the fight/flight syndrome. When we don't or won't flee, we fight (within ourselves) to regain control in order to help others. The trauma or disruption we are facing creates *internal energy* that can be used to regain self-control."

A second insight from Dr. Framer is that employees, family members, friends, and colleagues may not react to or recover from a fearful situation as quickly as successful leaders do. It's necessary

to understand and allow for this dynamic in the human side of emergency planning. Managers must be careful not to assume that their employees are gaining control as quickly as they are. You'll learn more about this in Part II, especially in Chapters 4 to 8.

Remaining Detached versus Getting Connected

Consider adding another ability to your behavioral toolkit, one that Stephen Schoonover, an expert in developing organizational competency models, refers to as *containment*. Containment enables you to:

- Set boundaries for behaviors and actions by yourself and others.
- Calm people by means of a soothing voice and other methods.
- Establish control through the use of a firm voice.
- Find ways to break the tension through emotional release, for example, by talking about the incident or finding a reason to laugh (dark humor) so people can begin healing. Jack Armstrong, a veteran fire chief and Incident Commander, says that dark humor is what helps keep people in balance in very trying times.

As a strong leader you need to be somewhat dispassionate. Yet you also have to be connected to those around you—empathetic and psychologically present without seeming detached. For example, practice the ability to hold at arm's length—maintaining a sense of touch but with some psychological distance; otherwise you can get swallowed up in the emotion of the moment. You need to be the voice of calm and reason.

As Dr. Boyatzis says, "Great leaders are in tune with their employees—they are in synch with the people around them. They exude hope, i.e., provide a sense of something bigger in the future, a vision, and a sense that they can take action on that future." He adds, "These leaders care about people and people know it; they have *emotional self-awareness* and are *empathetic*. And, they have *mindfulness*, i.e., a sense of being aware of the environment and what surrounds them in the moment."[3]

That describes New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani running down the street to find a new command center on 9/11. As difficult as the situation was, he exuded a sense of self-control, giving those

in Manhattan and the rest of the world hope that life would go on. He remained very much aware of what was happening to him and others, and he took the most direct and positive action that he could—moment by moment.

Facing the Leadership Challenge Head On

We hope we have inspired you to step up and begin the disaster planning process in your organization, focusing especially on the human component. It may take more than one attempt to break through, but the payoff can be extremely rewarding—especially when a disaster strikes. In spite of whatever crisis you may face, employees will be re-energized and will go back to work, and you'll have a continuing, vibrant business.

Keep in mind that you don't have to go it alone in the planning and preparation phase. In addition to working with colleagues, you can take advantage of the conferences, literature resources, and self-assessment instruments offered through the Society for Human Resource Management and other organizations. Check out the Resources section starting on page 133.

Action Steps

1. Prepare for the leadership role by assessing yourself and putting a development plan together to improve or enhance your capabilities.
2. Read Chapter 2, on business continuity planning, to enhance your understanding of the process.
3. Sit down and begin to jot down your thoughts on the organization of your core team and the business continuity plan.

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