# Organisational Resilience

Adversity Leadership

Developing and implementing effective adversity leadership practice is one component of strengthening an organisation's resilience capacity.

About this booklet

This booklet is set out in a series of sections focusing on different components of an adversity leadership team's life cycle.
In each section, you will find:
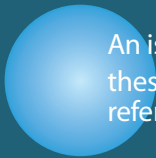
An issue for consideration in blue - these issues have been raised in a reference source

An idea to trial in green - these ideas have been identified in a reference source or have been seen in use in a business by the author

Reference sources include books, research papers, video clips and websites.

In this booklet we have purposefully used the term Adversity Leadership Team. These teams could include incident management teams, emergency management teams, crisis management teams, business continuity management teams, response and recovery or solutions teams etc. The term Adversity Leadership Team covers all of these. The information provided has applicability to some or all of the different teams. It is up to the reader to assess how the information provided can be used to build the performance of their teams.

"If you think it is expensive to hire a professional to do the job, wait until you hire an amateur"

- Red Adair

Background

Developing and implementing effective adversity leadership practice is one component of strengthening an organisation's resilience capacity. Good adversity leadership practices will increase the possibility that adverse events are planned for and managed effectively.

This booklet brings together a diverse range of research findings, and suggests practical activities that can be used to improve the preparedness and performance of Adversity Leadership Teams.

The research base suggests a number of broad dimensions to address in enhancing adversity leadership. These broad dimensions are:

- Improving information management and communication

- Understanding the issues versus the trigger event in making sense of what has happened

- Organisational structures, teams and decision making, and

- Psychology, perceptual issues, ambiguity, stress management and group think.

Traditional adversity preparation mainly focuses on structures, experience and actions to anticipate based on past events. This is very important, but even more important is to prepare our adversity leaders for the management of uncertainty, complexity, and novel situations.

Not all suggestions in this booklet will be relevant to Adversity Leadership Teams in all organisations across all situations. This is the nature of the problem. Formulaic approaches do not work in the face of complexity and uncertainty. However by reading and thinking through the many issues raised, staff responsible for adversity leadership programs may be stimulated to review their approaches and consider new ideas. This booklet also raises ideas to trial in exercises and to emphasise in training. Many of the issues raised may also have relevance for incident reviews and debriefs.

Many organisations have an Adversity Leadership Team structure and supporting systems. Supporting systems may include special facilities, checklists, adversity procedures and information technology. Structures and supporting systems provide the basis for leadership in adversity. The ideas raised in this booklet can contribute to the refinement of structures and supporting systems.

Throughout this booklet references are provided to enable readers to explore ideas in more detail. These references could be a book, research paper, video clip or website. Exploring these links will provide interested readers with insights and promote further exploration and development of ideas.

Giving your team a head start

Effective forewarning identifies developing conditions that may trigger the activation of an Adversity Leadership Team.

In any organisation, managers are busy focusing on routine objectives and therefore collecting and analysing the information required to achieve them. Managers may have no time for collecting and analysing information on emerging or developing risks in the operating environment or at the fringe of their routine world. Frequently there are signals that a problem is developing and often someone in an organisation detects the weak signal.

The challenge for an organisation is having a process for quickly assessing these signals and recommending action to be taken to prepare for developing threats.

Some organisations establish a Rapid Reflection Force (RRF) to perform this role. The RRF is made up of people with the skills and knowledge to:

- frame, anticipate, and clarify the nature of a source of risk

- understand the possible consequences the source of risk poses for the business, supply chains and community

- make recommendations on actions to be taken to effectively manage the risk arising

An effective RRF depends significantly on the participants having the ability to think systematically about possibilities that could arise from the source of risk. Effective RRFs empower any member to call the team into action at the detection of a weak signal. Weak signals may be collected from media scanning, informal networks, geopolitical websites, intelligence networks, industry associations etc. RRF members need to be people from diverse backgrounds who have an inquiring mind, accept complexity, understand inter-connectedness, think outside their operating sphere, are networked and accept uncertainty.

RRFs can also be used to review accidents and disasters that have impacted other companies, industry, or society to identify learnings for their own organisation.

Effective RRFs mean Adversity Leadership Teams have a head start and are in place before competitors know there is a problem. This gives these organisations the edge in obtaining response resources and information.

Paper: "A New Cosmology of Risks and Crises: Time for a Radical Shift in Paradigm and Practice" by Patrick Lagadec
http://www.patricklagadec.net/fr/pdf/New_Cosmology.pdf

Books: "Peripheral Vision – Detecting the Weak Signals" by George Day and Paul Schoemaker; "Wide Angle Vision" by Wayne Burkan; "The Age of the Unthinkable" by Joshua Cooper Ramo.

