

Business Crisis Triage: The START Framework

A free resource from "Business First Aid: The Emergency Guide for Your Company" by Marcos Duarte Rivero

BUSINESS FIRST AID

The Emergency Guide for your Company



MARCOS DUARTE RIVERO

Former Paramedic & Telecomm Executive for over 25 year's

Introduction: When Multiple Crises Strike

When facing multiple simultaneous business crises, leaders must quickly determine which situations demand immediate attention and which can wait. Just as emergency room doctors use triage protocols to allocate limited resources during disasters, business leaders need a systematic approach to prioritize multiple threats.

The START Framework (Simple Triage and Rapid Treatment) adapted for business helps you quickly categorize issues and allocate resources effectively when everything seems urgent.

Quick Assessment Process (15 Minutes)

1. **Gather basic facts** about each crisis to understand its general nature and scope
2. **Check core survival metrics** to identify immediate existential threats
3. **Identify time-critical issues** requiring action within hours
4. **List available resources** to understand your response capacity
5. **Categorize each crisis** using the framework below

The START Framework Categories

● **RED: Immediate Response Required**

Definition: These crises threaten core business survival, require response within hours, and outcomes can be influenced by immediate action.

Assessment Criteria:

- **Survival Impact:** Direct threat to business viability
- **Time Sensitivity:** Requires action within hours
- **Action Effectiveness:** Available resources can meaningfully impact outcome
- **Resource Requirements:** Resources are available for response

Examples:

- Cash crisis preventing payroll processing
- Catastrophic system failure affecting core operations
- Regulatory emergency threatening license to operate
- Major product safety issue with potential liability
- Sudden loss of key customer representing >25% of revenue

Resource Allocation: Dedicate maximum available resources immediately. Postpone all non-essential activities.

● **YELLOW: Urgent but Not Immediate**

Definition: These situations affect important but not survival-critical functions, have response windows measured in days, and require significant but manageable resources.

Assessment Criteria:

- **Survival Impact:** Affects important functions but not immediate survival
- **Time Sensitivity:** Requires action within days
- **Action Effectiveness:** Response will likely improve outcome
- **Resource Requirements:** Moderate resources needed

Examples:

- Significant customer complaints that could lead to contract cancellation
- Operational inefficiencies generating excessive costs
- Emerging competitive threats requiring strategic response
- Staff performance issues affecting important functions
- Supply chain disruptions with 1-2 week impact horizon

Resource Allocation: Address after RED category crises. Allocate specific, limited resources with clear timelines.

GREEN: Important but Can Wait

Definition: These issues impact non-critical business functions, have response windows measured in weeks, and immediate action is not essential for outcomes.

Assessment Criteria:

- **Survival Impact:** Affects non-critical functions
- **Time Sensitivity:** Can wait weeks for response
- **Action Effectiveness:** Immediate action offers little advantage over delayed response
- **Resource Requirements:** Can be scheduled as part of normal operations

Examples:

- Minor system inefficiencies
- Gradual market share erosion in secondary segments
- Non-critical supplier issues with multiple alternatives
- Facility maintenance needs without operational impact
- Internal process improvements for non-core functions

Resource Allocation: Schedule for systematic resolution after crisis period. Monitor for any escalation to higher categories.

● **BLACK: Beyond Salvation or Not Worth Resources**

Definition: These situations are either beyond recovery regardless of intervention or not worth the resources required given other priorities.

Assessment Criteria:

- **Survival Impact:** Loss will not threaten core business
- **Time Sensitivity:** Recovery unlikely regardless of timing
- **Action Effectiveness:** Outcome unlikely influenced by any response
- **Resource Requirements:** Would exceed available capacity or provide poor return

Examples:

- Failing non-core product lines in dying markets
- Damaged relationships with inconsequential stakeholders
- Opportunities requiring resources better deployed elsewhere
- Legal issues where liability is clear and fighting would increase costs
- Markets where competitive position is irretrievably lost

Resource Allocation: Document decision, inform stakeholders, and redirect resources to higher-priority categories.

Crisis Triage Worksheet

Use this worksheet to quickly categorize each crisis your organization faces:

Crisis Description	Survival Impact	Time Sensitivity	Action Effectiveness	Resource Req.	Category
	High/Med/Low	Hours/Days/Weeks	High/Med/Low	High/Med/Low	R/Y/G/B
	High/Med/Low	Hours/Days/Weeks	High/Med/Low	High/Med/Low	R/Y/G/B
	High/Med/Low	Hours/Days/Weeks	High/Med/Low	High/Med/Low	R/Y/G/B
	High/Med/Low	Hours/Days/Weeks	High/Med/Low	High/Med/Low	R/Y/G/B
	High/Med/Low	Hours/Days/Weeks	High/Med/Low	High/Med/Low	R/Y/G/B

Resource Allocation Plan

After categorizing your crises, use this template to allocate your limited resources:

RED Category Issues:

- Assigned Team Members:
- Resources Committed:
- Monitoring Frequency: Every _____ minutes/hours
- Success Metrics:

YELLOW Category Issues:

- Assigned Team Members:
- Resources Committed:
- Monitoring Frequency: Every _____ hours/days
- Success Metrics:

GREEN Category Issues:

- Assigned Team Members:
- Resources Committed:
- Monitoring Frequency: Every _____ days/weeks
- Success Metrics:

BLACK Category Issues:

- Documentation of Decision:
- Stakeholder Communication Plan:
- Resource Reallocation Plan:

Remember: Triage is Continuous

Effective triage is not a one-time assessment but a continuous process. Regularly reassess crisis categories as situations evolve and interventions take effect. Issues can migrate between categories as circumstances change or new information emerges.

Master the Complete Crisis Management System

For the complete business emergency response system, including:

- Detailed protocols for each crisis type
- Prevention strategies that stop emergencies before they happen
- Recovery techniques to rebuild after crisis
- Advanced organizational resilience building

Get your copy of "Business First Aid: The Emergency Guide for Your Company" at: www.businessfirstaid.online

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