

# Trust in Crisis

How to be trusted in the face  
of uncertainty.



**LEFT  
OF BOOM**

“

Trust involves the Juxtaposition of people's loftiest hopes and aspirations with their deepest worries and fears”.

- JEFFERY A. SIMPSON

# Leadership in crisis is a matter of trust

The underpinning value for high performance teams is trust. Trust in each other, your team, your process, individual competence and a common sense of purpose all combine to deliver outstanding results in whichever field of human endeavour. There's no magic pills and no

step-by-step guides, but there is a desire to challenge and strive together for better. All of a sudden fear and uncertainty are not seen as obstacles, but more as challenges to overcome, together, learning and growing.

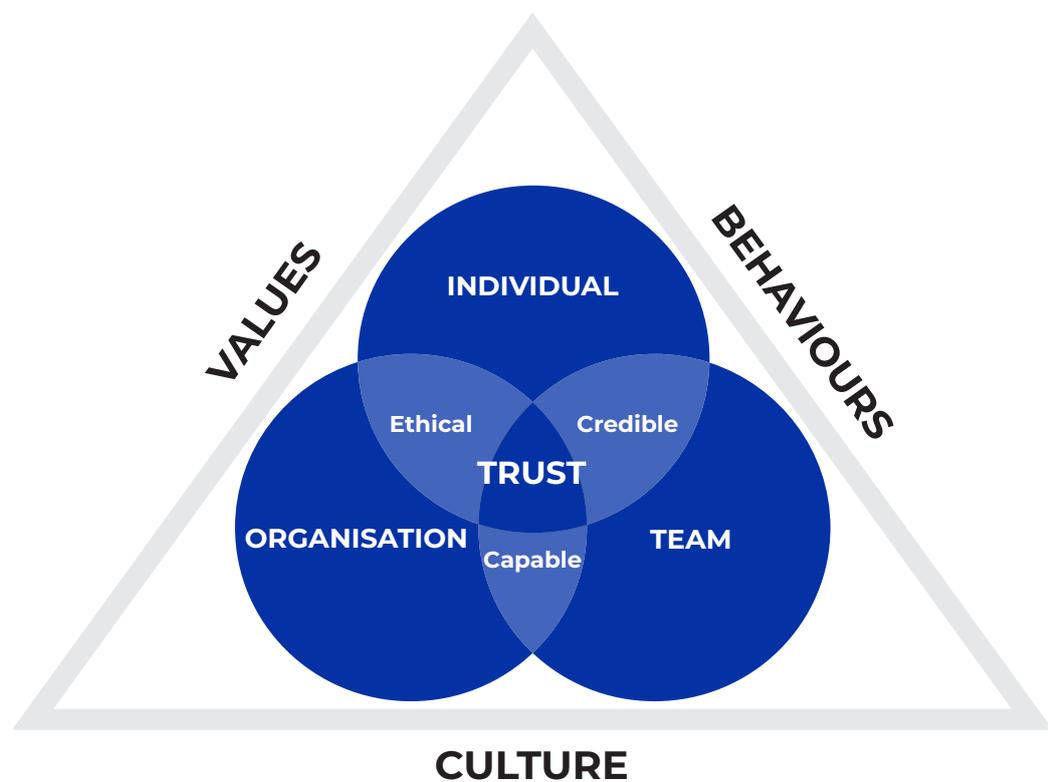


Figure 1.1

When a crisis strikes a high performing team, they don't react, they respond proactively and with confidence. They lean into the problem, work together collaboratively and embrace the opportunity to learn. They recognise the contributing factors and they adapt - stronger and more resilient

from the experience. COVID has forced organisations to re-evaluate their trust paradigms. High performance teams don't adapt because they have to, they do it because they want to. They do it because they trust each other, their process and their structure.





