



Managing Threats In Organizations

A Role for the Threat Assessment Professional in the
Threat Management Process

AETAP Conference
Vienna, Austria
April 23, 2013



© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Good Management

is dependent on

Good Assessment!



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Good Management

can occur concurrently during

Good Assessment!



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



***Why are
we doing this?***

***What is
our ultimate goal?***



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Affective (vs. Predatory) Violence

- Autonomic arousal
- Subjective experience of emotion
- Perceived threat
- Possible displacement of target
- Primarily emotional or defensive

- Reid Meloy, 2000



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Affective Violence In Organizations

- Typically driven by sense of INJUSTICE
- Subject also may feel threatened
- Hopelessness – with no other options





Threat Assessment Assumes:

That threats and acts of violence occur within a wide framework of variables (behavioral, circumstantial, cognitive, environmental, etc.) that can be reviewed, understood and therefore managed.





Threat Assessment

- Considers all contributing (or mitigating) factors for that situation - the entire context
- Is always dynamic/contextual/situational
- And the Threat Assessment Professional (TAP) is part of that context





Observer Inseparability

- The observer is always part of the system, and influences what is being observed
- The Heisenberg Effect:
 - The very act of becoming a player changes the game
 - Observation alters what is being observed (which makes it impossible to accurately predict its behavior)
- The Hawthorne Effect:
 - Subjects being studied change their behavior in response to the knowledge that they are being studied





The Primary Factors Influencing Assessment

1. Personality
2. Emotional
3. Cognitive
4. Situational and Social



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.

● ● ● | **Threat Assessment:**

- Goal: Risk Management/Containment/Reduction
- Assesses movement from idea to action
- Is often fluid, with many steps
- Ongoing, evolving, checks on itself – an active process



● ● ● | **The Threat Management Process**

Generally, the assessment/management process works best when we can bring the risks under control, and then proceed in a step-wise fashion, where each step informs the next step.





The Threat Management Process

The Call



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.

● ● ● | **Step 1: Addressing Imminent Risks**

What Do We Need To Do Now?

- Is the situation currently stable?
- Where is the subject now?
- Do we need to address immediate security issues?
- Protect targets?
- Keep the subject in the workplace?
- Etc.





Step 2: Control, Contain, & Stabilize

- Can we call a “Time-Out”?
- Can we exit the employee under a controlled, carefully considered process that:
 - Addresses our immediate security needs
 - Stabilizes and reduces the emotional urgency
 - Provides information as part of an initial assessment
 - Buys us time
- How can that be successfully accomplished?



● ● ● | Removing The Subject From the Organization

- Ensures safety/establish better security
- Initiates a more positive intervention/relationship
- Buys us more time to assess, plan, etc.
- Buys the subject more time to vent, stabilize and de-escalate themselves
- Begins the separation process (in case of termination)



● ● ● | Removing The Subject From the Organization

- Allows the TAP the opportunity to
 - obtain a better, more comprehensive assessment
 - establish a positive (or at least a more neutral) relationship
 - establish a relationship that can continue post-event (i.e., termination)
 - more effectively monitor the subject



● ● ● Removing The Subject From the Organization

- Allows the TAP the opportunity to
 - better assess subject's underlying *needs*, and other factors, to help guide ideas for resolution
 - test the subject's ability to comply, and to control impulses
 - engage in communication strategies to manage down the risks
 - take advantage of negotiation opportunities



● ● ● | **But Let's Not Forget Our Real First (& Ongoing) Step:**

- What Do We Want to Ultimately Accomplish?
- What Does The Client Want?
 - What are the client's expectations?
 - What is the desired outcome?
 - How are the risks defined?
 - What represents success?





The Critical Communication Process

De-
Escalate

“Re-
Frame”

Problem
Solve



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Engaging The Subject: Goal #1

- Address Their Most Primary Need
 - *To be heard!!*
 - To be acknowledged
 - To have their concerns validated
 - To have their “day in court”
 - To receive understanding (and an apology)



● ● ● | **Engaging The Subject:
Goal #1**

The Active Listening Process

(It's Easy! Just Act Stupid)



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Engaging The Subject: Actively Listen!

1. Listen! (avoid over-responding)
2. Demonstrate that you are listening!
 - Repeat what they say (reframing if appropriate)
 - Ask them to repeat themselves
 - Ask follow-up questions; encourage elaboration
 - Summarize frequently – with paraphrasing
 - Check in with them – “Did I get that right?”





Engaging The Subject: Actively Listen!

- This all happens through Learning!
- The success of any Threat Assessment and Threat Management process is dependent on how well we are engaged in an active learning process.
- “The primary function of any Critical Conversation is that we ...Teach Each Other.”

- Dr. Todd Conklin



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Engaging The Subject: De-Escalation Techniques

- Do not try to dis-empower them
 - Never, ever minimize or negate their ability (and right) to make their own choices
- Help them with their self-esteem
 - Acknowledge them
 - Validate and normalize when you can
 - Complement whenever you can
 - Affirm their “good intent”





Engaging The Subject: De-Escalation Techniques

- Say “yes” a lot
 - Confirm and agree, when you can
 - Find and focus on areas of agreement before focusing on more contentious areas
 - Find common ground (build a relationship)
 - “Yes, but..” is not a “yes”





Engaging The Subject: De-Escalation Techniques

- Allow some venting
- Be patient; avoid over-responding
- Reverse their tactics: Be respectful and non-threatening
- Deflect/ignore/reframe personal attacks



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Engaging The Subject: The “Re-Framing” Process

- Your goal (for you and the subject) is to identify the more primary needs that underlie their positions, demands, anger, etc.
- This is where active listening skills are most critical – and when “solutions” will suddenly emerge



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Engaging The Subject: The “Re-Framing” Process

- The ideal goal is to help them get to a perspective that allows you (and them) to
 - Better understand the subject’s more primary needs
 - Engage the subject in a more reasonable and productive solution-oriented process
 - Reframe the issue into one that allows for a less dangerous conclusion (and a graceful exit)
 - Arrive at “solutions” that address the underlying need to an adequate extent.





Engaging The Subject: Getting to a “Resolution”

- Joining with the subject – getting to “we”
- Help them “save face” - walk away with a relatively intact, or restored, sense of integrity.
- Think Long-Term!
- Avoid premature solutions.
- If you can’t come up with a resolution, ask them for one.
- Help them get to that answer; avoid giving it to them if possible.





**People are more convinced
by reasons they discovered
by themselves than those
found by others.**

-Pascal



Critical
Response
Associates

© 2011 Critical Response Associates, LLC. All rights reserved. Use by permission only.



Dr. Marc McElhaney

Critical Response Associates

P.O. Box 29644
Atlanta, GA 30359
U.S.A.

mmcelhaney@craorg.com

(1) 888.391.2214

(1) 404.441.5793 (mobile)

www.craorg.com

