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Crisis Management Communication Review

Crisis management planning is essential for any event in case any unexpected crisis happens during an event. If a crisis is not handled properly on the day with quick responses or planning before an event, this can result in serious damage and injuries to stakeholders, possibly even loss of life and impact to the organization (Coombs, W.T., 2007). Risk assessments are essential before events as organizations can plan how to reduce high risks during an event to avoid potential harm to stakeholders. This case study will critically review how well the crisis management assessment went with using crisis management models and the personal role of being a gold commander and the roles and responsibilities that were used during the assessment to reduce the crisis throughout the various events.

Preplanning before the day, as a group everyone did their own research in preparation for the crisis management assessment. The event on the day of the assessment was 'The champions League' in Cardiff in 2017, with the players Bayern Munich and Liverpool playing against each other. Already from the teams playing, risks are already high as there is a German and English team playing, and both have history behind them. This causes football hooliganism and can be violent if both teams are not separated. Liverpool experienced a major disaster at the Heysel Stadium football game in 1985, which was due to football hooliganism, bad crowd control, and separation of both teams. This resulted in many deaths during the event and could have been avoided if there had been a risk assessment plan in place (Frosdick, S. and Marsh, P., 2013). With football events, it is key to split the city to ensure fans are segregated in order to reduce this crisis from happening (Kerr, J., 1994).

Major sport events have many potential crises risks that need to have strategic planning in place in case this arises, many of these risks for football events are terrorism, hooliganism and rioting. As stakeholders and staff are the main priority for events, crisis management needs to be controlled in order to reduce harm to stakeholders, as not only would it negatively affect the families, but it would ruin the reputation of the organization. Decision making is key to crisis management as a crisis can escalate quickly which need quick responses (Seeger, M.W., Sellnow, T.L. and Ulmer, R.R., 1998).

Throughout the day, as a gold commander, the roles and responsibilities included working in a group which we had to use strategic methods and planning by using quick strategic thinking to act upon the crisis to report to the silver and bronze command. Each team member had their own responsibilities which included Ambulance (Shannon), Armed forces (Anna), Police (Chloe), Fire Safety (Amy) and Media (Mel). Gold commands are important to have in any type of event, as they control the strategic measures to help organizations reduce any risks in case a crisis may happen, which then they report to silver (tactical) and bronze (Operational) who would be on site at an event in case of any emergencies (futurelearn.com, 2023).

In the real-life Champions league that took place in 2017 at Cardiff Millennium stadium, security was at its highest in case any threats or risks happened during the event. To avoid any terrorist attacks during the event, the Millennium stadium closed the roof to avoid any drone terrorist attacks. Cardiff city had to control areas of Cardiff and have specific security zones where residents and attendees had to have ID or proof of address to enter that specific zone. They managed the security zones with vehicle mitigation, which they implemented barriers to stop people entering and exiting those security zones unless they had ID. There were expected to be around '170,000' fans to be in Cardiff for the Champions

League (Mosalski, R, Walesonline.co.uk, 2017). Along with this, Cardiff had ensured that they split the city for fans, while entering the stadium to avoid any riots and football hooliganism. For security reasons, Cardiff has modern technology and uses facial recognition to keep an eye on anyone that looks suspicious and helps detect to the police if there are any attendees that are on the watch list, to protect stakeholders at the event. For extra security on the day, there was around '6,000 officers' to manage the streets of Cardiff during the event and using the methods of ring of steel and using police horses to manage fans on the day (Walesonline.co.uk, 2017).

As a team, multiple videos of major event crises were presented to everyone to get the team thinking about how we could reduce the risks and prevent it from further harm and what the group would have done differently to what happened at those disaster events originally. Many of those events included the Hillsborough disaster, champion leagues, Bradford city fire, London Bridge attacks. Times are essential when dealing with a crisis as a crisis can escalate quickly, and emergency services should be at the scene straight away to help and avoid harm to attendees. Along with this, staff should be well trained in an organization in case of any crisis planning and designated to a specific job role to control their zone area of the event such as stewards, security, police etc. (Booth, S.A., 2015).

The London bridge attack showed an example of a major terrorist attack that was unexpected and unprepared for. This crisis escalated rapidly and unfortunately 2 people lost their lives, along with 3 other people who got wounded from the attack (bbc.co.uk, 2019). People nearby the area reported the men to the police, which they arrived at the scene within a reasonable time of 5 minutes and put a stop to the attacks. However, there was a lack from the security measures of London as one of the attackers have been convicted of serious crimes before and facial recognition cameras should have picked up this and been reported straight away. However, regarding this the armed police managed the crisis quickly and London was prepared for any terrorist attacks after the incident that happened in Paris in 2015 and have increased the total of officers on duty and the equipment that is needed to stop any threats like this from happening (theguardian.com, 2017). CCTV cameras from the control office helped identify the actions needed to stop the crisis.

The event on the day consisted of the royal family attending the Champions League in Cardiff, who included Prince William and Kate Middleton and their 2 eldest sons (Prince George and Prince Louis). Along with this, the Prime Minister of Britain was attending, and the Prime Minister of Germany was attending the champions league. As the gold command group, we all decided that the royal family would travel by private transport with tinted windows to ensure safety, with police escorts guiding and following the vehicle along with royal security, and the route would involve going over Bute Park as Cardiff would be in lockdown hours before the event took place to provide extra security. Which then the vehicle would be guided into the private zone, for the royal family to enter the venue safely. When this was reported to the silver command, they suggested a different approach to the gold commands strategic planning and suggested that the Royal Family should arrive on a boat in Cardiff Bay or by helicopter for protection and brings less attention for any threat. Even though this way of transport would provide protection, the gold and bronze command agreed that during the original Champions League in Cardiff in 2017, boats were prohibited from using Cardiff Bay to travel to provide security for the day of the event (Mosalski, R, 2017). This might have caused more threat and suspicion if the Royal Family arrived by boat. To ensure the Royal Family arrived safely, our group discussed putting the stadium into lockdown as soon as they arrived at the venue to avoid anyone entering the stadium for safety reasons, where they will be escorted to a secured function room to watch the game.

