

Leadership under pressure: Communication is key

When the unthinkable happens, managers need to take charge and assemble the ideal management team for the crisis at hand.

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Everything was in place for the New York City marathon. The 2012 event was supposed to be the largest in history, with 47,500 runners from around the world and an estimated \$340 million in revenues forecast for the city. But then the unexpected happened: Hurricane Sandy. The storm pounded the United States' eastern seaboard, leaving hundreds of thousands without electricity or running water. Although thousands of volunteers joined city authorities to help clear debris and save the race, the ravages of the storm proved too much. Mayor Michael Bloomberg was forced to announce the cancellation of the marathon.

Let's not kid ourselves: crises happen, even with contingency plans in place. The day comes when the unthinkable happens. What then?

When a crisis hits, regardless of what form it takes, the most important thing is to remain calm. The uncertainty of the situation must not be allowed to cripple the organization. To stop this happening, two key ingredients are required: leadership and communication.

This article examines the role of a leader during a crisis, and how that leadership must be delivered through proper communication. I will draw on crisis communication and management principles, as well as use real-life examples, including those from IESE case

studies, of companies that have experienced crises and come out the other side.

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