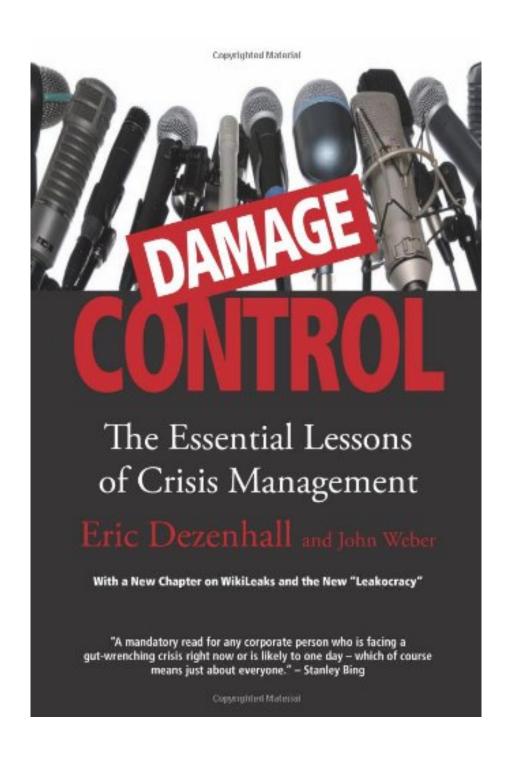


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Review

A mandatory read for any corporate person who is facing a gut-wrenching crisis now or is likely to one day which of course means just about everybody. -- Stanley Bing

I do this kind of stuff for a living, and this book gave me chills. Corporate executives pay consultants fifty grand a month for advice a whole lot less intelligent and compelling than this. Now for just a few bucks they can get this book, put it under their pillows, and sleep well at night, if they sleep at all. -- Gil Schwartz, executive vice president, CBS Corporation

About the Author

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What to do when you have "a cow in the ditch"

By Robert Morris

Obviously, avoiding damage is preferable to managing it but that is not always possible. Then what? In this volume, Eric Dezenhall and John Weber share everything they have learned about crisis management, explaining to their reader "why everything you know about [it] is wrong." I presume to suggest that you ignore the book's subtitle's hyperbolic presumption and focus on what can be learned from the material that Dezenhall and Weber provide. Also, while reading the book, keep in mind Voltaire's admonition to cherish those who seek the truth but beware of those who find it.

I presume to suggest two separate but related approaches: Be alert to how damage is most effectively managed once it occurs, of course, but also be alert to the lessons learned post-damage so that it can be avoided - or its impact can at least be reduced -- in the future. In this context, I am reminded of an anecdote that Anne Mulcahy (Xerox CEO) frequently shares. Specifically, some advice she once received from Albert C. Black, Jr. (president and CEO of On-Target Supplies & Logistics): "When everything gets complicated and you feel overwhelmed, think about it this way: You gotta do three things. First, get the cow out of the ditch. Second, find out how the cow got into the ditch. Third, make sure you do whatever it takes so the cow doesn't go into the ditch again."

In this volume, Dezenhall and Weber suggest that companies (and individuals) that survive crises tend to have certain features in common: they have strong leaders, question conventional PR wisdom, are flexible, commit sufficient resources to the given situation, have a high threshold for pain, think in terms of "baby steps" rather than grandiose gestures, know themselves (who they are who they aren't), believe that corporate defense is an exercise in moral authority (i.e. they insist on doing whatever is principled rather than expedient), and finally, are "luck" in that they often (not always) catch "unexpected breaks delivered by God, Nature, Fortune, or some other independent factor."

It is important to understand that Dezenhall and Weber endorse a political model of crisis management versus the more conventional public relations approach. "The fundamental difference is that the political model...assumes the threat of motivated adversaries, while the public relations model tends to view crises as organic and resolvable through good communications." In other words, adversaries (e.g. competitors, plaintiffs' lawyers, the news media, politicians and regulators, short-sellers, corporate stalkers, whistleblowers, and bloggers) may have had nothing to do with causing the given crisis but may - and often do -- take full advantage of it to serve their own self-interests.

To me, one of Dezenhall and Weber's most important insights is their recognition of the importance of being fully prepared to ask the right questions, the most important questions, and then knowing how and where to obtain the right answers to them ASAP. This is an essential component of contingency planning, as are being fully prepared to take appropriate action(s) once a crisis occurs, and, being both willing and able to commit

whatever resources may be required.

Dezenhall and Weber help their reader to increase their understanding of several important issues. For example:

- 1. The differences between and among a nuisance, a problem, a crisis, and a marketplace assault
- 2. How to manage blame and resentment
- 3. Why "offense wins, defense loses"
- 4. Why an effective response to a crisis must involve much more than "having to say you're sorry"
- 5. Who needs to know what...and when

The value of this book will obviously vary from one reader to the next but, in my opinion, the information and counsel it provides can be of substantial benefit to decision-makers in all organizations (regardless of size or nature) because crises can occur at any time, frequently without warning. Yes, some can be prevented. As for all others, their damage can be "controlled," at least in terms of its nature and certainly in terms of its impact. To paraphrase Albert C. Black, Jr., you just never know when you'll have a cow in the ditch.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Don't be a Wimp

By Michael P. Maslanka

This excellent book says that today's crisis management is fixated on making nice with those who would harm you and it is wrong, wrong, wrong. Yes, J and J did a great job with the Tylenol tampering but it was a victim of a nut. The template of what they did does not work, or so Dezenhall argues, with a crisis where you have an enemy. What to do? Figure out of the company has a backbone to fight(if not. throw in the towel); preach to the choir(rally your allies); manage the media(Wendy's told the media you can interview our execs but stop showing the finger); and, above all.like all good trial lawyers know, come up with an alternate belief system, a plausible and different scenario for what occured; don't use the default of apology when you have nothing to apologize for.(a la pepsi and the purported syrgines in the pepsi cans. The book is direct, well written, and short.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Damage Control is real-world guidance superbly written, by an excellent writer

By E. Bruce Harrison

Eric Dezenhall is not only experienced in counseling on crisies at very high levels of company and peformance-art; he is an accomplished writer who lays it out in practical and engaging terms. This book-Damage Control--is real-world insight, with guidance useful to any corporate or organizational leadership team. I am using it as text for the graduate course on Corporate Crisis Communication at Georgetown University.

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