

THE TERRIBLE TWINS

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Abstract

I have seen Emergency Management and Business Continuity develop over the past 20 years. Business Continuity prominently was created in the IT world as Disaster Recovery and has slowly morphed to the organisation as whole. When a Business Disruptive Event occurred, I often heard the terminology ‘Crisis Management Team’ though having experience in Emergency Response /Management I was used to the terminology ‘Incident Management Team’. I have always seen a Crisis Management Team as the same as an Incident Management Team as they essentially did the same function; that been: deal with the event in a coordinated manner, utilising variants of the principles Command, Control, Coordination and Communication.

It was these reflections and discussions with other Business Continuity practitioners that motivated me to present my perspective at the Australasian Business Continuity Institute Summit 2016 held in Sydney and that the IHEA Health Care Facilities management Conference 2016 held in Adelaide Australia and now at the TEIM International Conference 2020.

From these presentations and on further reflection I provide my thoughts on how these two principles seem to be aligning into one discipline.

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Using a family metaphor, I originally described the relationship between Business Continuity and Emergency Management as cousins, related with similar backgrounds but distantly connected DNA.

In Business Continuity terms the initial event was previously referred to as a disruptive event as defined in the BCI Good Practice Guide, 2013, in an Emergency Response it is referred to as an Incident. The current version of the Good Practice Guide, 2018 p 10, now refers to the term ‘Incident’ and uses the word ‘disruption’ in the definition only. The source used by the BCI Good Practice Guide is ISO 22300:2012, however other ISO standards have similar definitions to the word ‘Incident’ “event that has the capacity to lead to human, intangible or physical loss, or a disruption of an organization's operations, services, or functions, which, if not managed, can escalate into an emergency, crisis, or disaster’ ISO 28022: 2011.

Based on these changes and definitions, I updated my analogy over 7 years ago to they are not cousins but ‘Terrible Twins’ same DNA (overarching principles). I have heard more similar terms and process emerge, the BCI Good Practice Guide 2013 referred to incident management plans and incident response structure as part of the outcome or review of the Business Continuity Program. The current Good Practice Guide 2018 now refers to incident response plans and incident response team, incident response personnel, and plan owners. In Australia we are used to the term incident action plan once again different words same intent.

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As I immerse myself further in Emergency Management and Business Continuity, I now see these not only as ‘Terrible Twins’ but conjoined, same DNA same body (overarching principles) but have two similar personalities and react differently to an event (two brains, two thought processes). Therefore, my analogy ‘The Terrible Twins’ when a disruptive event or major incident occurs these Terrible Twins emerge to provide the principles of Command, Control, Coordination and Communication. Utilising these overarching principles, these Terrible Twins react differently to the incident. By differently I mean look at the same incident/event with differing priorities, one may look at the immediate impacts of the emergency initially focusing on immediate response, then at a strategic level of the incident. The other looks at what the impact to the business will be, how long before the business is impacted either through loss of production, financial, reputation etc. are impacted.

Emergency Management is defined as: overall approach preventing emergencies and managing those that occur: In general, emergency management utilizes a risk-management approach to prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery before, during and after potentially destabilizing and/or disruptive events. ISO 22300:2012 and ISO 22320:2011

Business Continuity is defined as: capability of the organization to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following disruptive incident. ISO 22300:2012, ISO 22301:2012.

It is the application of both these Emergency Management and Business Continuity principles that provide an organisation to recovery from an incident/disruptive event in an effective and efficient manner that makes an organisation resilient. I see resilience as an outcome of this principles not necessary a process.

Another consideration is Risk Management, this underpins both Emergency and Business Continuity Management, is there a third person in this analogy, making it the “Terrible Triplets”?

What is the future profession for those in emergency Management or Business Continuity, is it?

- Emergency Management?
- Business Continuity?
- Organisational Resilience?
- Resilience?

The intent of the presentation was never to resolve if Emergency Management and Business Continuity are merging in as an overarching philosophy ‘Resilience’ or ‘Organisational Resilience’ but reflect on how these business practices are moving forward in this field and terminology. When a disruptive event or incident occurs these Terrible Twins or ‘Triplets’ emerge, and we utilise the underpinning principles of Emergency Management, Business Continuity and Risk Management that best suit the needs of situation faced. Does this then make the organisation more Resilient?

Keywords: Business Continuity, Emergency Management, Risk Management, Resilience, Resilient, Organisation Resilience, Disruptive Event, Incident, Incident Management