Figure 1.2

## The Trust Paradox

The paradox of trust is that in order to be trusted, one must first distrust. In an effort to establish some level of control, organisations turn to compliance and “Zero trust models”, along with rigid plans and playbooks, in an effort to “design out risk”. These models assume that people make mistakes at the best of times, let alone when they are under pressure. Risk and crisis professionals provide safety nets in the form of rigid plans, centralised command and control structures and strictly curated decisions. The juxtaposition is that businesses have been moving away from these structures for decades, so trying to make corporate crisis leaders into “Incident Controllers” isn’t going to work. They neither have the time nor the inclination or the training and years of experience to operate that way.

“  
Trust -  
but verify  
- RONALD REAGAN  
”

<sup>1</sup> Zero Trust Networks: Building Secure Systems in Untrusted Networks, Doug Barth and Evan Gilman, 2017



# So Where Do You Start?

Optimism bias and groupthink are dangerous foes to business leaders. They breed apathy in planning and lethargy in a response. The panacea isn't compliance-based plans, its flexible and scalable teams that communicate openly and have an inherent trust. Now more than ever before, organisations need to re-think their risk and consequence management programs and focus their efforts on building trust in their people, structure and process to prevent and withstand the crises of the future.

The best way to achieve this is to:

- Understand your purpose
- Build trust in your people
- Focus on preparedness over plans
- Plan and structure for failure
- Build confidence in your process at scale
- Debrief and learn.

# Understand your Purpose

## Assured - Adaptive - Trusted

Every situation has to be met with an intent to adapt or evolve as a result of the experience. Adaptive organisations embrace uncertainty as an opportunity to learn and grow. They can do this because they are more resilient, more trusting and are playing an infinite game. Their trust in themselves, their teams, their process and their stakeholders gives them a sense of conviction they will be able to adapt to any situation.

Left of boom - is the time before a major event, when we can prevent the risk from occurring and prepare our teams. Right of Boom - this is everything after the risk has been realised - consequence management mode. How bad the failure, or how poor the response, determines whether you have a crisis or not.

LEFT OF BOOM	RIGHT OF BOOM	STAKEHOLDER IMPACT
Assured	Adaptive	Trusted
Prepared	Proactive	Empowered
Common Operating Model	Collaborative	Engaged
TRUST		
Structured	Directive	Advised
Planned	Reactive	Notified
Unprepared	Chaotic	Confused

Figure 1.3



## Compliance vs Assurance - understanding your why?

Compliance is for audit - Assurance is for everyone. Assured organisations care about the trust they have invested in the community, their stakeholders and their employees. Assured organisations

implement the appropriate preparedness measures to protect their core values and repay their stakeholders and customer's investment in their success.

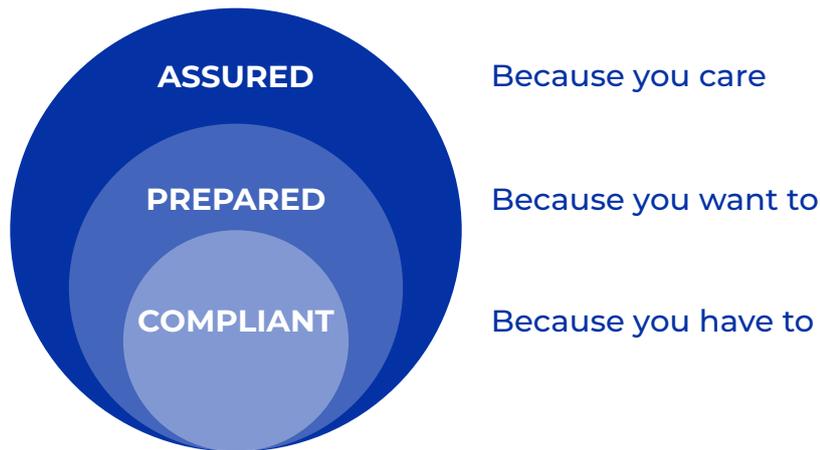


Figure 1.4

## Build Trust in your people

At the core of effective crisis management is trust in your people. A crisis automatically implies that this trust has been broken in some way, sometimes irreparably.

