
Potential Problem Analysis Example

Action Background

We make automated storage systems for use by the life sciences industry during clinical testing. Our company will be participating in a trade show in two weeks and we are in panic mode. Two of our people who were to set up and staff the booth are ill. As a result we are scrambling to find replacement resources. Most of our marketing and sales people who could have stepped in to take over from them are already committed elsewhere. The two lucky individuals who have been assigned to set up and staff the booth are an engineer and a trainee sales associate, neither of whom has much experience in tradeshow logistics. These two individuals are meeting with the office manager to ensure our participation in the trade show is a success.

The trade show is a small but well attended event and most of our regional clients will be attending. We want to showcase some of our solutions that have been created in the past year for our international clients. It is important that we constantly remind our clients of our products, explain new innovations to them, and gather information on what new products they would like to see from us in the future.

Arrangements to participate in this trade show were made last year, so we have space reserved, service level contracts are in place, and invoices have been paid. Now we need to focus on shipping out the booth, the demonstration equipment, and marketing literature; and setting it all up before the start of the show. We have two booths, one large and the other small, that are warehoused with a company that handles tradeshow displays. The company arranges for the shipment of the booths, but not for the assembly. Demonstration equipment is packaged and shipped by the closest facility to the tradeshow. Marketing and Sales determine what marketing materials to ship out and how many, and this is an area that does not pose any concerns.

As two tradeshow novices are involved, everyone is anticipating trouble and is anxious to avoid it. As a result we are conducting a Potential Problem Analysis to address likely problems ahead of time.

1. Identify Potential Problems

State the action

What decision, action, plan, or end result do we need to protect?

What decision, action, plan, or end result might be at risk?

Write a short, clear statement. Include action, end result, and modifiers. Time frame and cost are optional

Set up the trade show booth.

List potential problems

When we take this action, what could go wrong?
What problem(s) could this action cause?
Visualize what problems could occur while taking the action
List quickly without discussion
Revise into object/deviation format

Use knowledge and experience OR...

Which potential problem should we work on first? Mark with *
Which potential problem is likely to cause the greatest damage?

...Use assess the threat to set priority

How likely is this potential problem? (probability)
How damaging is it likely to be? (seriousness)
Record (P) and (S) data. Rate H/M/L; Work on highest combinations first

Potential Problems

Probability

Seriousness

The wrong booth arrives at the tradeshow	Happened once before when company signed up for two concurrent trade shows	Booth may not fit in allotted space; might have to rent larger space for a higher cost and space may not be available; messaging on the booth may not be appropriate for this particular show; will make a poor impression with tradeshow visitors
	L	H
The booth does not arrive on time	No history of this having happened before	Will likely not have a noteworthy booth or display; will likely increase costs
	L-	M+
The demonstration equipment does not arrive on time	No history of this having happened before	Will not be able to demo how our equipment works to prospective new clients; will not be able to generate new leads
	L-	H
The demonstration equipment arrives damaged	This has occurred occasionally given the rush to unload and set up within a short period	Will not be able to demo how our equipment works to prospective new clients; will not be able to generate new leads
	M	H
Demonstration equipment gets stolen	This has been known to happen although we have not experienced it ourselves	Will not be able to demo how our equipment works to prospective new clients; will not be able to generate new leads
	L	H
Service, such as electrical hook up, is not provided on time	We have experienced this occasionally depending on the size of the show	All service hook ups have to be completed before the exhibits open according to service level agreements
	M-	L
Booth staffers do not interact professionally with trades people and clients	Both staffers are novices	Could damage our reputation, relationships, and our successful participation in the show
	H	H

