

Violence in the Workplace: A Strategic Crisis Management Issue

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Organizational leaders and academicians seem to view workplace violence, crisis management, and strategic management as independent concepts. However, they are interdependent. The first step toward workplace security and strategic crisis management is to establish a workplace violence prevention system. Workplace violence involves violence or threats of violence from workers against co-workers and includes bullying and harassment as well as threats and acts of violence. From moral and legal perspectives, organizational leaders have an obligation to establish violence prevention systems as an integral part of strategic crisis management. Such violence prevention systems include anti-violence policies, procedures, and processes as well as physical and structural means of preventing violence. Improvements have been made in terms of violence prevention. However, compared to advances in communication and technology, many violence prevention systems are limited in scope and capability because bullying, harassment, threats, and acts of violence are still rampant in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and ASIS International's Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention: American National Standard defines workplace violence as "a spectrum of behaviors—including overt acts of violence, threats, and other conduct—that generates a reasonable concern for safety from violence, where a nexus exists between the behavior and the physical safety of employees and others (such as customers, clients, and business associates) on-site or off-site, when related to the organization" (ASIS International and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2011 as cited in Bryant, 2012, p.1). In a 2012 survey, SHRM found that over one-third (36 percent) of organizations reported increased incidents of workplace violence. Two years previously, organizations indicated that incidents of violence had either stayed about the same (45%) or decreased in frequency (40%), while 15% reported an increase in frequency ("Workplace Violence", 2012, p.1).

OSHA defines "workplace violence" in accordance with the National Institute for Occupational Health's definition, which is "violent acts (including physical assaults and threats of assaults) directed toward persons at work or on duty" (Cordaro & Yohay, 2012). This definition is similar to the definition provided by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 2002, "Workplace violence is violence or the threat of violence against workers. It can occur at or outside the workplace and can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide, one of the leading causes of job-related deaths" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2002, p. 1). Jacob (2004) indicates that violence includes homicides, aggravated assaults, simple assaults, rapes and sexual assaults, and robberies. Lieber (2007) lists additional workplace violence as "sabotage of a co-worker or manager's work or property, violent

confrontations, sexual harassment, threats of violence, suicide at the workplace, and hostage incidents” (pp. 91-92).

In 1994, Alexander and Franklin reported that “approximately, 12% of all occupational fatalities are homicides, accounting for 40% of such fatalities among women and 10% among men” (640). According to a 1992 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, “. . . a large majority of such violence occurs in connection with robberies and related crimes” (Baron & Neuman, 1996, p. 162). This same point is made by Jacob (2004, p. 58) who noted that robbery accounts for 85% of workplace homicides. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics News, “The number of workplace homicides in 2006 . . . reflected a decline of over 50% from the high reported in 1994” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007, p. 1). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries submitted a report stating that the rates of workplace violence have declined substantially since 1994 - an 82% reduction for government employees and 75% for private workers (How Safe is your workplace, 2013).

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the workplace has experienced an explosion of advanced communication and technological capabilities as well as increased opportunities for education and training. Improvements have also been made in the strategic management of workplace violence and other types of crises. However, in comparison with other advancements, very few things have been achieved in the area of violence and other workplace crises. The number of complaints of bullying and/or violence handled through employee relations or other areas of human resources continues to increase. The common belief is that most employment violence is severe and deadly, but over several decades, statistics have shown that the opposite is true. In 1999, Baron, Neuman, & Geddes noted that “most attempts of harm-doing in work settings tend to be far less dramatic in nature” (p. 282). Of course, the concern is not just about the actual violence. Employers and employees are also concerned about the increasing threats of violence.

Regardless of the degree of severity of the violence or the threat of violence, there is a negative impact on the people involved and on work results. Anderson and Pearson (1999) stated that victims or targets reported the following after the violence incident: 28% lost work time in order to avoid the instigator; 53% lost work time worrying about the incident or possible future incidents; 37% believed that their commitment to the organization declined; 22% decreased their effort at work; 10% decreased the amount of time that they spent at work; 46% contemplated changing jobs to avoid the instigator; and 12% actually changed jobs to avoid the instigator. A workplace violence study based on data collected from over 1400 employees across industries found that 50% of sample respondents lost work time due to worry while 25% reported wasting work time avoiding instigators by working around them. They also found that victims (1) were less committed to the organization, (2) disengaged or reduced their organizational and helping activities, (3) reduced work efforts and (4) even engaged in organizational theft. Further, over 50% of respondents indicated increased employee turnover, and 12% actually left the organization (Trudel, 2009). The negative impact of uncivil behaviors lowers the physical wellbeing, higher burnout, and increased turnover intentions (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). This indicates that incivility has damaging effects, specifically lessening employee’s sense of commitment and contributing to employee turnover in the organization.

