Minimizing Chaos During Public Health Emergencies: The Challenge for Leadership

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Extreme Events: What Leaders Need to Know
School of Public Health, University at Albany
August 2006
Our Goals…

- Provide some insights relative to public health challenges in leadership (esp. in crisis),

- Discuss some new thinking, and

- Look at a few tools that might prove useful to today’s leaders
Our Approach...

- The System of Leadership
  - Decision challenges
    - Failure of imagination
    - Organizational/Political
    - The notion of “acceptable” loss
    - Chaos

- The Person as Leader
  - Connectivity
  - Phases of Leadership
  - Active vs. passive leadership
  - Meta-Leadership
    - Conflict resolution
    - Emotional Intelligence
The System of Leadership
Three Dimensions of Public Health Readiness

CONSIDER THE ESCALATING DECISION CHALLENGE

**Number of Cases/Affected**

- **1,000s – 100,000s**

**Potential for Chaos Increases**

- **SARS**
  - Assess – Diagnose – Isolate – Treat – Manage
  - Communicate to stakeholders and public – enhance surveillance & reporting
  - Report – Mobilize Response – Investigate – Prophylaxis

- **Katrina**
  - Command and control – vital to assure wide area containment
  - Manage high volume of data and information
  - Deliver mass intervention – call up reserve workforce

- **Pandemic Flu**
  - Command and control – vital to assure wide area containment
  - Activate community-wide mass care system – manage great loss

**Leadership Pressure**

- **LOW**
  - Katrina
  - SARS
  - Anthrax 10/01

- **HIGH**
  - Pandemic Flu

**Time (Velocity)**
Decision Challenges:
Incidents Without Precedent – Failure to Imagine

- Substance & Nature
- Scope
- Size
- Quality of Response
- Scale
Decision Challenges: Organizational and Political

Understand expectations and roles of:

- Elected Officials have:
  - Authority, can exercise options, and are ultimately accountable
- Subject Matter Experts have:
  - Information and facts, capacity to analyze, and expertise and credibility that create public confidence

What the public wants

FAMILIARITY

What the public expects

BALANCE

TRUST
Decision Challenges: Acceptable Loss

Important considerations:

- Sacrificing a few for the benefit of many
- Building a decision model that will allow for acceptable loss tolerance
- MUST – be discussed and built into plans before an event
- Areas of Public Health Interest:
  - Strategies for the use of scarce medical countermeasures (i.e., flu vaccine)
  - Plans for the use and enforcement of “quarantine”/ movement restrictions
  - Plans for how the U.S. will work with other nations to halt the spread of disease inside and outside U.S. borders
  - Assuring fairness to all regardless of race, class, and other socio-economic differences

Decision challenges:

- Impedes ability to make decisions in time if not thought out beforehand
- Prediction of negative consequences significantly increases risk perception
- Can be a major factor in creating chaos….
Decision Challenges: Chaos

- Defined as:
  - A "perceived" state of extreme confusion and disorder – Princeton University
  - The disorder of formless matter and infinite space, supposed to have existed before the ordered universe – Webster’s Dictionary
  - In Chinese mythology it’s the name of a god – Wikipedia.org
  - The name of the puppet cat in Canadian children’s television program Sesame Park – Wikipedia.org
  - The final boss in the first Final Fantasy game. He is a relatively large demonic figure who possesses magical powers as a result of apparently being of the Four Friends – My 15 year old son Nick
Simple Exercise (10 minutes):

- **My story**
- **Key discussion questions:**
  - Describe a situation where you experienced a chaotic situation? What was your initial “emotional” reaction?
  - How did it resolve? – Who, when, how?
  - What role did you play?
  - What critical lesson did you take away from the experience?
- **Take 5 minutes to think about this and we will discuss**
Decision Challenges: Chaos (continued)

- What feeds chaos:
  - Lack of control of:
    - Information (coming in and going out)
    - Resources
    - The decision process
    - Time (can’t do much here)

  - Command pressures – orders from above to perform

  - Failure to imagine where an event might take you (i.e., Pan Flu)

  - Failure to understand the consequences (good and bad) of decisions (short and long-term)

  - Failure to assume command and assert control

Hold that thought for a few minutes...
The Person as Leader
What/who is an effective leader?

A human being who is respected by others, has a vision and the capacity to move a group of other humans to realize the vision over a planned period of time, appears to make order out of chaos, commands, strives to succeed or win, and communicates effectively up, down, and across chains of human command - and seems to keep the pieces connected continuously…. 
Connectivity*

A *seamless web* of people, organizations, resources, & information that can best prevent, respond, and recover from a crisis event

*Dr. Leonard Marcus - Harvard University - National Preparedness Leadership Initiative*
Connectivity*
THE LEADER:

A **seamless web** of **people, organizations, resources, & information** that can best **prevent, respond, and recover from** a crisis event.

