

The Design, Set-Up and Management of a Crisis Management Training Centre

Abstract — This abstract serves to provide a brief overview of the team’s design considerations in their set-up of a crisis management training centre to cater to the training needs of the organisation. The team’s design foci were largely: “*System Functionalities*”, “*Infrastructure Flexibility*” and “*People Capabilities*”. This paper explains how each of them is critical in the set-up and management of the training centre.

1 Introduction

Preparing officers for Incident Command has always been crucial in preparing our officers for any crisis and emergency management. Officers go through a series of situational training exercises to prepare them to be operationally ready. However, crisis incidents and emergency situations have always been unpredictable, and conditions in which they happened have always been unique to each of them. It is thus challenging to fully prepare commanders for all types incident management. In addition, Incident Command is a skill which is unique to each commander and his readiness is dependent on his prior experiences and leadership styles. [1] With this in mind, the team believes that *Incident Command Simulation* is a viable form of training where it comprised elements of what needs to be done, what is to be done and who should do it and it focuses on training those involved in Incident Command Decision-Making. [2]

The focus of this paper is to explain the design considerations in setting up a Crisis Management Training Centre – the Home Team Simulation Centre, bearing in mind that any form of training should contain the elements stated above. The environment should be mimicked as closely to the actual working environment as possible as we attempt to recreate the actual operating environment for commanders in command posts. While training exercises are scripted with training objectives in mind, the system will also have to be dynamic in response, to cater to the differing decisions made by commanders, so that the training will not become prescriptive. Lastly, an effective exercise will not be possible without trainers with expert knowledge of incidents and the system, as they work together to recreate scenes to train our commanders. With this, the key design foci for the training centre were: “*System Functionalities*”, “*Infrastructure Flexibility*” and “*People Capabilities*”.

2 Approach

The approach that the team took was to ensure that the three key design foci of the centre were carefully integrated into the development of the training centre. *System Functionalities* to ensure that exercises are realistic with room for different outcomes to be played out; *Infrastructure flexibility* to ensure that environmental conditions are similar to actual sites while we cater to

different levels of trainings; and lastly, *People Capabilities* to prepare our people to be competent in utilising the system and achieve training objectives.

2.1 System Functionalities

System Functionalities is crucial in *Incident Command Simulation* training. These simulation exercises aim to create realistic possible emergency situations which officers may be required to manage in their operation environment. As per during any actual incidents, these simulated exercises should provide commanders with resources, information and equipment as what they would have in an actual command centre. These include being able to access emulated information on news media and social media websites, to even being able to recall CCTV footages or gain access to “live” imagery on site.

While training exercises have scripted decision chains and expected outcomes, these exercises must still be able to recreate other escalation or de-escalation scenes of situations to maximise the training effectiveness.

2.2 Infrastructure Flexibilities

When designing the centre, the team envisaged the different types of training exercises which they hoped to deliver. Such trainings could range from single-level exercises involving ground commanders or multi-level exercises where decisions from higher authorities are required. To design this, the team looked into *infrastructural* considerations, by ensuring that the training centre holds sufficient facilities to conduct different types of exercises. These ranges from creating individual pods for first-responders, to different command centres for commanders.

To emulate the working environment of our officers, the team designed the rooms with some resemblance of what it would be like in an actual situation. This include providing them with props or simulating actual interaction with other personnel to emulate the stress and dynamism of any incidents. By mimicking as closely to actual incidents, officers can be trained in more authentic environments so that effective learning can take place.

2.3 People Capabilities

Lastly, “*People*” is a critical success factor to maintaining such Training Centre. The maintenance of such training centre and executing effective training simulation exercises require different groups of people working closely with one another. For an exercise to be successful, training staff must be equipped with the skills to design realistic scenarios with clear training objectives in mind and successfully conduct these exercises to tease out the learning points. Training staff must understand the capabilities and limitations of the system and work closely with the system support staff to contextualise and recreate the scenarios in the system.

3 Lessons Learnt/Future Work

Many valuable lessons were learned in the design and development of the Home Team Simulation System. As new trends are emerging and training requirements are constantly changing, the team invested much efforts to anticipate the potential requirements in the future and ensured that the system was designed with functionalities to stay relevant and capable of future expansion to meet demands of the new operating landscape.

Infrastructure flexibility is crucial to allow different trainings to be conducted in the training centre. Each of the rooms were designed so that it can be a command post, an on-scene-pod, a briefing room or an After Action Review debrief room, depending on exercise’s needs. Such flexibilities allow the training centre to support different training configuration and also maximise the usage.

The success of almost all training systems largely rely on the commitment and capabilities of the team. Deliberate efforts were made to bring on board users early and this helped to bring about better ownership and usage of the system. Continuous engagement through both formal and informal approaches are also essential to maintain a pool of capable trainers to support effective trainings.

4 Conclusion

The use of simulation for training is not new in military and incident command training. The team had learnt from like-minded practitioners and adopted best practices in designing the set up of our training centre. Adopting the design foci on “*System Functionalities*”, “*Infrastructure Flexibility*” and “*People Capabilities*”, the Home Team Simulation Centre has the ability to provide effective training for Home Team commanders in decision making and incident management. We will continue to fine tune and improve our practices, processes and explore new ways to enhance the centre, so that training of incident command can be more effective.

References

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- [2] F. Williams-Bell., B. Murphy., B. Kapralos., A. Hogue., & E. Weckman. Fire Tech, **51**, 553 – 584 (2015)

Author/Speaker Biographies

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