IDENTIFYING PRE-VIOLENCE INDICATORS, SYMPTOMS, AND TRENDS

Diversity in the workplace has helped transform the employment landscape and may contribute to workplace violence. Also, the global nature of many organizations may cause some types of hostilities. While many believe that sexual harassment as well as race and age discrimination are major problems, it is bullying that has escalated to an unprecedented level that has brought the violence issue to a global scale. Workplace bullying is the unwarranted and unrelenting use of hostile words and actions by an employee toward other employees (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998). According to Namie (2003), bullying can be explained on a continuum which starts from incivility, moves to bullying, and ends with workplace violence. Martucci and Sinatra (2009) stated that there are no specific federal laws that prohibit workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is viewed as, “repeated unwelcomed negative act or

acts (physical, verbal, or psychological intimidation), that can involve criticism and humiliation, intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the target from one or more individuals in any source of power with the target of the bullying having difficulties defending himself or herself” (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011, p.72). There is greater violence against females and those workers in particular occupations. Campolieti, Goldenberg, and Hyatt (2008) discussed a study which revealed that “Women tended to be victims of workplace violence more frequently (as evidenced by) about 56 percent of workplace violence claims” (p.61). Also, occupations such as nursing and law enforcement had the highest claims rate, 46.4 claims per 10,000 workers and 45.6 claims per 10,000 workers (respectively). The study also revealed that women victims of workplace violence tended to have longer absences from work than their male counterparts. Other occupations that were at higher risk included postal and social workers. Social workers are more likely to be victims of workplace violence in Canada than the United States (McCall & Horowitz, 1997).

In 2013, workers are still at higher risk in some industries and occupations. The sector which remains high risk is the healthcare sector. Workers and nursing home employees are especially affected, with seven times the average rate of injury from workplace violence. They account for 45% workplace of the workplace violence rate. Violence in medical settings may arise from interactions with aggressive patients who may be drunk, drugged or emotionally disturbed. Yet there is no rule or mandate by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to require healthcare facilities to implement safeguards for their employees (such as metal detectors, security guards or even locked doors to isolate patients in guarded areas). This is part of a larger problem: There are no federal OSHA rules requiring employers to ensure workplaces are safe from violence (Elk, 2013).

Analysis of 200 workplace violence incidents by The Workplace Violence Research Institute of Palm Springs, California revealed 20 pre-incident symptoms or indicators of potential violence. Those symptoms reported by Jacob (2004) were: “increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs; an unexplained increase in absenteeism; noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene; depression and withdrawal; unprovoked, explosive outbursts of anger or rage; threats or verbal abuses of co-workers and supervisors; repeated comments indicating suicidal tendencies; frequent vague physical complaints; noticeably unstable emotional responses; behavior suggestive of paranoia; preoccupation with previous incidents of violence; increased mood swings; having a plan to ‘solve all problems;’ resistance and over-reaction to procedural changes; increased unsolicited comments about firearms and other dangerous weapons; empathy with individuals committing violence; repeated violations of company policy; fascination with violent and/or sexually explicit movies or publications; escalation of domestic problems; and large withdrawals from or closing company credit union account” (p.60).

VIOLENCE CAUSES AND RESULTS

Sometimes employees are apprehensive about reporting bullying, harassment, and other threats and acts of violence. Employers should create an open-door policy that stimulates communication among employees and management. No one should have to work in fear and become accustomed to a hostile environment because they believe that it comes with the territory. Employers should recognize that prevention of workplace violence is a wise business strategy. When violence occurs, employees are often absent for long periods of time, production is down, insurance costs rise, lawsuits are possible, and other undetermined costs may exist. Workplace violence not only impact production and service results. It also negatively impacts human capital effectiveness, organizational culture, relationship between peers and supervisors, morale, job satisfaction, absenteeism, employee commitment and concentration, all of which results in inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and increased costs (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). Neelam Gill Malhorta, Director of Human Resources for Computer Sciences Corporation, India stated “Bad behavior (at the workplace) affects the psyche of the target person(s) and has far-reaching ill effects. It is demoralizing and hinders effectiveness, efficiency and productivity” (Bajaj, et. al., 2007, p. 164).