Identify Likely Causes		Take Preventive Actions	
Consider causes for the potential problem		Take actions to address likely causes	
What could cause this potential problem? What else could cause...? Review similar experiences List many likely causes for each potential problem Explain how each cause could create the potential problem		What can we do to prevent or reduce the chances of this likely cause? How can we keep this likely cause from creating the potential problem? List many preventive actions Assign responsibility, resources, and time frame for each	
Likely Causes		Preventive Actions	
		Review paperwork sent to warehouse and confirm with warehouse staff which booth will be shipped out Who: Office Manager By when: 19 October Request a copy of the shipping manifest from the warehouse staff and review it; ask for ability to track arrival of the booth at the show Who: Office Manager By when: 19 October	
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		Monitor weather reports; news reports for accidents and accordingly ask warehouse to ship out booth earlier Who: Office Manager By when: 26 October	
		Monitor weather reports; news reports for accidents and accordingly ask facilities staff to ship out equipment earlier Who: Office Manager By when: 19 October	
		Remind Facilities' packers to pack equipment extra carefully; include spare parts in the shipment Who: Office Manager By when: 19 October Remind Facilities' packers to label the packages for appropriate handling; include handling instructions on mailing documentation Who: Office Manager By when: 19 October	
		Set expectations that the booth will be staffed by at least one person at all times when the exhibits are on display Who: Office Manager By when: 26 October Remind them of the expectations just prior to their departure Who: Office Manager By when: 30 October	
		Accept the risk	
		Coach booth staffers on tradeshow protocols Who: Marketing Manager By when: 30 October	

Prepare Contingent Actions and Triggers

Prepare actions to reduce likely impact

- What actions will we take if the potential problem happens?
- What actions will minimize the impact if this happens?
- What can we do to recover as quickly, cheaply, and effectively as possible?
- Brainstorm a list of contingent actions
- Involve others who will complete or judge the action or plan
- Prepare contingent actions in advance
- Assign responsibility, resources, and time frame for each

Set triggers for contingent actions

- How will we know the potential problem has occurred?
- What will cause the contingent action to start?
- Set a trigger for each contingent action
- One trigger can initiate more than one contingent action
- Identify the system or person that will initiate the contingent action
- Automatic triggers are preferable—they do not require judgment
- Use manual triggers when there is a choice of contingent actions or when the need for action has to be assessed

Contingent Actions

Ask tradeshow personnel for assistance to reconfigure the booth and additional time for set up	
Who: Engineer	By when: 31 October
Ask warehouse to express ship replacement booth	
Who: Sales Associate	By when: 31 October

Triggers

Error is discovered when booth is unpacked early on 31 October

Who: Engineer and Sales Associate

Rent a makeshift booth through tradeshow services	
Who: Sales Associate	By when: 30 October
Install promotional banners and brand identity posters to personalize the booth	
Who: Sales Associate	By when: 1 November

Install promotional banners and brand identity posters to personalize the booth
Who: Sales Associate By when: 1 November

Make arrangements for a back-up set of equipment to be available	
Who: Office Manager	By when: 29 October
Ship the back-up equipment as checked-in baggage or as freight	
Who: Engineer, Sales Associate	By when: 31 October

Shipper/tracking mechanism warns that booth is held up by bad weather/accidents and delivery date will be missed
Who: Office Manager
Rental booth has been assembled and installed
Who: Sales Associate

Check progress daily, and if the shipper/tracking mechanism warns that the equipment is held up in transit within 3 days of set-up, prepare to order a back-up set and prepare Engineer and Sales Associate to check them in as baggage or freight

Who: Office Manager

Assess the damage and use spare parts to make immediate fixes; test that the equipment is working as designed

Who: Engineer By when: 1 November

Check for visible signs of damage immediately on unpacking the equipment

Who: Engineer

Inform tradeshow security of theft	
Who: Engineer and Sales Associate	By when: Immediately on discovery of theft
Time permitting, ship out a replacement set	
Who: Office Manager	By when: If equipment is not recovered within 2-3 hours of discovery
File an insurance claim	
Who: Office Manager	By when: If equipment is not recovered

Equipment is missing and cannot be found
Who: Engineer or Sales Associate

Accept the risk

Check up twice daily on progress and provide coaching as needed

Who: Marketing Manager By when: Before and during the show

Coach booth staffers on tradeshow protocols	
Who: Marketing Manager	Who: Marketing Manager