

*Making the Case for
Pandemic Flu Preparedness:
Lessons Learned*

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*"How Institutions Think About the Unthinkable:
Organizational Learning and Communication About Catastrophic Events"*

Agenda

- ✦ Research background
- ✦ Barriers & Mitigation Strategies
- ✦ Flu plan components
- ✦ Relationship with Public Health
- ✦ Lessons Learned from H1N1
- ✦ Model Practices
- ✦ Applications for other threats

Research Design

- ✦ Timeline: Winter-Summer 2009
 - ✦ H1N1 emerged in April 2009
- ✦ Participants
 - ✦ Current Business Continuity Managers/Consultants (n=9)
 - ✦ Prior Business Continuity Managers (n=3)
 - ✦ Emergency Preparedness/Business Continuity consultant (n=2)
 - ✦ Public Health/Public Sector (n=4)
- ✦ Location: West and East coasts of US

Research Design (Cont'd.)

- ✦ Types of Organizations:
 - ✦ Size (Private Organizations)
 - ✦ 10,000-150,000 employees
 - ✦ Locations
 - ✦ Local to Multinational
 - ✦ Sectors
 - ✦ Banking/Finance
 - ✦ Retail
 - ✦ Higher Education
 - ✦ Professional Services
 - ✦ Technology
 - ✦ Real Estate

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“By the summer of 2008, I hardly heard anybody ever mention the word pandemic, and by the time the fall occurred, people were saying to me, ‘Don’t talk to me ever about a pandemic. You need to talk about other stuff.’”

- Business Continuity Consultant

Barriers & Mitigation Strategies

Barriers

- ✦ Pandemic is scary, overwhelming
- ✦ Lack of executive support
 - ✦ Lack of dedicated funding
 - ✦ Need business continuity planner (BCP)
- ✦ Employee privacy
- ✦ Limited sharing of plans between organizations
- ✦ Lack of mandate

Mitigation Strategies

- ✦ Incorporate preparedness in day-to-day life
- ✦ Benchmark against peers
- ✦ Refer to expert advice
- ✦ Start small with low- or no-cost initiatives
- ✦ Engage in conferences, professional groups to share information

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“It’s evolving. It’s feels like it’s still a work in progress as much as it’s a viable program we have in place.”

*- Private Sector Business
Continuity Manager*

Pandemic Plan Features

- ✦ Incorporate in broader Business Continuity strategy
- ✦ Predict levels of impact and associated actions
- ✦ Consider both workforce and business
- ✦ Keep plans simple
- ✦ Keep plans local
- ✦ Don’t reinvent the wheel
- ✦ Iterate

Pandemic Plan Components: Organizational Actions

- ✦ Pandemic Task Force
- ✦ Budget
- ✦ Escalation triggers
- ✦ Critical skills and functions
- ✦ Supply and distribution chain
- ✦ Education and training

Pandemic Plan Components: Employee Policies

- ✦ Sick leave
- ✦ Case management plan
- ✦ “Gray area” questions
- ✦ Workforce tracking
 - ✦ Return to work following isolation / quarantine
 - ✦ Employee self-screening and re-entry screening
- ✦ Compensation and benefits

Pandemic Plan Components: Communication Plan

- ✦ Consistent, positive message
- ✦ Don't justify preparedness on fear
- ✦ Pre-script talking points
- ✦ Be sensitive to different interpretations of messages
- ✦ Consider what people are hearing in the media

Pandemic Plan Components: Social Structure

- ✦ Telecommuting
 - ✦ Important component for some industries/roles
 - ✦ "Last mile" of infrastructure
 - ✦ Categorize critical offsite employees for priority on network
- ✦ Employee travel
- ✦ Expatriate evacuation
- ✦ Social distancing
- ✦ Customers

Pandemic Plan Components: Physical Location

- ✦ Transportation
- ✦ Workplace hygiene
- ✦ Food services

Pandemic Plan Components: Stockpile

- ✦ Non-pharmaceutical
 - ✦ Hand sanitizer
 - ✦ Masks
 - ✦ Disinfecting wipes
 - ✦ Janitorial supplies
- ✦ Pharmaceutical
 - ✦ Vaccine
 - ✦ Antivirals
 - ✦ Antibiotics
- ✦ Distribution

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“From the private sector side, we need to reach to public health more often. But they can do the same thing.”

