

## Global Risk Communication: The Octopus Syndrome: How to Sort the Constant Refresh of Information

Do you consider yourself an early adopter when it comes to technology? If you find yourself picking up the latest tools to be released and enjoy discovering new devices and educating others on it, you are an up-to-date tech geek. On the other hand you may be completely opposite from this. Do you find yourself keeping away from the latest fad, find learning a new tool distracting or useless? Perhaps you are a late-adopter when it comes to technology. Then there are those that fall into the middle. To adopt a new technology or not...

This question could seem out of scope from a risk management perspective but it is all about how you keep connected (technology/methods), to what extent (super, medium, or low), and whether disconnecting is an issue. In today's world, not being aware of the latest news like the latest plane miss-landing or mine collapse is considered a miss unless you were experiencing it live or as close to the actual occurrence as possible. With applications on each smart device, the world is constantly refreshing and absorbing news as it unfolds. It is important to ask yourself: Is it essential I know every event; does it bring something to my job; is this just something to talk about at the coffee machine?

The same questioning should be applied to risk management roles including loss control and supervision. To be simple, let's consider only yes or no answers. Yes, a Risk Manager needs to be informed of specific losses or claims and in some instances of near-misses as well. Does the Risk Manager need this information immediately or could it be delayed? Immediate feed would be required for media coverage and top management requiring such information. Catastrophic events always require immediate communication. For standard claims at a corporate level, immediate communication is not required. Reactions to claims must be done locally and so proper preplanning is necessary. A Risk Manager needs to stay well informed but must also put confidence into teams so that the minor claims can be dealt with locally. Updates don't have to be specific for minor claims but the overall information must still be communicated.

People who stay connected 24-7 tend to manage everything themselves, with the entire burden falling on their own capabilities. This "Octopus Syndrome" is when a person has strong control on all people and operations. Like the well-known octopus, their hands are in everything and from afar, seeing the multiple aspects being handled, it can almost seem chaotic. The sense of



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simplicity is often lost. By delving into every detail for each and every claim, the information starts to build up quickly. When dealing with a loss like property damage, you could address decontamination, file the claim, contract a loss adjuster, and more. These are all tasks that can be handled on a local level. It does not bring added value to put additional corporate pressure on a team that already has existing pressure to solve issues and react accordingly. Maintaining and implementing a plan with contact numbers and updated phone lists can better prepare the team. With a plan in place all should remain under control and this allows the team to feed corporate level executives with quality information. Instead of demanding information real-time amidst the struggle of the local team solving an issue, it is best to train and educate them.



Risk Managers should write and detail job positions so that the teams are able to hire the proper recruits for the job. Clear and concise procedures should be written and listed as well. During an event staff will not be able to scramble through hundreds of pages, procedures should be as brief as possible. Implementing local training ensures the staff is trained and knowledgeable on these

procedures. As a Risk Manager, the organization and regular auditing of this is necessary. Pre-disaster plans and contingency plans are key to approaching any undesirable event. These plans, while not necessarily written, must exist, be reviewed, formalized, and implemented to the team.

Connectivity is not evil, and in fact we are not suggesting we revert back to an age without technology, but we are bringing to light that too much connectivity might create inefficiencies and complicate situations with added stress and the possibility of over-reactivity. The trick is for Risk Managers to keep focused on necessary items on their level. By maintaining this high level profile and method they can easily coordinate information in different countries or continents. Without this higher level of organization, a Risk Manager would not be well informed.

The goal is to have quality information delivered after all necessary emergency measures have been taken on a local level. The approach involves hiring and training the right people, formalizing procedures, and coordinating all actions. This is one approach to a world full of information. Ultimately this is a personal choice; some people find satisfaction from over-connecting and others do not. Regardless of your style, nothing should substitute setting a good pre-disaster plan in place.



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