Crisis & Issues Leadership

Ben Pronk DSC, Adjunct Faculty, AGSM

This course will be delivered in face-to-face format, at AGSM's Kensington campus and a number of offsite locations, including a Bondi Beach venue. On campus accommodation may be available at a cost of $150 per night. Please contact agsm.residential@unsw.edu.au to check availability.

Please note AGSM cannot accept students holding Australian citizenship for enrolment in GNW courses.

Brief description

Managing a crisis is one of the most difficult situations a business leader will confront. Crises are generally characterised by rapidly developing, unpredictable situations within ambiguous and often highly emotional information environments. They can range in scope and impact from sensitive, reputational issues all the way through to global pandemics, all of which hold potentially disastrous consequences, both for individuals and the wider organisation. Clearly, it is too late to begin thinking about a system for managing crises after they have already struck.

This course is designed to provide leaders across all sectors with a framework for understanding the nature of crisis and issues management, as well as the ability to lead through this complexity in order to return to business-as-usual arrangements. The course will outline crisis-management workflows that can structure ensure business continuity, reduce financial and legal liability and preserve (or even enhance) the organisation's image and reputation. Working collaboratively in a flattened and focused crisis-management environment, communicating across complex stakeholder groups and dealing with the potential reputational impacts associated with rapidly emerging social and traditional media stories are all core to effective crisis management. High-profile contemporary case studies will be used throughout the course to contextualise and amplify lessons learned.

While the focus of the course is on preparing leaders to operate effectively in times of crisis, the teachings delivered within this course will be equally applicable in a business-as-usual context. Indeed, many organisations view crisis and issues management training as an excellent 'leadership laboratory' which, in a very short period of time, can provide participants with exposure to critical skills such as developing situational awareness, verifying and qualifying disparate information, decision-making, leadership presence and generating tempo through concurrent activity and clear prioritisation of tasks. All of these skills are also extremely beneficial in a day-to-day leadership context.

Content outline

The course will cover the following topic areas:

1. *Introduction to Crises and their Impacts*. This unit will introduce students to the contemporary business environment, focusing on crises and their impacts. In particular, it will explore not just the impact of events, but also the issues arising from the events, which can be as damaging to a company as the incident itself. Contemporary case studies will be used to highlight learnings.

2. *Leadership in Crisis Situations*. There is no 'silver bullet' for successful leadership in any situation, let alone a crisis. Rather, successful leadership relies on an ability to understand the dynamic interplay between the leader, their followers and the situation, and to adapt rapidly and appropriately. This unit will cover a number of key crisis leadership theories and practices, and encourage participants to recognise the requirement to adapt their leadership style to suit the nature of the crises and the time critical needs of their followers and wider stakeholders – while still remaining authentic to who they are as a leader. It will also explore the concept of 'Leadership Presence', those elements which assist a leader engender motivation and action among followers in high-pressure situations.

3. *Dealing with Crises*. The shock of a rapidly emerging incident can sometimes be overwhelming to the point of paralysis. This unit provides students with an understanding of the structures that modern businesses use to manage crisis situations, as well as a toolkit for regaining the initiative through a logical process of understanding the full breadth of the problem, fighting for information, separating facts and assumptions, identifying and satisfying priority information requirements and then mapping stakeholders and confirming key messaging. Having conducted these three steps, students will then be instructed in methods for establishing a disciplined and sustainable workflow, which will allow for constant maintenance of team situational awareness and facilitation of clear passage of priorities and tasks.

4. *Crisis Communications*. Crises demand clear and structured communications, both internal and external, across a range of complex stakeholders. Some of these communications will be mandated and templated, while others will require careful and tailored preparation, development and

delivery. Regardless, all must remain synchronised and unified with the team's central themes and messages. This unit will cover the key principles of crisis communications, as well as methods for developing single overriding communications objectives and key messages tailored to a range of internal and external stakeholders. Within this, it will cover the changing nature of the media, including the increasing importance of social media. It will outline preparation of traditional and social media statements, as well as the conduct of media engagements. Throughout the unit, contemporary case studies will be utilised to highlight good and bad methods of communicating a message during a crisis.

5. *Practical Activities*. Throughout the course, students will be provided the opportunity to adopt roles within the Crisis Management Team of a fictitious company facing an emerging crisis. In this capacity, they will have an opportunity to put their teachings into practice within an ambiguous and rapidly emerging crisis environment.

