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## And Finally... Crisis Planning

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# Crisis Planning

**Michael Simonson**

**T**he time to plan is now. If you do not have a plan to move to online teaching and learning, develop one. If you do have a plan, review it, update it, and train everyone.

*After action reports* following a crisis or significant event are great ways to determine what happened, and to identify what was learned. Usually after a crisis event is over it is possible to take a few steps back and dispassionately review and learn.

The word crisis comes from the Greek word meaning “decision.” Usually, in times

of crisis decisions are made, or not made, and these actions deserve review.


There is little need to describe the crisis of the last year—COVID-19 forced schools to close, required colleges to evaluate how to offer instruction, and placed organizations in the situation of sending workers home. After action reports are needed by these schools, colleges, and organizations.

Here is a summary of a recent study (conducted during the COVID-19 crisis), that identified a number of lessons identified during the crisis.

What has been learned:

- **We Were Not Ready:** Most educational organizations were poorly prepared and had no plan about what to do when the COVID-19 crisis hit them.
- **Internet Access Is a Necessity:** The days of “going to the library, or to Starbucks, or to a friend’s house to surf the web” are over. Internet access is essential and is now a utility on par with clean water, electrical power, and trash removal as a necessity to be provided by government if private enterprises cannot offer services inexpensively and effectively.
- **Training Is Needed:** Teachers, professors, and trainers must be prepared as distance educators. On the job preparation is no longer acceptable. Certainly, a new teacher must have all the skills nec-

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essary to teach, interact, evaluate, and interact with distant learners.

- **There Are a Few Key Ideas for Everyone:** Basic concepts of distance education must be stressed rather than having software or hardware-specific training. For example, course management systems should be understood first, then systems such as Teams or Canvas can be studied.
- **Instructional Design and Designers Are Critical.** Teachers, even when effectively prepared, are not instructional designers, nor should they be. A school without qualified media specialists, and colleges or training organizations without instructional designers are schools or organizations at risk when a crisis happens.
- **Plans Are Needed:** Contingency plans for a move to online instruction are needed and have become almost as important as “code red plans” and “fire drill training.”
- **Best practices research must be ongoing and exhaustive.** Already, the “snake-oil-salespeople” are emerging promising miracle cures, and quick fixes. Science and scientific inquiry are the only ways to continuously improve the way educational organizations offer instruction, especially instruction at a distance.

*And finally, as they say during Marine Corps recruit training, “A little sweat now saves a lot of sweat later!”*