- **Manages Operations**
- **Drives Decisions**
- **Coordinates Assets**
- **Creates Linkages**
- **Measures Progress/Impact**

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Three Phases of Leadership

**PHASE I**
Vision & Strategy
- See Big Picture
- Know Desired Outcomes
- Build Coalitions

**PHASE II**
Operations & Execution
- Plan
- Execute
- Connect Pieces

**PHASE III**
Impact & CQI
- Monitor Change
- Measure Productivity
- Assure Systems to Support CQI
Three Phases of Leadership

PHASE I
Vision & Strategy
See Big Picture
Know Desired Outcomes
Build Coalitions

DREAMERS

PHASE II
Operations & Execution

PHASE III
Impact & CQI

If you are only looking at...

Then:
• Your vision will not have traction
• You may find your intentions distorted
• Vision legitimacy will be questioned
• During response may not appreciate details
Three Phases of Leadership

**PHASE I**
- Vision & Strategy

If you are only looking at...
- High activity/low productivity
- Others won’t know direction & intent
- Could do more damage than good

**PHASE II**
- Operations & Execution

Then:
- Plan
- Execute
- Connect Pieces

**CHARGERS**
- Impact & CQI
Three Phases of Leadership

**PHASE I**
Vision & Strategy

**PHASE III**
Impact & CQI

**BEAN COUNTERS**
Operations & Execution

If you are only looking at...

Then:
- There will be high frustration
- No realistic metrics to assess accomplishments
- The change/impact will be questioned

Monitor Change
Measure Productivity
Assure Systems to Support CQI
Three Phases of Leadership

**PHASE I**
Vision & Strategy

**PHASE II**
Operations & Execution

**PHASE III**
Impact & CQI

Leaders drive the learning curve across all three phases – especially during a crisis

WHERE DO YOU LEAD?
ACTIVE AND PASSIVE LEADERSHIP

GOOD

PASSIVE

Empowers others
Won’t micromanage
Methodical progress

ACTIVE

Commands/Acts
Charts the course
Thinks
~fast~forward

BAD

Indecisive
Risk averse
Seems confused

Ego driven
Alienates subordinates
High Emotions
ACTIVE AND PASSIVE LEADERSHIP

GOOD

PASSIVE
Lyndon Johnson
Woodrow Wilson
Abraham Lincoln

BAD
Mike Brown (Katrina)
Jefferson Davis
Capt. of the Titanic

ACTIVE
Winston Churchill
George S. Patton
Thad Allen (Katrina)

Alexander Haig
Napoleon Bonaparte
Lex Luther
Leadership Quotes

“One cool judgment is worth a thousand hasty counsels. The thing to do is to supply light and not heat.”

“A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week.”

“No reason to panic, I’m in charge.”
“Considering the dire circumstances that we have in New Orleans, virtually a city that has been destroyed, things are going relatively well.”
Meta-Leadership

- Defined as:
  - Leadership that connects the purposes and the work of different organizations or organizational components to achieve a greater good
  - Leaders able to influence and accomplish such collaboration of effort across organizations – multi-jurisdictions, multi-agencies, and public-private entities… motivating inter-action, enhancing communication, and engendering the sort of cross-organizational confidence necessary for effective “action”
Meta-Leadership (continued)

- Traditional Leaders vs. Meta-Leaders:
  
  Traditional leaders derive their power and influence from within their organizational silos (i.e., job description, authority of position, expectations of supervisor and subordinates)

  1. Promotes a related set of functions
  2. Controls a related set of workers
  3. Is the sum of all the parts - Newtonian Systems
  4. Supports a structured/familiar Organization
  5. Operates under a defined set of principles
  6. Is tied together by a unique culture

And there’s nothing wrong with this…
Meta-Leadership (continued)

- Meta-Leaders strive to influence what happens within their organization by seeking credibility from others outside their office or organization where common goals or a sense of purpose are shared – they lead across the silos…

- Big picture
- Multi-dimensional perspective
- Comfortable with the unfamiliar
- Recognize cultural value
- Can integrate diverse goals
- Leads through all phases of leadership

COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS
More than the sum of the individual parts
Meta-Leadership (continued)

- Key Characteristics of a Meta-Leader:
  - Courage to take risks and manage consequences
  - Sensible in understanding and managing various organizational cultures
  - Curious – asks good questions
  - Conflict Solver – recognize, manage, solve – *A Walk in the Woods*…

1. Recognize the Problem
2. Understand all interests
3. List agreements/disagreements
4. Determine choices/new motives
5. Assure mutual buy-in
6. Share the result
7. Take Action

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Key Characteristics of a Meta-Leader (continued):

- Emotional Intelligence*:
  - Know thy self – moods, emotions, sense of humor = self confidence
  - Self regulate disruptive impulses (think before acting) = Trust
  - Understand motivation to act for unselfish interest = Commitment
  - Empathize = Play well with others
  - Be mindful and proficient in building relationships and networks

* Goleman, 2004
Minimizing Chaos – Your Take Aways

What can be done to minimize chaos:

- Understand and actively manage decision challenges
- Address acceptable loss before the decision moment (crisis)
- Enable connectivity inside and outside your silo
- Recognize the need to know and lead across the continuum of leadership phases
- Know when to lead actively and passively
- Be a Meta-Leader
  - Use your imagination and think about future events/consequences
  - Identify, manage, and resolve conflict
  - Calculate and manage your emotional intelligence
- Remember: Chaos is managed when the patterns of cause and effect are discovered and dealt with