Building resilience through real-time case studies

By Donna Dark, your governance guide (Lighthouse Advisory Services)

This article provides an overview of the use of real-time case studies of other organisations to ensure your systems are prepared for potential future events.

This is a future-focused approach to considering and planning for future risk events and is an important aspect of a robust organisational governance system.

Why use a real-time case study?

A real-time case study is how I describe an adverse event or issue that is happening or has recently happened to another organisation or institution that threatens its survival.

Real-time case studies offer the opportunity to reflect on and question how we would respond without the stress of going through the experience of a significant issue or crisis. I find that using a real-life event can increase engagement, as it is a tangible issue, and it is removed from the organisation itself. This means that team members may be more open to discussing gaps or weaknesses in systems when an event has not yet occurred.

Real-time case studies can also indicate an emerging issue or risk for the organisation that we have not yet considered, but now we can - without the associated consequences.

Key points for effective use:

1. Use cases inside and outside the industry.

Potential events for a case study outside of aged care require broader scanning of reliable news sources as well as professional body newsletters and alerts. Inside aged care, real-time cases can be easily identified from news and industry information sources.

2. Ensure respect of the issue, content and individuals involved.

We use real-time cases to learn from and use only information that is necessary and what is publicly available. One day, we may be the case study.

3. Be aware of bias and judgement.

All facts and information are unlikely to be known. It’s important to also separate fact from opinion in news stories and industry reports.

4. Present the case study concisely and accurately.

Compile the information available about the event so that it can be reviewed and discussed by participants in the reflective exercise. Ensure the compilation it is fair, balanced, and complete.

5. Keep it simple

Consider using the Practice Review approach provided by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission as a basis and modifying it accordingly, for example:

- *Why did that event/incident happen?*
- *Could this event/incident happen here?*
- *Do we understand the likelihood of the risk of this event and its potential impact?*
- *What could we do better to prevent this incident/event OR prepare for this potential incident event?*

Alternatively, you may choose to use your risk assessment tools and methodology to frame your approach.

6. Define participant roles and mix

Participation depends on the nature of the issue or incident. Consider who needs to be there to share knowledge of how things really work, who has key responsibilities, and other stakeholders that should provide their perspectives. Include some people outside of the area or function involved to ask the questions others may overlook. All participants need to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the exercise and their role.

7. Close the loop

Lastly, is important to ensure actions are agreed, responsibility assigned, and a reporting mechanism is in place that provides feedback on progress to those involved as well as the governing body, and the broader organisation. Actions for improvement should be captured in relevant continuous improvement plans.

Resources

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – Practice Review Guidance Materials

Articles

Fast Company (2023) Leadership Now. *What it means to be a resilient leader, according to an Oxford professor*.