Yashovardhan Verma, Director of HR at LG Electronics indicated that “The damage varies from loss of customers and clients to loss of brand equity and even career damage (Bajaj, et.al, 2007, 165). Many

employees claim that informing their managers about workplace violence brings them no help. “In New Zealand the workplace bullying helpline has found that 73 percent of those who experience workplace bullying and have reported it to their management have not been helped” (Olsen, 2007, p. 26). It is imperative that an employee not accept the aggressive behavior because it can affect other employees. The frustration that an innocent employee feels can inadvertently be passed on to other employees without malicious intent (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). It is important to understand the situation and correct it before it spirals out of control.

Workplace bullying does not necessarily mean that a person has to physically confront another person. However, bullying should be taken seriously regardless of the form it takes. Johnson and Indvik (2001) cautioned that “Workplace hostilities mirror incidents of social incivility, such as road rage and deadly duels over parking spaces” (p.45). In the workplace, such rude behavior might include nasty demeaning notes or email, accusations, and shouting, and the rude behavior might be exhibited by management or non-management personnel. In fact, overruling decisions without offering a reason, giving public reprimands and not giving credit where it is due are rude actions of some management people (Johnson & Indvik, 2001).

Kenneth Baker, a crime consultant for Academy Group Inc., noted, “What we are seeing now, in the last five years, is more technological kinds of nastiness and incidents of behavioral problems in the workplace” (Ceniceros, 2008, p. 12). These are important events that employers should seriously consider, since this type of action is a prelude for more serious negative actions from bullying employees. The consequences of the invisible or the difficult-to-detect bullying can lead to more pervasive insidious behavior that will eventually become uncontrollable by the victim (Klie, 2008).

Identifying certain behavior such as *lashing out* can be the first step in stopping any further bullying or violence. Employees should be educated and counseled on how to deal with the hostile environment in such a way that they will not become direct targets for further abuse. Emotional support should be provided for employees who experience, as well as those who overcome, such acts (Lee & Brotheridge, 2006).

No federal or state laws exist that prohibit workplace bullying. However, since 2003, many states have tried to pass legislation related to the issue. Michael Fox, an attorney in Austin, Texas indicated that employers need to understand that they “may be found liable for bullying-type behavior, even without a law against it” (Anonymous, 2008, p. 7). Fox feels that employers should avoid specific terms like “workplace bullying.” Instead he recommends the following statement: “Our policy is that (employees) are entitled to a workplace where you are not harassed for any reason” (Anonymous, 2008, p. 7). However, other violence prevention experts recommend a more explicit policy that would be more effective in preventing violent behavior.

Many other factors contribute to workplace violence, such as alcohol, drugs, mental illness, and family violence. However, Johnson and Indvik (2001) emphasize that problems can also occur at work because of “corporate downsizings that cause workers to battle one another to survive job cuts. This also indicates that the quantity of emails (an average of 190 per worker) which require instantaneous responses put pressure on workers and often cause rudeness and incivility” (p. 458).

There are no concrete answers on how to prevent violence or universal prevention programs to stem this serious problem. According to Armour (2004), an analysis of 224 instances of fatal workplace violence showed that “In a majority of the cases, employers ignored, downplayed or misjudged the threats” (p. 1).

This leads to the following questions: (1) What can employers, employees, the community and legislation do to help prevent violence? (2) What can they all do to help restore victims? (3) How can they improve and/or increase their security measures after an attack from an employee or other individuals? Carney and Aspen (2007) suggest that “Risk Managers and safety officers at schools, organizations and municipalities across the country need to consider taking long, hard looks at their plans to anticipate and respond to such events” (p. 23).

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Planning and preparation is required to eliminate workplace violence. A strategic crisis management plan is required to prevent violence and to respond and implement when workplace violence occurs. According to a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “In 2009, approximately 572,000 nonfatal violent crimes (rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault) occurred against persons age 16 or older while they were at work or on duty, based on findings from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)” (Harrell, 2011, p.1). The report goes on to say that in 2009, “521 persons age 16 or older were victims of homicide in the workplace” (Harrell, 2011, p. 1). The report also states that in 2009, “an estimated 4 violent crimes per 1,000 employed persons age 16 or older were committed while the victims were at work or on duty” (Harrell, 2011, p.1).