*- Private Sector Business
Continuity Manager*

Public Health/Business Partnerships

- ✦ Pre-conceived notions
- ✦ Different expectations of each other
- ✦ Sustainable model
- ✦ Ideal public health department role
 - ✦ Business perspective
 - ✦ Public health perspective

Public Health/Business Partnerships

- ✦ Current model practices
 - ✦ Business representative in local emergency operations center
 - ✦ Business involvement in pandemic conferences, meetings
 - ✦ Share information & resources

Public Health/Business Partnerships

- ✦ Future Model Practices
 - ✦ Business voice at table for impacted decisions
 - ✦ Partnerships through interest groups and industry associations
 - ✦ Targeted sharing of capacities
 - ✦ Public health ensures safeguards for good corporate citizens
 - ✦ Businesses help with marketing public health messages
 - ✦ Private sector reaches out to public health proactively

Public Health Perspective

- ✦ Breadth of “private sector”
- ✦ Budgeting v grant cycles
- ✦ Infectious diseases v all hazards

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“In our industry, we keep saying ‘lessons learned,’ but I keep seeing them learned every disaster, so I’m not really sure that they’re learned but acknowledged and then forgotten.”

- Private Sector Business Continuity manager

Lessons Learned: Pre-H1N1

- ✦ Confirm executive support
- ✦ Consider local environment
- ✦ Limit fear-based messaging
- ✦ Terminology: “incidents”
- ✦ Rumor control, especially related to public health actions

Lessons Learned from H1N1: Organizational Actions

- ✦ Educate senior management proactively
- ✦ Executives engaged quickly
- ✦ Keep plans flexible
- ✦ Review metrics
- ✦ Review escalation procedures
 - ✦ WHO phases ≠ triggers
 - ✦ Severity
 - ✦ Local assessment
- ✦ Consolidate information sources

Lessons Learned from H1N1: Employee Policies

- ✦ Employee educational curve
- ✦ Case management
 - ✦ Approach that can scale for large events
 - ✦ Privacy and HIPAA
 - ✦ Different case definitions
 - ✦ Case classification after public health stops testing
- ✦ Monitoring sick leave
- ✦ Sick leave policies
- ✦ School closings
- ✦ Doctor's notes for sick leave

Lessons Learned from H1N1

- ✦ Communication Plan
 - ✦ Employees will have range of reactions
- ✦ Social Structure
 - ✦ Visiting affected areas
- ✦ Stockpile duration
- ✦ Testing the Plan
 - ✦ Basic plans were effective
 - ✦ Plans are a work in progress
- ✦ Improved public health guidance

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"I don't think you can do too much on this."

*- Private Sector Business
Continuity Manager*

Model Practices: Gaining Executive Support

- ✦ Senior support at the top
 - ✦ 3-pronged approach (Private Sector Business Continuity Manager):
 - ✦ Establish credibility: *"We tried to get the most compelling arguments from the most credible sources."*
 - ✦ Benchmark against others: *"We say, 'Hey you know so and so is doing XYZ and people expect us to do the same.'"*
 - ✦ Emphasize that this is the right thing to do: *"You've got to do the right thing by your people."*

Model Practices

- ✦ Engage steering committee
- ✦ Engage employees
- ✦ Choose strategies that fit your culture
- ✦ Discuss short-term benefits of policies
- ✦ Think about the questions to ask
- ✦ Create response structure

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“The idea was that it could be more all-encompassing...”

“It’s not just flu pandemic. It’s any planning for any kind of disaster like that.”

*- Private Sector Business
Continuity Managers*

Applications to other threats and initiatives

- ✦ Create an “infectious disease” plan
 - ✦ Seasonal flu
 - ✦ Other specific diseases (e.g., TB, measles)
 - ✦ Contagion mitigation in general
 - ✦ Be aware of unique aspects of different diseases
- ✦ Employee health campaign
- ✦ Other emergency management actions & functions

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Questions