"He is most free from danger, who, even when safe, is on his guard"

- Syrus Publilius

1st Century BC

Launch and coach your team for success

Following 9/11 US Intelligence agencies conducted Project Looking Glass. This project identified that the way people in a new team were introduced had a significant impact on the team's effectiveness. It was found that introduction by job title and job status inhibited partnerships. Teams that introduced themselves by the skills and knowledge they brought to the table were more effective at working together. These teams utilised everyone's abilities to achieve goals.

Solving complex problems in a rapidly developing context requires effective information exchange between participants, the generation of solution options, and the critique of possible solutions from multiple perspectives. Items such as uniforms, job status, and the way introductions are done can inhibit effective information flows, solutions generation, and identification of problems and opportunities.

Close attention should be paid to the interactions in an Adversity Leadership Team. Consideration should be given to effective introductions based on skills and knowledge brought to the team and the setting of interpersonal codes of practice that promote open discussion.

In some adversity management centres tabards or identification bibs are used to denote a person's role. Research into sports teams shows that once a team puts on their jerseys the body releases low levels of Oxytocin. The Oxytocin increases the desire of team members to assist in achieving each other's objectives. The Oxytocin strengthens the team's cohesion and unity of purpose. Oxytocin also improves our ability to interpret people's faces.

The use of tabards in an Adversity Leadership Team can also be useful in helping the team to achieve cohesion and unity of purpose.

Research shows that we are not capable of discussing strategy when we first come together and need time to settle into the team setting first.

When the Adversity Leadership Team first assembles set some quick tasks to be completed to allow members to settle into the environment. Initial objectives in an event can often be of a standard nature. Have these initial objectives established to enable an effective team launch. Once the team is established, bring them together for complex strategy discussions.

Research shows that we are configured to conduct mid-point reviews of activities. Half way through the shift conduct a review of what has been achieved and what needs to be revised in the operation. At the mid-point the brain is primed to undertake this task.

Ensure that at the mid-point of the Adversity Leadership Team's shift there is a review of the team's response.

The following checklist is provided to assist in developing new procedures or revising existing ones. The practices are identified by various authors.

Ensure that at the mid-point of the Adversity Leadership Team's shift there is a review of the team's response.

- Introduce the team by their knowledge and capabilities

- Set clear role boundaries for each part of the team

- Set the operating code for the team:
  - challenging each other's ideas is good
  - asking others why they are thinking what they are is necessary to combat:
    - emotional tagging (referencing to the last big event they have experienced)
    - confirmation bias (looking only for information proving their interpretation is right)
    - narrative fallacy (forming and interpretation of the event that is incorrect)

- Establish **initial** response objectives and strategies:
  - to ensure safety
  - to establish an effective network of thinkers
  - to establish key communication links
  - to alert key stakeholders
  - to confirm initial information about the event
  - to contain spread of the event

- Set the decision making framework:
  - values and beliefs that decisions are to be based on
  - sacraficial goals
  - rule breaking boundaries

- Develop strategy once the team has settled their environment:
  - make sense of the event
  - establish what the event means to different stakeholders
  - decide what the outcomes should look like
  - communicate intentions
  - communicate concerns

- Ask open-ended questions:
  - how are you going to do that?
  - do you see any issues in getting that to happen?

- Conduct a major review of the roadmap at mid-shift
  - is what we are doing working?
  - what have we done that was not successful?
  - what do we want the next half of our shift to achieve?
  - what shall we do differently for the next half of our shift?

"The beginning is the most important part of the work"

- PLATO
Greek philosopher and writer
429-347 B.C.E.

Books: "Leading Teams – Setting the stage for great performances" by J Richard Hackman; "Top Dog" by Po Bronson & Ashley Merryman

Paper: The Sport Hormone? http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/landia/PIIS2213858713700044.pdf

Improving your team's understanding of the problem

When looking at a scene we often focus on the object or point we think is important versus the scene's context. We will look for what we want to find, not what is there. In doing so we are oblivious to what else is going on. This characteristic is not as strong in cultures that teach the importance of context to children instead on focusing on objects independent of their setting.

Adversity Leadership Teams can be assisted in analysing the consequences of an event by the use of techniques that encourage them to see beyond the immediate trigger event. An example of a trigger event might be a bushfire or electrical outage. The team may require help to identify the true consequences to be managed such as customer impacts, regulatory implications, reputation damage, societal outrage, environmental effects, organisational disruption, interdependency issues etc. It is important to open the team's vision to the scope and scale of the event as much as possible to mitigate tunnel vision.

Youtube:
"The Monkey Business Illusion" by Daniel J Simmons: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY

People often do not notice change occurring around them; the human brain normally seeks out a stable environment. Identifying what has changed in a set of data or a picture may not be easy.

In an emergency operations centre it is important to bring information to people's attention if information changes, or if staff are absent from an emergency operations centre for a period of time. It should not be assumed that people have identified or acknowledged the change. Significant changes and developments should be actively bought to the attention of Adversity Leadership Team members.