Whether it be an operational or systemic failure, stakeholders, customers and shareholders naturally seek to understand what happened, why it happened and what will be done to prevent it occurring again. This requires assurance. Not just telling your stakeholders what you will do, but acting on it.

“  
Too many  
of us treat  
trust like a  
valuable asset  
that must be  
guarded

- SIMON SINEK

”



# Adaptive Leadership = Trusted Leaders

How you respond and stay ahead of emerging situations also depends on how well you prepare your leaders. The ability for leaders to be clear in chaos and to lead with purpose and empathy has never been more important than now. The leaders who assure their stakeholders that they can respond proactively and empathetically, earn their trust and the right to continue to lead. How leaders

do this, often depends on the situational role they are playing and the values they exhibit in any situation - let alone under the pressure of a crisis.

Adaptive Leadership balances the leadership values with the leadership role in any given situation.

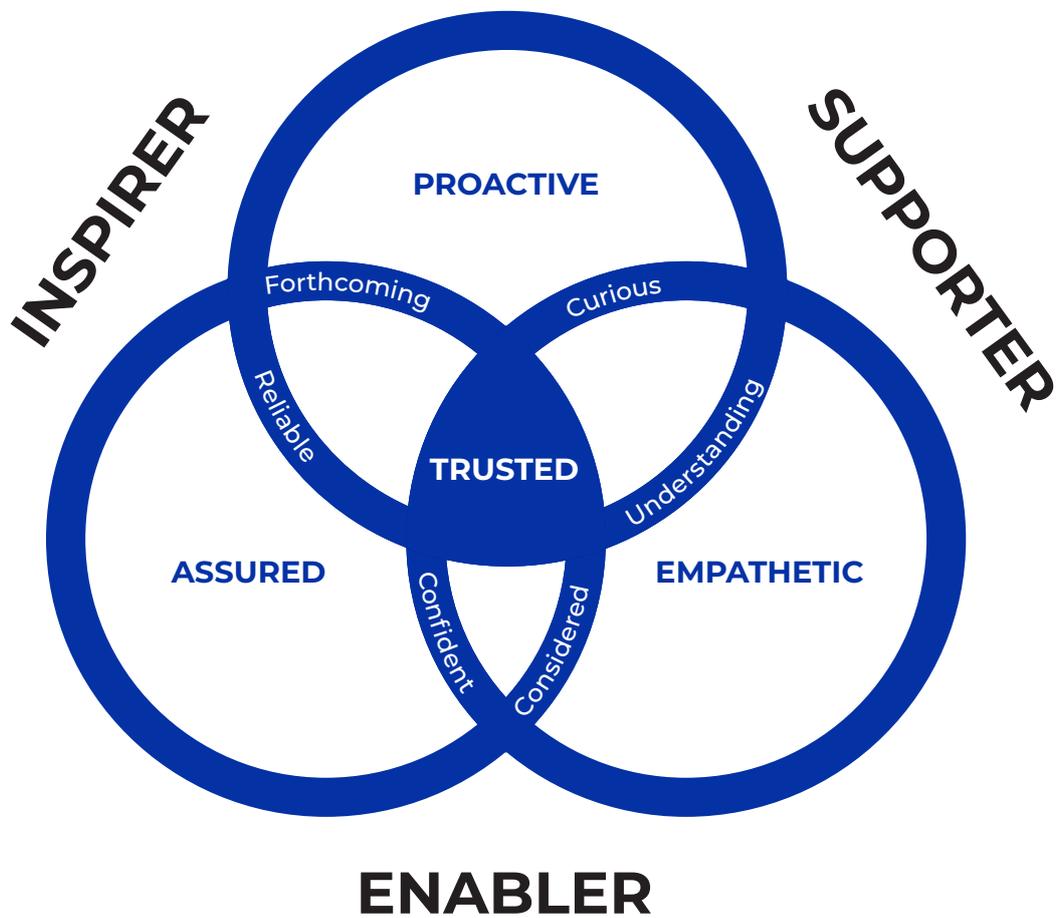


Figure 1.5



# Focus on preparedness over plans

Gone are the days of extensive crisis manuals and Business Continuity Plans. Leaders demand simple checklists or ready reckoners that quickly articulate the steps to be taken when under pressure, so they can efficiently move through the initial chaos. Checklists or “Breakout packs” that describe “how to” plan and prepare for certain aspects of a response are really helpful. Having a common communication protocol and a common planning process is a positive start.

