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Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness Measures by Meeting Planners

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Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness

Finliard et al., Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness

Measures by Meeting Planners

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. The 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. 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 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 two examples of crises that have occurred at meetings in recent years. Yet the limited research available on crisis preparedness and meetings indicates less than half of meeting planners ever prepare a risk management plan for their meetings (Event Solutions, 2007; Kline & Smith, 2006) leaving meeting participants at risk for injury or death and the organizations holding meetings (meeting organizers) at risk for bad press, liability, and financial hardship.

The need for research to focus specifically on what organizations should do to prepare for crises 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.

Crisis and disaster scholars encourage researchers to collaborate with those who put crisis management measures into effect (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Literature Review

Commercial Importance of Meetings

Despite the visibility of events like the Democratic National Convention and the annual International Council of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE) conference, many people do not realize the importance of meetings to the organizations that hold them. The organizations holding meetings (the meeting organizers) often depend on the success of the meeting for commercial reasons. For example, meeting organizers often invest a great deal of money into meetings. Twenty percent of associations have annual convention and meeting budgets of \$2.5 million or more. Meetings account for one-third of the annual income for some organizations (Russell, 2007). These organizations depend on meeting planners for the success of their meetings. Meeting planners may plan an average of 194 different meetings with an average duration of 2.6 days in a single year (Meeting Professionals International, 2008).

Crisis Management

There are ambiguities around uses of the terms prevalent in crisis, disaster, and emergency management literature (Elliott & Smith, 2006). For purposes of this study, *crisis* refers to an *organizational crisis*. Organizational crises are low-probability, high-impact events that threaten the viability of an organization (Pearson & Clair, 1998). These events are characterized by “ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as a belief that decisions must be made swiftly” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 60).

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 rather than preparedness. In the tourism field, recovery is a particularly prevalent area of crisis management research (see for example Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2003).

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. The importance of preparing for crises is apparent due to 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). Thus, practice of crisis preparedness, and the research to support that practice, is sorely needed. At its least, crisis management results in the protection of the ongoing operations of an organization. At its best, crisis management results in saved lives.

Crisis Preparedness for Events and Meetings

Crisis preparedness measures are those measures taken to reduce the likelihood that a crisis will occur or to minimize the impact of the crisis. The same crisis can have different impacts and 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, depending on perspective. 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 could have become a business or financial crisis for Extol. This is especially true if it did not have event cancellation insurance or the meeting planner did 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.

The people who are most likely to have to implement a crisis plan if a crisis occurs are the people who should prepare for it (Drabek, 1994). Thus, meeting planners are the appropriate people to survey about crisis preparedness for meetings. Meeting attendees are also likely to depend on meeting planners in a crisis. Like other tourists and business travelers, meeting attendees are often unfamiliar with the meeting destination and venue. 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.

Methodology

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 40 crisis preparedness measures in the survey were identified through a review of the literature and the Delphi process (for more detail on survey development, see Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, Palakurthi, Leong, & Johnson, 2009). The first part of the survey addressed characteristics of the meeting planner respondents, their meetings, and their organizations. 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 the 40 crisis preparedness measures presented.

Professional members of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) who self-identify as meeting executives, meeting managers, or plan meetings as a major component of their positions (2,041) were sent an e-mail PCMA asking them to complete the web survey (Professional Convention Management Association, 2008). In order to achieve an adequate response rate, the survey was subsequently sent to the subscribers of MiForum, an e-mail list of 1,500 meeting planners. The PCMA web survey yielded 240 responses and the MiForum web survey yielded 324 responses. Of the 564 total surveys that were collected (a 16% response rate), 89 incomplete surveys were eliminated resulting in 475 usable surveys.

The implementation of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners were evaluated using descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and ANOVA to compare mean differences based

on characteristics of the meeting planners, their meetings, and their organizations. The elements that influence the adoption (or lack of adoption) of crisis preparedness program measures by respondents was evaluated using content analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions.

Analysis

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. On other characteristics, respondents were nearly evenly split. Approximately half 47.2% had 10 years or less experience. Likewise, 48.8% of respondents have no professional meetings industry certification. Nearly half (49.5%) work for small to medium-sized organizations (<50 employees), which likely means they may have fewer resources for crisis preparedness and planning. Approximately half (47.7%) planned more than 20 meetings per year. The largest meeting planned by 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. For analysis, quartiles were used to compare the means of like-sized groups.

