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ENTERPRISE RISK AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Abstract

The primary goal of Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) is to produce objective, risk-based evidence to inform senior management decisions. Similarly, a function of knowledge management (KM) is to capture and preserve relevant organizational knowledge for future reuse. To this end, some business continuity and crisis management plan decision aids may be systematized to accelerate organizational reaction to a threat. Chief Risk Officer (CRO) involvement in drafting and implementing these plans as ERM-produced planning scenarios, their associated risks, as well as the standardized “identify, analyze, mitigate, and control” processes should play a big role in aiding decisions. The Covid-19 virus spread globally within 100 days. The pandemic claimed lives, swamped health care systems, shut down cities and countries, and destroyed broad swaths of global markets. Lessons from two previous pandemics, SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, were seemingly ignored or perhaps never documented. In this respect, Covid-19 was not a black swan event, but was in fact predictable and indeed predicted, yet knowledge gained from past pandemics was not applied in scenario, contingency, or business continuity planning by any measure of success. There are potentially hundreds of organizational planning knowledge gaps related to the pandemic that should be documented and transferred globally, as Covid-19’s deadly successor might very well again threaten unprepared organizations. Compilation and sharing of pandemic lessons learned is not, therefore, an academic exercise: there will be a next time. Knowledge gained to date should be codified in organizational plans, processes, and procedures for future action. The Covid-19 pandemic should raise awareness of the essential involvement of Chief Risk Officers and Chief Knowledge Officers in business continuity and crisis management planning and execution. Capture and transfer of pandemic lessons learned will allow organizations to capitalize on this fleeting opportunity to leverage ERM and KM practices to ensure future organizational sustainability.