“  
Plans are  
useless, but  
planning is  
indispensable  
- DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

”

## Plan and Structure for failure

Experts and Advisors are identified and the organisation is configured to manage the scale of the incidents that may occur. When Zero-hour kicks off in a crisis, one hour in planning saves 10 hours in a response. Boards and C-suites’ need to take the mindset of planning to fail. “Left of Boom” Planning

Sessions force organisations to consider worst-case scenarios, and build their plans accordingly. This is not an acknowledgment of failure, but a prudent step to ensuring preparedness for any situations.

“  
Amateurs talk strategy,  
professionals talk logistics

- GEN. OMAR BRADLEY

”



# Build confidence in your process at scale

## Structured Teams

Delivering assurance at scale during a crisis is an extremely resource intensive activity. The organisation's ability to quickly activate their crisis teams and build

capacity quickly during a crisis can be the difference between hours and days in the response.

## Clusters

"Clusters" are agile, task-organised, cross-functional teams to address key planning activities, or engage concurrently to plan through different risk scenarios.

Using clusters during a crisis helps build concurrency and capacity, and helps break down group-think. The more we distrust and challenge in planning, the more confidence we build into our plans.

Response clusters work with planning clusters and each can be scaled up or down quickly depending on the incident. Clusters enables crisis teams to manage the here and now, whilst focusing on the future. They allow the organisation to be task-organised, flexible and scalable based on the risk and the level of response.

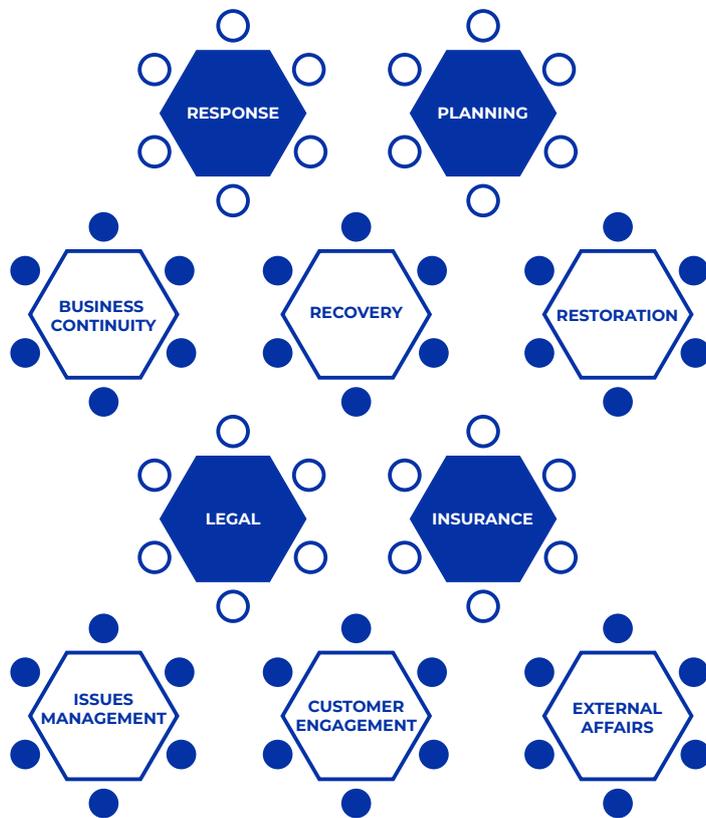


Figure 1.6



# ADAPT Process

Leaders need to challenge and verify every assumption in order to demonstrate that they have assessed all options as a part of their planning. If you don't have the correct structure and process to manage this, too much leadership time is spent processing and re-analysing issues and decisions. Trust in your structure and process becomes critical.

