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# 2 Crisis: The Juncture of Stability and Development

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## Introduction

The development of the events sector over the last 40 years has shown a remarkable consistency. Not necessarily on the ground with specific events, but certainly looking at the management processes at a meta-level, there is a longitudinal pattern that has emerged. It seems the startling diversity of events, their independent development, the variety of personalities and work practices in every country and city of the world has produced a model of development. I have been fortunate to observe and, to a small degree, influence this development. I have experienced and worked in its various phases. From working in events in over 40 countries ranging from the Liberia to the USA, the pattern is unmistakable. This pattern is dynamic and self organizing. The development pattern creates five phases I have described here. The maturity levels become phases when we introduce the dimension of time. But what has this to do with 'crisis'. In an innovative and disruptive industry such as events, crisis is one of the factors that powers the pattern in development. From the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), to terrorism, to the COVID crisis, these are stimuli that have help create a development model.

## Crisis, back to normal

A large part of the literature on crisis, disasters and crisis response concerns the management of the recovery. These stress the ability to 'return to normal' and resilience. Resilience is measured by the length of time required to return to normal (US Department of Homeland Security, 2010). The British Standards Institution, for example, focuses on business continuity management. In this chapter I will examine crisis as a mechanism for change. Instead of returning to the previous state of normal, it is a tool of development along a maturity path.

PAS 200:2011 defines a crisis as an “*inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organization.*” (British Standards Institution, 2011). As with all statements that include the concept of ‘strategic objectives’, this assumes that the objectives are never in opposition. For example, an objective of an event may be to adapt to new evolving condition to expand their audience. This can come under the general title of ‘audience development’. This may clash with the objective to provide a stable platform for sponsors. Developing new sponsors can almost certainly clash with retaining current sponsors. It is this juncture of development and stability that is exposed in a crisis.

According to Register Larkin’s Assessment of PAS 200, quoted by Hamidovic (2012):

*“[Crises] develop in unpredictable ways, and the response usually requires genuinely creative, as opposed to preprepared solutions. Indeed, it is argued that preprepared solutions (of the sort designed to deal with more predictable and structured incidents) are unlikely to work in complex and ill-structured crises. They may, in fact, be counterproductive.”*

This last statement is the core of the movement along the maturity path. The plans, standards, rules and regulations become inertia. Mathematically it can be demonstrated that hazards and risks are a result of frequency analysis of past incidents and therefore are inherently conservative. In a stable environment the past is indeed a measure of the future. However events are by their very nature ‘new’. When combined with the diversity, independent development and complexity of the events sector, perhaps it takes a crisis to overcome this stultification.

## Maturity model

The basis of this chapter is the assumption that the events sector follows the other sectors in society, such as engineering, accountancy, medicine and moves through the phases outlined in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. This concept originates from the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) of the Software Engineering Institute of Carnegie Mellon University (1994). The CMM is set out as a prescriptive model to ensure optimization of software development.

In the Events Sector Maturity Model, the development is an emergent result of the complexity of events and event management. Each city, town and country has over the last 30 years independently developed their part of the events sector. It has organically grown through localized demand, failure and success. Events compete for resources and an audience and therefore it can be regarded as an evolutionary model. Most festival and other community level events were globally isolated and the event teams focused on delivering their specific event. They were not concerned with global standards.