

SILVER BULLETS, BLACK SWANS, GRAY RHINOS WITH COD & CHIPS ! 🤖

In this article, the 3rd in our series, Andy Blackwell, ISARR's Senior Risk and Security Advisor, looks at why it's best not to get too bogged down with risk labels, details of complex academic studies, or trying to predict the future, but instead to double down on your organisational resilience, make risk-based decisions quickly and sensibly whilst being prepared to challenge the status quo and break from traditional business models.



There is nothing like a crisis state to bring out a flurry of buzzwords, and myriad of 'expert' views and forecasts about what the future may

or may not hold. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception, with a number of so called '**silver bullets**' being offered up. In reality, these are questionable solutions unlikely to stand up to much scrutiny, and would perhaps be better labelled as 'tarnished duds'.

There has also been menagerie of risk descriptors circulating in the media, including **black swans** and **gray rhinos**, all very sound principles and theories but the terms may be confusing to those outside the risk management community who find themselves faced with managing a crisis.

This article, the 3rd in our series, looks at why it's best not to get too bogged down with risk labels, details of complex academic studies, or trying to predict the future, but instead to double down on your organisational resilience, make risk-based decisions quickly and sensibly whilst being prepared to challenge the status quo and break from traditional business models.

Learning from academic research will always be important though, and the key to robust organisational security and resilience is having the ability to transform this into authentic and effective action at a business level.

Learning from the best practices and mistakes of your own organisation and others will also provide valuable insights.

Most organisations find change difficult at the best of times, but during a crisis their ability to safely manage dynamic change whilst rapidly pivoting the business will often be the critical success factor in terms of business survival.

Pontification and trying to achieve perfection will not help either, the corporate need is for rapid and sensible decision making, bearing in mind the direction of travel may be quite different to how business was conducted prior to the crisis state emerging.

Another challenge for organisations is how to quickly obtain a company-wide, branch by branch situation report. This sounds relatively straightforward but is something many organisations struggle with, often having to use conventional email or a ring-round

system rather than using dedicated tools and platforms to gather the information and collate the responses. The longer it takes to obtain this information, the longer it will be before crisis managers will be able to make informed judgements.

No one welcomes a crisis, but despite the damaging consequences they can bring, they often create opportunities. The challenge for many organisations is not being able to spot the opportunity and 'use the difficulty' due to the pressure of the crisis or the impending crisis.

This is the organisational equivalent of a person not being able to make clear and rational decisions due to the levels of stress they are under. Some people manage stress better than others, and the same applies to organisations. There are those that can operate more collaboratively and are more decisive in a crisis state, and organisations would benefit from incorporating these behaviours into their business as usual activities.

As we've mentioned before, Sir Winston Churchill is quoted as saying '***never waste a good crisis***', which emphasises the need to question the norm, particularly when a crisis comes calling. Traditional solutions alone may not be sufficient, so the organisational focus must be on what you've already done to prepare or minimise the impacts of the particular crisis state, whilst also deploying an empowered, experienced and agile team to make dynamic fast-time decisions based on the best information available at the time.

Once again, security, risk and resilience tools and platforms have a key role to play here.

On the subject of **Churchills**, the British Fish and Chip shop chain of the same name, and part of the Chesterford Group, serving 50,000 customers per week, provides us with a good example of agile decision making, how to rapidly pivot a business, and how to thrive during a crisis.

By way of background, the Coronavirus lockdown forced all the group's 40 fish and chip restaurants in Britain to close to all walk-in customers, and the company was fast running out of money. CEO

James Lipscombe was concerned that the company would run out of cash as the business was losing £150,000 per week, and at that rate the business could only survive for 6 months at the most. Realising the predicament the business was in, Lipscombe knew he had to make fast decisions and break the chain's traditional business model. He quickly expanded the group's system for taking food orders online. All customers would receive their order by click and collect, or have their orders delivered.

The rapid decision making and change of business model, in just 2 weeks, not only protected Churchill's revenue, it enhanced it and provided an improved service offering for their customers. In Lipscombe's own words, "maybe the days of waiting in a fish and chip shop for 10-15 minutes in a queue are probably gone".

There are a number of lessons we can learn from Churchill's fish and chip business, let's take a look at them:

- The senior management identified the warning signals and acted on them quickly.
- There was recognition of an urgent need to change. The company was fast running out of money and its very survival was threatened. There was no guarantee of when normal business activities could resume.
- The organisation had the courage to challenge convention.
- The organisation was able to make rapid decisions based on informed judgements.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also provided us with examples of companies where rapid business growth due to unprecedented demand has resulted in security and risk management lapses. Eric Juan, CEO of Zoom, the online conferencing platform, to his credit recently admitted that his business had 'fallen short' on privacy and security. The Coronavirus outbreak saw a flood of new users, which presented Zoom with challenges they had not anticipated. The platform was originally intended for large organisations with full IT support, and not the myriad of 'lockdown' users. The lesson from Zoom is a clear one, when there is a need to move fast, it is important not to move too quickly and forget the safety and security

elements. Organisations who experience rapid growth can often fall foul of this.

CONCLUSION

The flurry of 'expert' views and buzzwords circulating following a crisis can be distracting and confusing to business leaders. Doubling down on your organisation's security and resilience so that risk-based decisions can be made quickly and sensibly, will be far more productive for your organisation than getting bogged down in complexity. Security, risk and resilience tools and platforms have a key role to play here.

Highly resilient organisations are the ones prepared to challenge the status quo and break from traditional business models. Another key to achieving robust organisational security and resilience is having the ability to transform the outcomes from complex academic research into authentic and effective actions at a corporate level. What we see all too often is a significant gap between good security and resilience and academic theories with the actual practices on the ground.

The examples we have used in this blog are from two completely different industries and demonstrate the learning opportunities created from reviewing best practices and mistakes made by other organisations, in addition to our own of course.

Would Churchills have been as dynamic and willing to break their business model prior to being in the crisis state? Only they will truly be able to answer this, but it does provide food for thought, for them and us all – excuse the pun!

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in further information about the system, would like a demo, or even arrange an initial telephone chat, you can get in touch using the “Contact Us” button below

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