Youtube:
"Movie Perception Test" by Daniel J Simmons: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBoMjORwA-4&feature=plcp

The male and female brains react quite differently to elevated stress levels. Males will increase their desire to be accepted by the team as a valuable member and be less likely to recognise risks. Females will increase their ability to interpret emotions in faces while developing a greater appreciation for people's interpretation of the situation. Members of an Adversity Leadership Team will react differently to elevated testosterone levels.

Different people bring different strengths to an Adversity Leadership Team. Female members of the team have a valuable role to play in identifying when team members display doubts or concerns about the solution being applied to solve problems. There is a significant value in having diversity in an Adversity Leadership Team.

Book: "The Hour Between the Wolf and the Dog" by John Coates

It is much easier for our brain to interpret a set of data if given a clue to predict what to look for. This prediction helps our brain recognise which information is useful. As the brain is looking for information to attach to the clue there is a risk that it may overlook information that does not seem relevant. In doing so key information suggesting alternate viewpoints may be ignored.

When briefing Adversity Leadership Team members, start by defining the key purpose or focus of the briefing. This provides a skeleton for the brain to sort and attach information. However be aware that this may reduce the receiver's focus on the broader context.

Book: "Incognito - The secret lives of our brain" by David Eagleman

The brain's method for storing and interpreting data is through the use of patterns. These patterns enable the brain to predict what it will hear and see next. The delay in our ability to process and interpret sights and sounds means we have to forecast what is next, i.e. make an assumption. Therefore we look and listen for what we expect - not necessarily what is. When our forecast does not happen it causes the Locus Coeruleus (a small nucleus in the brain stem) to raise our mental alert status. This increases our ability to see movement, hear soft sounds and alerts the body to prepare for action.

If a briefing contains unexpected information be sure to give team members time to process the information. If necessary, give that part of the briefing twice. People may need to see or hear the information twice or for a longer period to process it. Key information can be presented using visual material to ensure a common interpretation. Explain any symbols, terminology and colour coding used so all recipients have a common interpretation.

Book: "On Intelligence" by Jeff Hawkins

Shannon's Information theory describes how when we know another person well, we often shorten our verbal interaction because both parties will infer supplementary information based on shared experiences and an understanding of each other's expectations.

When briefing Adversity Leadership Team members remember that not all the team may have had your experiences or know of your expectations. Ensure the detail provided is adequate for the newest and least experienced members of your team. Be concerned if members fitting this description have no questions. Be sure to check that they understand the information you have conveyed and the actions you want done.

Book: "On Intelligence" by Jeff Hawkins

Creating mindfulness is important in managing situations with high levels of volatility and uncertainty. Mindful staff are aware of what is happening, what has to happen, what can go wrong and therefore what to look out for. Mindful staff are more likely to see early warning indicators of problems.

Gary Klein provides this guide for briefings:

Situation

Here is what I think we face.

Task

Here is what I think we should do.

Intent

Here is why I think this is what we should do.

Concern

Here is what we should keep our eye on because if that changes we are in a whole new situation.

Collaborate

Now talk to me. Tell me if you don't understand, cannot do it, or see something I do not.

Books: "Managing the Unexpected" by Karl Weick and Kathleen Sutcliffe; "Intuition at Work" by Gary Klein.

"Having all the answers is less important than knowing what to ask"

- Robe S Kaplan

Improve your team's brainpower

The human brain represents only 2% of an average person's body weight but accounts for around 20% of the body's total energy usage. Your blood supply system can only supply enough energy to activate around 2% of the brain's neurons at any one time.

Working in a busy Adversity Leadership Team managing uncertainty and large volumes of information and decision making places significant demands on the brain's processing capacity. In an adversity event the provision of appropriate food and good fluid intake is important to optimise staff effectiveness. Members of the team should take regular breaks with sufficient exercise to promote blood flow.

When people become sleep deprived their ability to utilize the food they are consuming falls by one-third. The ability to make insulin and to extract energy for the brain begins to fall. The body reacts by wanting more food and the body's stress hormone levels begin to rise in an uncontrolled manner. Five consecutive nights of reduced sleep gives the cognitive performance of 48 hours without sleep.

Organisations need to ensure that they have adequate Adversity Leadership Team capacity to enable stand down periods and the staffing of operations that may last multiple days. After an intense shift in an emergency operations centre most people take some hours to reduce their stress levels enough to enable sleep. The sleep patterns of Adversity Leadership Team members should be monitored to ensure they are capable of effective decision making.

Books: "Brain Rules" by John Medina; "The Power of Habits" by Charles Duhigg
Video: http://www.brainrules.net/dvd

"We have been planning for easy, but we need to plan for real"

- Craig Fugate
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Improving your team's interactions

The Milgram experiment involved subjects giving electric shocks to people at the direction of a laboratory worker. Findings from the Milgram experiment showed that participants carried out the electrical shock 62% of times that the laboratory worker wore a laboratory coat but only 20% of the time when the laboratory worker wore civilian clothing.