At 12pm, on the day of the crisis scenario, all groups got informed that there was a suspected bomb at Cardiff Castle after a phone call was reported. Principality Stadium often gets at least 7 phone calls during an event of a suspected bomb threat. As gold command, we all decided as a group that the best decision was to evacuate Cardiff Castle and guide fans to a safe spot, while making the fans unaware of the situation to avoid panic and rush into the city centre. Then as part of the safety measures, we would call bomb disposal to investigate the area just in case the phone call wasn't a hoax as stakeholders are a main priority. Lockdown was another option that we as a group discussed but thought that it would be too risky if there was a threat or harm to people nearby. The author (Jennifer Hesterman, 2019) suggests that the best course of action to a bomb threat would be to evacuate the area, even if it's a hoax but does mention that evacuees could be at risk if the bomb is near the exit, so that could be a potential risk to evacuees. As a group, we could have improved in this area, as later we found out that the stadium has multiple bomb threat hoaxes and could have used facial recognition and CCTV cameras to see if anyone was acting suspicious or on the wanted list.

One major problem with mega events is that fans can have fake tickets and staff need to be aware of these and deny entry to those people. Some people may have been sold fake tickets, so fans need to be aware of these fake tickets on social media. It is a criminal offence to sell fake tickets, and people should be aware of the consequences. Reselling tickets can also be an issue if the attendee's name isn't on the ticket, and it is safer to only buy tickets from the original event website (Scott, D, 2023). At 1pm, in the crisis scenario there were cases of fans using fake tickets. As gold command, we decided that we wanted a statement released on social media before the event to warn people about using fake tickets, then to have measures in place such as limited restriction at Principality Stadium, have multiple check stations before entering the stadium to enable time for checking tickets and keep the flow of crowd control in check with people entering the stadium. In the Champions league in Cardiff, people were asked to show their tickets before entering the security zone by the ring of steel (police) to ensure that there were no fake tickets. This happened in 2017, where a fan paid '£500', and on the third checkpoint got refused entry after being sold a fake ticket (Sands, K, 2017).

By 3pm, fighting began to happen between the fans and flares started to go down Cardiff Bay, as gold command, we decided the best strategic plan was send police with horses down to Cardiff Bay to stop the fighting between fans and confiscate the flares and arrest those involved as it is a criminal offence. We reported this to silver, who suggested informing the pubs and bars that fans are drinking and getting into fights and limiting the alcohol limit. After this crisis, the commands were also informed that fans started throwing things at resident houses and that a council vehicle was left running in the security zone. As a group, we decided to send police down to where the fans were throwing things and check the vehicle registration and CCTV cameras to see who the driver was. This happened at the real-life event and caused suspicion, but it turned out someone forgot to turn off the vehicle. With crisis management it is essential to see the proposed risks and potential threats.

The major crisis that required quick response thinking happened around 9:58pm in the scenario, the roads reopened, and a suspicious van has been seen driving around. As a group we decided to check the CCTV cameras and reported to silver command, 5 – 6 people got hit by the van, which led to multiple stabbings and were seen with harmful weapons. Using the crisis management system (Beirman, 2016), as a gold command we looked at the overall crisis, we chose the strategic plan to solve the crisis, and then implemented the plan in place to monitor and stop the crisis. As a group, we decided to send armed forces to the location, put the bars and restaurants into lockdown, check CCTV'S for identity, put

the roads back into road closures, and then armed forces dealt with the crisis. This was a really hard task as it involved quick strategic planning and thinking as a group, we lacked communication at the end as we had to solve the issue quickly with the other commands. This crisis was like the London Bridge attacks and armed forces arrived at the scene 5 minutes after the reported call and escalated very quickly.

Luckily at the real-life event of the Champions League, no major crisis happened as there was a high number of securities in the area. If this crisis did happen at the Cardiff Champions League, there would be huge impacts to Cardiff City, such as loss of public safety, loss of reputation and finances, impact on families and loss of lives or harm and injuries to people. Also, as Cardiff is a smaller capital city, it would have been unexpected and have huge media coverage, which is like the Manchester attack. People would fear going to Cardiff and would have a loss of tourism and have economic issues. The impacts would be like the London Bridge attacks, where residents and people in London would have anxiety incase another crisis happens like this again (Jumbe, S., Milner, A., Clinch, M., Kennedy, J., Pinder, R.J., Sharpe, C.A. and Fenton, K., 2021).

Overall, crisis management is key to any event and for future recommendations the events should have a clear implementation plan that considers any risks that could potentially happen. The London Bridge attack was unexpected, so quick decision making from the commands had to be in place, which they successfully achieved. As London is a capital city, it is essential for London for MI5 to keep on top of security measures to stop these crisis's from happening. The champions League event was deemed too successful as no major crisis happened, as there was high security in place. With the scenario, as a team we worked well to come up with quick thinking strategies to reduce the crisis, but we needed to improve on communication and have specific roles. We needed more preplanning with crisis models to plan accordingly to the crisis.

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