These are alarming statistics that affect the workforce of America and impact organizations and society in general. Organizations can reduce the risk of workplace violence by focusing on refining negligent hiring and retention and having security measures in place to prevent workplace violence. A survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2005 found that more than five percent of U.S. businesses had experienced at least one incident (5 percent of all establishments, including State and local governments had reported a violent incident of workplace violence. That number jumped to fifty percent in businesses employing more than 1000 employees. Service- providing industries reported much higher percentages of criminal, customer, and domestic violence than producing industries (“Survey,” 2006). The Census on Fatal Occupational Injuries found an average of 590 workplace homicides occurs in the U.S. each year. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), it is the employer’s responsibility to provide a safe environment for employees to work. Organizational leaders are obligated to find ways to reduce workplace violence. According to the National Institute for Prevention of Workplace violence, negligent hiring cases have had verdicts as large as \$40 million. The average negligent hiring settlement is \$1 million (“Workplace violence”, 2012). It is a strategic imperative for the organizational leaders to strategically and tactically manage and prevent workplace violence.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The leaders of organizations and nations should develop executable strategic crisis management plans through which they are prepared to prevent workplace violence and other crises and/or minimize their negative impact when they occur. Taneja, Pryor, & Zhang (2010) emphasize that employees and other stakeholders should be trained in strategic crisis management and be able to execute their respective crisis management responsibilities. Jacob (2004, p. 58) encourage organizational leaders to make a commitment to the guidelines and recommendations listed by OSHA which contain the following elements: “(1) Management commitment and employee involvement; (2) Worksite analysis; (3) Hazard prevention and control; and (4) Training and education.” Organizational leaders should integrate worker safety into their strategic and tactical plans. In addition, they should identify areas of risk and potential violence as well as safety data. The workplace should be designed to prevent violence and unsafe practices, and employees should be trained so that they can protect themselves and their fellow workers.

Murray & Powell (2007) emphasize that the fact that family violence also moves into the workplace cannot be ignored because “home life can impact work life” (p. 67). As a result, employees must have some way to rapidly notify management when violence is imminent. Jacob (2004, p.58) recommends various physical, structural, and procedural controls, such as:

- Alarm systems or panic buttons
- Mirrors
- Bright, effective lighting
- Adequate staffing
- The arrangement of furniture to avoid entrapment
- Cash-handling controls (e.g., drop safes)
- Emergency procedures

- Video surveillance equipment
- Post incident evaluation and response procedures
- Assistance programs for victims

Karmally (as cited in Murray & Powell, 2007, p. 65), argued that “workplace policies which provide for flexible leave provisions, increased security measures, flexible shifts and making available referral information to local family services” are methods that can be implemented with successful results. Other examples can include philanthropic activities that can help support in terms of food, clothing, and transportation to local family violence organizations. Another avenue to pursue would be to create a partnership that would invite local family violence support center representatives to speak, distribute information and make known other referral services available in the community. Employers can also provide confidential counseling and create physical or online places that employees can retrieve information without the fear of recognition.

Although many organizations have a myriad of reasons that workplace bullying is not handled to the fullest extent, doing so achieves positive results. Management should facilitate proactive involvement among employees when faced with bullying. One employer reported, “There was no need for a formal process, lengthy and time consuming investigations...the people within the team confronted the behavior quickly and effectively” (Olsen, 2007, p. 27). In this particular case, the employee realized that she could not continue behaving badly and resigned. The employees had positively impacted the situation by supporting each other and calling the situation before it spiraled out of control.

One of the most efficient methods of prevention is to educate employees about workplace violence (and its warning signs) before it happens. According to psychologists and counselors, employees should start looking for what they refer to as the “*violence vibe* . . . Violence rarely happens in a vacuum; there are always warning signs of some type” (Traynor, 2007, p. 30).

EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Workplace violence is a primary concern for organizational leaders, governments, and society. Organizational leaders need to work to educate and prepare key stakeholders within their organizations to identify and mitigate the threat before an incident occurs (Ritchey, 2013). The renewed emphasis on security and crisis management that has resulted from terrorist threats and acts coincides with, and strengthens, organizational emphases on violence prevention. Unless organizations have in place security and crisis management systems that work, it will be difficult for them to minimize incidences of violence.

OSHA recommended that every employer needs to establish a no-tolerance policy for workplace violence, including any form of bullying and verbal or nonverbal threats. Employers should clearly define workplace violence in respective Codes of Conduct or other policies and procedures and provide multiple methods for reporting incidents of workplace violence. To foster a no-tolerance policy, employers should make clear that no employee will suffer reprisals for reporting inappropriate conduct. In addition, employers should establish protocols for investigating reports of workplace violence and taking disciplinary and remedial action (Cowley, 2013).