Items such as uniforms have a big impact on how Adversity Leadership Team members react to ideas from the decision maker. Adversity Leadership Teams need to ensure that their members still question ideas and directions given by all people involved in the team regardless of their clothing and focus instead on a person's knowledge and experience. The use of tabards can be useful in creating a sense of team.

Youtube: Milgram's Obedience to Authority Experiment 2009, 2/3 BBC TV
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzTuz0mNlwU

US National Transportation Safety Board incident data shows that airline incidents are significantly more likely on the first day a crew fly together. Research shows that teams who work together regularly develop an understanding of each other's capabilities and expertise. This enables the team to develop ways of working together that use each other's capabilities and expertise. When teams are fatigued those who work together regularly have been found to pick up more errors in each other's work than fresh teams who are working together for the first time.

Careful consideration should be given to establishing pre-nominated Adversity Leadership Teams. These teams should work together during exercises and events. Regularly exercising strengthens the team's ability to optimise their effectiveness.

Book: "Collaborative Intelligence – Using teams to solve hard problems" by J Richard Hackman

"A title does not justify an action nor reveal the worth of a man"

- Jordan Moussa

Improving your team's decision making

The brain seeks out information to confirm that an idea is right. This is called confirmation bias and may mean we ignore information that contradicts our interpretation of an event or suggests a solution we developed may not work. There are many former leaders such as US President Abraham Lincoln and General Motors CEO Alfred Sloane who were well known for ensuring that people around them did question each other and presented differing opinions. The diversity of views and thinking processes helps to mitigate our tendency towards confirmation bias. Colin Powell was known to say to his intelligence officers "Tell me what you know, then tell me what you don't know, and then tell me what you think. Always keep those three separate".

Ensuring Adversity Leadership Teams have diverse membership can assist mitigating the effect of confirmation bias. This diversity can be created by using staff from different disciplines, different career backgrounds, different business units, different age groups and thinking styles. When developing a solution to a problem confirmation bias may be reduced by posing the question, "Why might this solution fail?" The discussion of this question for just two minutes by the team may be enough to bring out issues that were not considered previously. Also consider posing the question, "What don't we know that would help with this decision?"

The role of our brain's orbitofrontal cortex is to integrate emotions into the decision making process. Many of these emotions originate from the Amygdala nuclei that have a key role in the formation and storage of memories from emotional events, i.e. our greatest fears and loves. Interestingly the words 'emotion' and 'motivation' share the same Latin root movere which means to move. Decisions under pressure will be significantly influenced by the stored emotional memories and core beliefs of the people making them.

During exercises, include events that identify core beliefs and highlight how major emotional experiences impact decision making. Understanding the Adversity Leadership Team's core beliefs and major emotional triggers enables an understanding of their likely decisions under pressure.

Books: "How we Decide" by Jonah Lehrer; "Brain Rules" by John Medina

Finnish proverb:

"Joukossa tyhmyys tiivistyy"

"In a group stupidity condenses"

Improve your team's efficiency

A large part of our activity takes place in short periods of burst action. The concept of 'burstiness' is evident in our phone calls, our emails, our productive time etc. Burstiness means that we do most of our work in concentrated bursts with significantly less energetic periods in between. This idea underpinned the great business productivity innovation of Ivy Lee in 1903. The innovation was the idea of asking managers to make a list of what had to be done the next day when leaving work. This created a burst of focused activity each morning. This concept has been rewritten in many management books since that time.

Create a simple A5 pad with headings such as 'urgent', 'priority' and 'later'. Each time the Adversity Leadership Team meet to review progress ensure members leave with actions on their lists. This will create a burst period after each meeting.

Book: "Bursts" by Albert-Laszlo Barabasi

"To get through the hardest journey, we need to take one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping."

Chinese Proverb

Top teams take opportunity

Our brain thrives on habits. Habits make up many parts of our daily routine allowing the brain to conserve energy. Major adversity events provide a unique opportunity for organisations as they enable habits and routines to be modified at a time when those who use them are more receptive to change. Undertaking innovative thought requires the brain to focus its capacity. The less energy being consumed to undertake routine tasks, the more there is to be directed to innovative thinking.

Turning many of the activities that the Adversity Leadership Team undertakes during events into habits will free brain capacity for creative and innovative thinking. Separating some staff from the intensity of the operation may also allow more innovative ideas to be generated.

Books: "The Power of Habits" by Charles Duhigg; "Brain Rules" by John Medina

"I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been"

- Wayne Gretzky, Canadian Hockey Star

Adversity
Leadership

TISN
FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
RESILIENCE