

COVID-19 Tabletop Exercises

Participant Workbook
6 March 2020

Tabletop Exercise - Overview

Tabletop exercises test the effectiveness of procedures and safeguards in place to respond to and recover from a specific threat. They are an effective way to gauge organizational preparedness and awareness as well as to uncover flaws or gaps in recovery plan design. Process improvements identified during the exercise are filtered back into enhancements and upgrades to the current process.



Tabletop exercises are designed around a hypothetical scenario. Just like a fire drill helps you practice exiting a building, a tabletop exercise is a safe place to practice a coordinated response. Should the risk event occur, your team is better prepared and can minimize losses. Participants better understand their roles and the priorities for the organization. It's good practice for everyone.



- Minimize the impact upon staff
- Minimize the impact on the supply chain
- Minimize the impact upon service delivery
- Minimize the impact upon the IT infrastructure
- Protect corporate reputation
- Reduce financial impact
- Return to new normality sooner

Agenda for Each Scenario

Illustrative

- 0:00 Introduction From Sponsor
- 0:02 Review Objectives for Session, Roles and Responsibilities
- 0:10 Introduce Scenario Information
- 0:15 Teams Collaborate to Address Scenario
- 1:00 Begin Debrief and Facilitator Comments
- 1:20 Next Steps, Changes and Process Improvements
- 1:30 Conclude Session

Objectives for the Session

It's important to identify the specific objectives for the session. Every organization is unique and has specific requirements. Generic objectives are included on the left side below. What do you want to get out of this exercise? Please write in organization-specific objectives on the right side of the page.

Generic Tabletop Objectives:

- Determine the effectiveness of plans, policies and procedures.
- Identify the level of cooperation between departments and executives.
- Determine the organization's ability to provide timely and accurate information to stakeholders.
- Determine the adequacy of resources (e.g., allocated funding and equipment).
- Increase awareness of crisis response procedures.
- Train the team on practice-aligned responses.

Additional Org-Specific Objectives:

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Roles of Tabletop Participants

All participants involved in the exercise will have assigned roles and responsibilities. High-level responsibilities for participants are included below.

For Your Organization:

<p>Participants respond to the presented scenario and are responsible for determining which actions they or their team would take.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
<p>Observers serve as functional experts to answer questions and provide more information to players during the exercise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
<p>The facilitator presents the scenario and subsequent updates and guides discussions throughout the exercise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
<p>Scribes work with the facilitator to ensure findings from the exercise are captured, typically documenting actions taken, issues and findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
<p>Evaluators use their functional expertise and knowledge of processes to assess the feasibility and efficacy of player decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

Introduce the Hypothetical Scenario

The facilitator will read the scenario for the group to consider. Write down any notes or key assumptions you may have as you are listening to the scenario.

Key Assumptions:



Other Notes:

What Should You Do?

Based on the scenario that was communicated by the facilitator, what actions would you take? Answer the questions to prepare your thoughts. Rate your confidence and disruption level in the shaded box at the lower right corner.

(A) What are the key considerations? What is your recommendation?

(B) What should the other executives do to be supportive? Are there any dependencies that should be considered?

(C) Is there anything else that should be considered?

- On a 1-to-10 scale (where 10 is very confident):
- How confident are you that the leadership team can manage through this? _____
 - How disruptive is this event to annual objectives (1 is little disruption, 10 is severe disruption)? _____

The Situation Worsens

Based on the new information that was communicated by the facilitator, what actions would you take? Answer the questions to prepare your thoughts. Rate your confidence and disruption level in the shaded box at the lower right corner.

(A) What are the key considerations? What is your recommendation?

(B) What should the other executives do to be supportive? Are there any dependencies that should be considered?

(C) Is there anything else that should be considered?

- On a 1-to-10 scale (where 10 is very confident):
- How confident are you that the leadership team can manage through this? _____
 - How disruptive is this event to annual objectives (1 is little disruption, 10 is severe disruption)? _____

The Last Straw

Based on the new information that was communicated by the facilitator, what actions would you take? Answer the questions to prepare your thoughts. Rate your confidence and disruption level in the shaded box at the lower right corner.

(A) What are the key considerations? What is your recommendation?

(B) What should the other executives do to be supportive? Are there any dependencies that should be considered?

(C) Is there anything else that should be considered?

- On a 1-to-10 scale (where 10 is very confident):
- How confident are you that the leadership team can manage through this? _____
 - How disruptive is this event to annual objectives (1 is little disruption, 10 is severe disruption)? _____

Debrief (Where Can We Improve?)

What went well, and what should we start doing? What are mistakes to avoid?
Independent and objective third-party observations can help your team learn from other organizations.

Keep Doing	Start Doing	Avoid

Next Steps and Follow-Up

As a team, you'll want to make sure the process enhancements are implemented. List steps that should be taken as a follow-up to the tabletop exercise. Be clear who is accountable for each change.

Process Change	By Whom	Due Date	Notes

Gartner Resources

COVID-19 Resources	Business Continuity and Tabletop Exercises	Scenario Planning Resources
<p>Toolkit: Pandemic Preparedness Briefing. Use this Toolkit to double-check your pandemic preparedness framework. It will ensure that you are taking appropriate precautions. The toolkit includes presentation slides and checklists for key functions such as HR, IT, Business Operations and others.</p>	<p>Ignition Guide to Conducting a Business Impact Assessment. Executives can use this step-by-step blueprint to establish a BIA process or to conduct their first business impact assessment. The guide is web-based and includes downloadable tools.</p>	<p>Ignition Guide to Conducting Scenario Analysis for ERM. Executives can use this step-by-step blueprint to create their own process and establish critical infrastructure for scenario planning. The guide is web-based and includes downloadable tools.</p>
<p>The Pillars of Pandemic Planning. Pandemics aren't your usual business disruption. Unfolding over months, these events require an extra set of activities that include consultations with epidemiologists, critical role identification and third-party evaluations. This article addresses concerns from various leaders throughout the organization.</p>	<p>Business Continuity Toolkit. This collection of templates, policies, best practice examples and benchmarks will inform your thinking on how to mature a business continuity function. Executives can use the toolkit to get started or to benchmark current processes.</p>	<p>ERM Scenario Analysis Toolkit. Executives can build resiliency into their organizations by preparing for multirisk scenarios. This toolkit provides guidance on how leaders can create a sustainable process for analyzing scenarios. It proposes several common scenarios and shows how to create new multirisk scenarios.</p>
<p>Coronavirus: How to Secure Your Supply Chain. This research article will help you respond to key risks in the supply chain and with vital third parties. It shows how organizations are taking a methodical approach to mitigating key supply chain and third-party concerns.</p>	<p>Tips for Running Successful Business Continuity Tabletop Exercises. Executives can use this presentation of key findings to double-check their own tabletop exercises. The guide provides a generic template that can be used for COVID-19 and other crisis exercises.</p>	<p>Winning in the Turns: Scenario Planning for Economic Uncertainty. The best organizations find opportunities in both growth cycles and economic downturns. This research shows where leading organizations change and pivot their strategy while industry peers are unable to change.</p>

**Thank you for
participating in this
exercise!**

This complimentary research is part of Gartner's ongoing coverage of the business impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

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