Employers with zero-tolerance violence policies are more likely to have lower incident rates. When employers mandate this policy, employees not directly involved in violent incidents but are witnesses are obligated to participate in the investigation by the employer or authorities (Lee, 2008). Those employees not willing to participate may be dismissed for lack of cooperation. This incentive will make the investigation and the zero-tolerance violence policies more significant. Also, OSHA advises organizational leaders as follows: “Employers must train all employees, including temporary workers, on the hazards specific to that workplace before they start working” (“OSHA Highlights”, 2013).

Employers have choices in terms of how to implement plans and initiatives to deal with violence in the workplace. However, employees often continue to suffer emotional problems even after management has dealt with an aggressive employee. Rukin (2008, p. 30) notes that “Irrespective of the setting,

common reactions in staff exposed to aggression and violence include fear, frustration and anger.” It is imperative that employers continue to offer their support after the situation has been handled.

Van Fleet and Van Fleet (2007) emphasize that the first major action to take in instituting a violence prevention system is to begin to understand and eliminate dysfunctional work environments. Quite often, managers of dysfunctional work environments micromanage, abuse power, lack anger management skills, threaten and demean others, and/or engage in other illegal or unethical behavior. As a result, good employees leave; quality, productivity, and profit decrease; costs increase; and stress and frustration increase (Van Fleet & Van Fleet, 2007).

In the past few years, employers have taken additional legal steps in attempting to protect their employees. For example, the Massachusetts Nurses Association sought support to address issues of violence against nurses. “S.1345, An Act Requiring Health Care Employers to Develop and Implement Programs to Prevent Workplace Violence would mandate that hospitals assess risk factors and develop and implement comprehensive workplace violence prevention programs” (Ohlson, 2007, p. 5). In Canada, steps have been taken to help employers adhere to the problem of violence permeating the Canadian workforce. The Ministry of Labour has presented clear guidelines to employers on the requirement for zero-tolerance environments in terms of violence. As a result, employers are scrambling to develop violence prevention plans that will include health-care professionals, law enforcement and public health advocates and to educate employees on how to handle situations before they escalate to violent tragedies (McKay, Arnold-Huberman, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008).

Van Fleet and Van Fleet (2007) offer the following steps in the establishment of an organizational violence prevention system: (1) Articulate a strong anti-violence policy; (2) Establish a crisis management team; (3) Identify and prioritize assets and resources; (4) Assess hazards in the workplace; (5) Assess employee security risks; (6) Establish administrative policies and controls; (7) Establish a procedure for reporting threats; (8) Balance the rights of troubled workers and other employees; (9) Train employees (management and non-management) to recognize potentially violent situations; (10) Select and train positive managers and supervisors; (11) Establish procedures for problem intervention; (12) Provide an adequate support system for employees; (13) Minimize the negative effects of reorganization; and (14) Develop contingency plans. Organizational leaders should consider the steps proposed by Van Fleet and Van Fleet (2007) as they establish their own violence prevention systems.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTION AND INTEGRATION

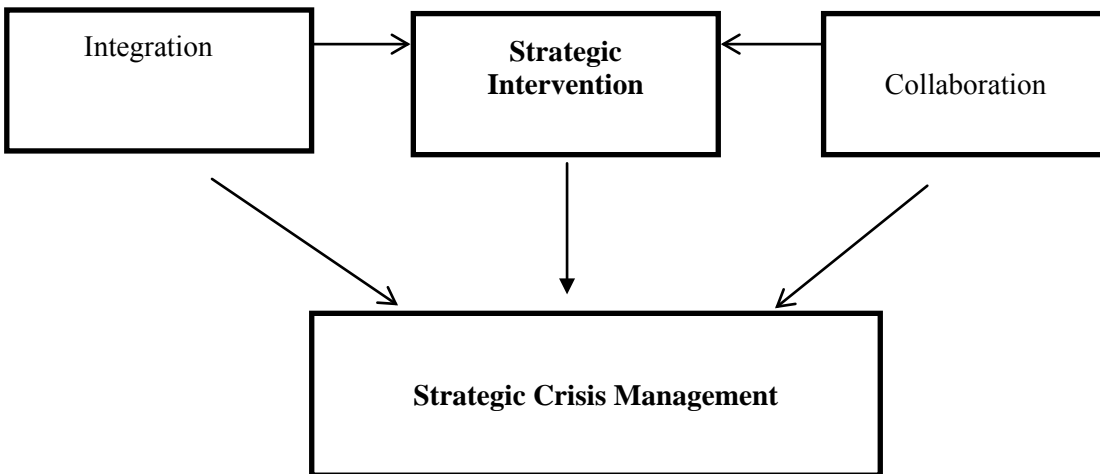
Efforts to prevent, or minimize the impact of, workplace violence should be included in crisis management plans which are an integral part of the strategic management of an organization. Strategic intervention is required to manage and prevent workplace violence. It encompasses both integration and collaboration strategies to proactively employ crisis management for the future of the organization and its employees as illustrated in figure 1. It is the responsibility of senior management to manage their employee’s security through crisis management by managing outcomes more efficiently. Senior management should ensure that processes and policies are in place to protect the employees from workplace violence. Also, they should try to minimize the negative impact on people and operations as they seek to reduce workplace violence and provide early warnings of potential or actual crisis situations, conditions and personnel. The use of collaboration and integration as a strategic intervention strategy is very important because they can help in minimizing the impact through a concerted coordinated response. There are recent examples of multiple workplace shootings that warrant corporate attention and consideration in critically assessing and evaluating workplace safety and security programs and policies and allocating and defining resources. Top management commitment is very essential for the integration and collaboration to allow organizations to use multiple intervention strategies. Nater and Ahrens, (2011) have suggested, “Relevant Methodologies as Best Practices to prevent workplace violence:

- Require the organization’s collective efforts to insure best practices rather than costly reinventions;

- Conduct frequent critical vulnerability risk assessments in helping to identify potential at risk situations and conditions;
- Implement Violence Prevention and Response Plans designed to engage situations before transition to a Hostile Intruder / Active Shooter;
- Develop comprehensive interrelated emergency management plans with local emergency services providers that consider employee support;
- Conduct drills and exercises integrating related plans;
- At the senior level use desktop simulations exercises and executive briefings to keep busy people engaged;
- Participate in local private public initiatives that invest in organizational safety and security.
- Promote employment of new technologies to exploit the value of Integration and Collaboration of systems as a cost-efficient way of having state of the art cross- functional system” (p.27).

Organizational leaders need to re-engineer their thinking to manage and control workplace violence as an integral part of strategic crisis management. (See Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND INTEGRAL PART OF STRATEGIC
CRISIS MANAGEMENT**



CONCLUSION

The issue of workplace violence is of serious concern because disturbed or angry employees continue to engage in criminal violence and wound and/or kill many victims. Also social outcasts, sexual harassment, discrimination, jealousy, bullying, and assault are very common in many types of workplaces. All organizations—big and small, profit making and non-profit—experience workplace violence. For humanitarian and legal reasons, organizations are responsible for the protection of their employees. It is the responsibility of the organizations to be proactive, detect the threats in environment, adopt preventive measures, and mitigate the consequences when violence occurs.

Violence in the workplace can be minimized by educating employees about workplace violence, making them aware of its nature, scope and consequences. Supervisors and other personnel need to understand how to handle coworkers and situations if they observe signs of possible abuse. In workplace violence, it is not uncommon for people to try to conceal that a threat or an attack has occurred.

Management should ensure that there are no barriers of communication between employees and employers and that a system exists that enables victims to report threats and acts of violence.

Ultimately, workplace violence presents very challenging problems for organizations to face. The key to an anti-violence strategy is an integrated approach, combining the skills and capabilities from all parts of organization to use as resources in developing policies, structures, and practices that will help prevent inappropriate behaviors at work. It is the responsibility of the organization, with a firm commitment from top management, to develop and implement a prevention and response system that has the right structure, predictability, and consistency for handling covert and overt behaviors and circumstances that jeopardize worker safety. Another reason to adopt a proactive systems approach to the prevention of workplace violence is related to questions regarding legal liability and potential financial costs. In addition, if workplace violence is not prevented or handled properly, the organization will experience other losses in the form of decreased productivity, low employee morale, and a corporate image which communicates a disregard for employee safety.

Various states are attempting to pass legislation to protect employees. Employers should be held liable when complaints are not investigated especially if an employee is murdered or injured physically, mentally or emotionally. If action is taken by an employer after an incident occurs, there should be some type of limited liability if an employer has done everything possible to protect employees. Employers which have exhausted their resources applicable by law and within their policies should not be held to the same standard as those organizations which have not performed their duties. Lastly, organizational leaders should review and upgrade their security measures and violence prevention systems and procedures to ensure that they are up-to-date, reliable, and an integral part of the strategic management of their respective organizations.

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