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

In a previous study, factor analysis, employing principal component analysis with varimax rotation was used to reduce the number of crisis preparedness measures into meaningful dimensions, referred to here as *core* crisis preparedness measures (Hilliard, Scott-Halsell, & Palakurthi, 2009). The five factors yielded explaining 66.6% of the variance were used to identify the *core* crisis preparedness measures for meetings. Five of the original 40 measures were eliminated due to double loading on two factors. This had a negligible effect on the explained variance. 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 (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Core Crisis Preparedness Measures Based on Principal Component Analysis

<i>Crisis Preparedness Measures</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>	<i>F5</i>	<i>E</i>
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	.284	.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

One-way between groups ANOVA was used to analyze the how the adoption of these five *core* crisis preparedness measures was related to (1) industry segment, (2) organization size, (3) number of meetings planned per year, (4) size of largest meeting planned, and (5) number of years of experience (see Table 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 3).

Influence of the industry segments

Four industry segments were identified according to the organizations for which respondents 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 identified the group differences as highlighted in Table 2.

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 menu of services to their clients, including crisis preparedness. This may be a good topic for future research.

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 2.

It is interesting that medium-sized 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 that they need these specialized services, but not large enough to have someone in-house to assist with them.

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 2).

Influence of the size of the largest meeting 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 2.

It is logical 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 of a crisis if crisis preparedness measures are not put into place.

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). Surprisingly, 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 2).

Table 2
Hilliard et al.: Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness
Analysis of Variance and Post Hoc Comparisons on Meeting Characteristics

I. Industry Segment	F	<i>p</i>	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	<i>p</i>	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	<i>p</i>	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.

Influence of professional meetings industry certification

Hamard et al.: Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness

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 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 meetings outside North America with those who do not plan meetings outside North America.

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 3).

Table 3

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

Professional Certification Status		With Certification N=158		No Certification N=169		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
Destination of Meetings Planned		Outside North America N=114		Not outside North America N=246		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 N=147		Has not experienced a previous crisis N=212		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 $p = .05$						

It is again somewhat surprising that there were no significant differences between meeting planners who plan meetings outside North America and those who don't. It would seem that more crisis preparedness measures would need to be in place for meetings in other countries or at least that complacency would drive meeting planners to be more comfortable and prepare less for meetings in their own country. This may bear further research.

Research Question 2 – Elements Influencing Adoption of Crisis Preparedness Measures

Based on the assumption that no respondent implemented all 40 crisis preparedness measures for all of their meetings, respondents were asked open-ended questions about the elements that influenced their adoption (or lack of adoption) of crisis preparedness measures for meetings. Content analysis was used to code and analyze the responses to these open-ended questions (Krippendorff, 1980). Ten categories each of elements influencing adoption and lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures were identified (see Tables 4 & 5).

A review of the literature suggested several elements that might encourage the implementation of crisis preparedness measures such as: regulatory compliance (Zsidisin, Melnyk, & Ragatz, 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.

Table 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry experts • Security personnel • Effectiveness of program • Efficient use of resources • Size of organization • Communications • Organizational continuity 	2	.4

The literature also suggested several elements that might discourage the implementation of crisis preparedness measures. Among those suggested are role ambiguity (it is someone else's job) (Elliott & Smith, 2006), misplaced optimism or denial (Sattler, Kaiser, & Hittner, 2000; Wicks, 2001), expense (Burton, Kates, & White, 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 elements gleaned from the content analysis of elements influencing lack of adoption of crisis preparedness measures.

Table 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaware that I need to • Contracts/waivers will protect us 	17	3.5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negativity/will scare attendees • Fear of liability • Venues are uncooperative 	<p>Harvard et al., Elements that Influence the Implementation of Crisis Preparedness</p>	
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Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to analyze the adoption of crisis preparedness measures by meeting planners. By identifying how crisis prepared meeting planners are and determining the elements that influence their implementation of core crisis preparedness measures, this study provides an empirical basis for meeting planners and meeting organizers to conduct a self-assessment of their crisis preparedness and identify why they may not be fully prepared for crises that may adversely affect their meetings, their organization, and their attendees.

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 commercial importance of meetings to organizations, it is surprising that there is not more research on what organizations do to ensure the success of meetings and the safety 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 by addressing the preparedness of meeting planners and the influences on the adoption of crisis preparedness measures.

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. 19

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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