UNSW SYDNEY

Lead faculty

Ben Pronk DSC is an Adjunct Faculty member at AGSM and an expert in leadership, resilience, and risk. His first career spanned 24 years in the Australian Army, with the majority of that time spent in the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment. In this capacity, Ben served on multiple operational deployments and was decorated for leadership in action in Afghanistan. He concluded his service as Commanding Officer of the SAS.

Ben is a highly regarded thought leader and sought-after public speaker, particularly on leadership in high-pressure situations, the development of individual and collective resilience and the reduction of risk. In addition to his role as an Adjunct Faculty at the Australian Graduate School of Management, Ben is managing partner of Mettle Global, a premium consultancy which supports clients around the world in the development of processes and capabilities across the entire spectrum of risk, including Crisis and Emergency Management. He is also a Patron of the Military Art Program Australia, co-host of the Unforgiving60 podcast and co-author of The Resilience Shield.

Ben is a UNSW Canberra alumnus, having graduated from a Bachelor of Arts in 1996. Ben also holds a Master of Arts (Defence Studies) from King's College London and a Master of Business Administration from The University of Western Australia.

Global Network Week: Crisis & Issues Leadership
16 – 20 October 2023

Course Coordinator & Facilitator: Ben Pronk

Sunday 15 October @ The Squires Landing, The Rocks	
3.00 – 6.00pm *The Rocks*	**Welcome to Australia!** Make friends with the AGSM MBA Fulltime Class of 2024 and enjoy some refreshments on Sydney Harbour in a relaxed and informal gathering (optional attendance).

Monday 16 October @ The AGSM Building (G27)	
9.00-9.30am	**Welcome refreshments**
9.30-10.00am JBR Lecture Theatre (JBR) all sessions	**Welcome to UNSW** Prof Nick Wailes, AGSM Deputy Dean & Senior Deputy Dean, UNSW Business School **Welcome to Country** Local Elder
10.00-11.00am	**Introduction and Icebreaker** Ben Pronk
11.00-11.30am	*Break*
11.30am–1.00pm	**Leadership in Crisis Situations** Ben Pronk
1.00-1.30pm	*Lunch*
1.30-3.00pm	**Dealing with Crises** Ben Pronk
3.00-3.30pm	*Break*
3.30-4.30pm	**Industry speaker**
5.00-7.00pm	**Welcome Event at Coogee Pavilion** (depart AGSM at 4.30pm)

Tuesday 17 October @ The AGSM Building (G27)	
09.00–10.30am	**Crisis Communications** Chris Urquhart
10.30-11.00am	*Break*
11.00am-12.00pm	**Issues Management** Ben Pronk
12.00 – 1.00pm	*Lunch provided*
1.00 pm	Travel to Sonder
1.30 - 4.30/5.00pm	**Offsite Industry Visit - Sonder** Ben Pronk
5.00pm	Return transport to UNSW Kensington Campus

Wednesday 18 October @ The AGSM Building (G27)			
9:00-10.00am	**Campus Tour**		
10.00-10.30am	*Break*		
	Media Training Chris Urquhart	**Resilience** Ben Pronk	**Conflict Management** Anne Lytle
10.30am-12.00pm	Stream 1	Stream 2a	Stream 2b
12.00-1.30pm	*Lunch*		
1.30-2.30pm	Stream 1	Stream 2a	Stream 2b
2.30-3.00pm	*Break*		
3.00-5.00pm	Stream 2	Stream 1a	Stream1b

Thursday 19 October @ Bondi Beach. Meet outside <u>Bondi Icebergs Club</u> at 8.45 for a 9am start	
09.00–10.00am	**Situational Awareness and Audit Tools** Ben Pronk
10.00-10.30am	*Break*
10.30am-12.00pm	**Issues Management** Ben Pronk
12.00 – 1.00pm	*Lunch provided*
1.00-2.30pm	**Offsite Industry Visit** Ben Pronk
2.30-3.00pm	*Break*
3.00-4.30/5.00pm	**Offsite Industry Visit** Ben Pronk

Friday 20 October @ <u>The AGSM Building</u> (G27) Room JBR	
9.00 – 11.30am	**Teams prepare presentations**
11.30-12.00pm	Campus Tour
12.00-1.00pm	*Lunch*
1.00–3.00pm	**Final team presentations**
3.00 – 4.00pm AGSM Courtyard	**Certificate Ceremony & Final Networking Drinks**