Having a common decision making or planning process becomes crucial. Planning processes save organisations time and ensure the planning process bakes in risk management considerations.

The key here is having a process that everyone trusts in, and leaders who are trusted to challenge plans at every level.

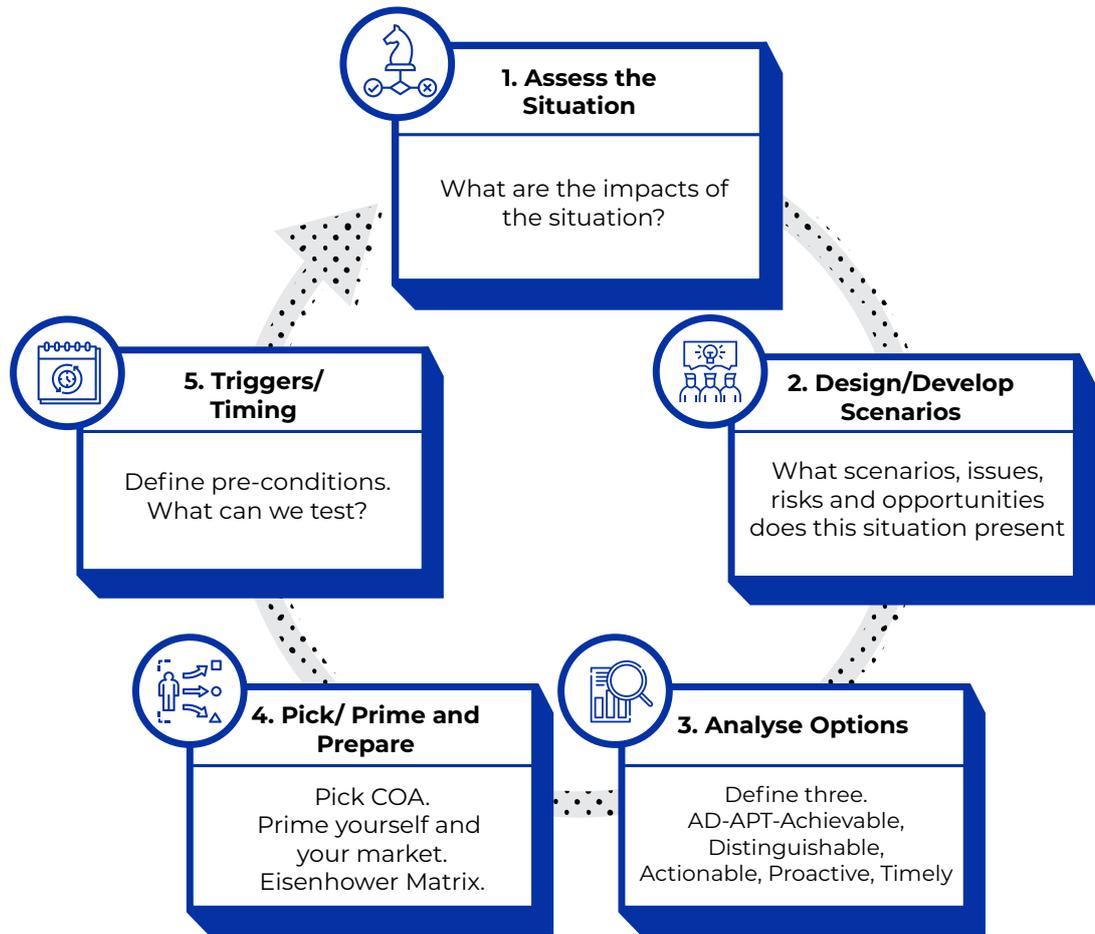


Figure 1.7



## Prepare Hard

Time for some “Hard Fun”. Individual training is important to introduce the leaders to the plans, however with the little time executives have for preparedness activities, the training needs to focus on skills that leaders will apply in crisis situations. Team training needs to be gamified and specific to high risk scenarios relevant for the business and sector. Scaling up from tabletops to full-scale simulations ensures the

organisational response is practiced to failure. This helps test different leadership scenarios and ensures leaders are challenged under realistic conditions. Target ethical dilemmas, team based decision making and practice decision making under pressure in your training. Debriefs are used to gain immediate feedback and to continuously improve the organisational preparedness and build a culture of continuous improvement.

