

Crisis simulation exercise: planning checklist

Plan, run and learn from a crisis communications exercise, from a tabletop session to a live simulation.

WEEKS BEFORE

- ☐ Agree two or three measurable objectives with the exercise sponsor
- ☐ Choose the format: drill, tabletop exercise or live simulation
- ☐ Pick a scenario from your risk register and check it is credible
- ☐ Name the exercise director, controller and observers
- ☐ Book the players, including the senior leaders who would decide for real

BUILD THE EXERCISE

- ☐ Write the main events list: what happens, when, and why
- ☐ Write each inject with the action it should prompt and what good looks like
- ☐ Brief the role players, including the journalists
- ☐ Prepare the exercise clock, logs and observer notes
- ☐ Start every exercise message with EXERCISE – EXERCISE – EXERCISE

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Send players the rules, timings and contacts a few days ahead
- ☐ Tell the wider organisation the exercise is running
- ☐ Brief the players, start the clock and keep to time
- ☐ Let players decide on incomplete information
- ☐ Speed up or slow down by releasing or holding injects
- ☐ Announce clearly when the exercise has ended

AFTERWARDS

- ☐ Hold a hot debrief before anyone leaves
- ☐ Hold a cold debrief within a few weeks
- ☐ Write the post-exercise report and have the director sign it off
- ☐ Give every lesson an owner and a date
- ☐ Update the plan, then put the next exercise in the diary