## Debrief and learn

Debriefing is one of the most important ways to build and improve trust between individuals and teams. Debriefing or challenging a plan or process helps enhance the effectiveness of the plan.

Inflight debriefing during a project or an incident helps quickly capture immediate lessons learnt and improvements. Debriefing at the end of an operational

cycle can help the next teams orientate for the next working period. Debriefing at the end of a training activity or actual crisis event, helps the organisation learn and improve.

Once debriefs are performed, the real effort comes in implementing and managing the changes identified.

## The 4 A's - Communicate Openly and Transparently

A key assurance step is actually communicating lessons openly. This will often be a lineball call for your leadership during a crisis, and be an ethical decision-point between legal and your crisis team. Use the four A's:

- + **Acknowledge** - Acknowledge the situation and your role in it. Be objective.
- + **Apologise** - Apologise for the effect and the impact.
- + **Assure** - Assurance comes down to what you are going to do about it. How can you guarantee that you have put in the appropriate safety measures to

minimise the chance of this happening again. Independent third parties play an important role here.

- + **Act** - You need to act, and stay proactive in correcting the mistake.

This applies equally to your internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are often forgotten about when an incident happens, but they are on the frontline of the impact. Ensuring that you respect and communicate with them first empowers them to support your wider efforts.



# Key steps to build trust in your organisation

## Are you ready to lead with purpose in uncertainty?

So what can you do to be better prepared for the next crisis.

- 1. Debrief to improve.** Review your plans and response in light of recent events. What worked well, what could be improved and where were the capability gaps in your plans, structure and team? Seek open input across the different layers of the response.
- 2. Communicate openly and widely.** Time to acknowledge what went well and areas for improvement.
- 3. Plan and structure for failure.** Assume worst case and everything less is manageable.

Build simple and flexible functional plans, backed by the correct resourcing. Identify clusters of expertise and ensure they are included in the activation. Activating at scale can be quickly scaled down.

- 4. Re-train your teams.** With the lessons learnt, re-train your teams. Ensure all people are aware of their roles and know how to work together in a crisis. Target ethical dilemmas, team based decision making and practice decision making under pressure in your training.

- 5. Invest in your leaders.** The leaders who assure their stakeholders that they can respond proactively and empathetically are the most trusted. Investing in their training on risk leadership assists in elevating their confidence and helps them build confidence with their teams. Don't just entrust them with the responsibility, empower them to deliver.

- 6. Test to failure.** There is no point making up scenarios that edify exposures in a crisis management organisation. Testing to failure ensures you challenge your responses under realistic circumstances in order to identify improvement opportunities.

If you are not proactively engaged in the preparation, you're not match-ready for a response.





# About Grant Chisnall

You don't want your crisis response to be based on theory. Grant has supported some of the world's leading organisations through crisis events ranging from cyber attacks to coronavirus; activism to aircrashes; and from Natural disasters to workplace fatalities. He has also interviewed business, military and political leaders who have led through crises as a part of his podcast, Crisis Talks. Grant combines this experience into realistic and crisis - proven preparedness training that equips leaders to respond proactively and lead with confidence through any situation.

## **The outcomes of engaging Grant:**

- + Elevate your program with proven crisis expertise
- + Move from compliant to assured
- + Build trust between your leadership teams
- + Protect your reputation
- + Save significant time and effort in organisational response.

## **How he can help:**

- + Reviews
- + Crisis planning facilitation
- + Leadership Training
- + Boardroom Exercises
- + Full Scale Simulation Exercises
- + Crisis Response Coaching



For more information and supporting tools, please go to

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