What Makes a Successful Tabletop Exercise?

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"Preparation through education is less costly than learning through tragedy."

Max Mayfield, Former Director, National Hurricane Center

What We'll Cover…

- What are Tabletop Exercises all about?
- What scenarios are being requested most?
- What makes an exercise "successful"?
- What makes a "mature" exercise?
- YOUR experiences with tabletop exercises

All About Tabletop Exercises…

▲ Discussion-Based Exercises
  - ✓ Seminars
  - ✓ Workshops
  - ✓ Tabletop Exercises
  - ✓ Games

All About Tabletop Exercises…

▲ Operations-Based Exercises
  - ✓ Drills
  - ✓ Functional Exercises
  - ✓ Full-Scale Exercises

Design…

▲ Types & Purposes

▲ Participants

▲ Goals & Objectives

▲ Length

▲ Restrictions

▲ Scenario

▲ Post Exercise Analysis & Follow-up

Scenarios…

- Anything Cyber
  - ✓ Ransomware & Malware
  - ✓ Loss of critical IT vendor
  - ✓ Disruption of major applications

- Emergency Response (Evac & SIP)
  - ✓ Loss of knowledgeable staff
  - ✓ Severe building damage (explosion, collapse…)
  - ✓ Natural disasters
  - ✓ Disruption of utilities (power, HVAC, water)

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What makes a Successful TTX

- Aligning Participants, Objectives, etc. with the Exercise Type & Scenario
- Appropriate Level of Maturity
- Believability (or at least acceptability)
- Consistency
- Understanding of the Methodology
- Moderator

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What is a Mature Exercise?

- Maturity is a continuum
  - ✓ Ensure the participants can "handle it"

- Different combinations of design element
  - ✓ Participants with scenario
  - ✓ Scenario with objectives
  - ✓ Objectives with participants

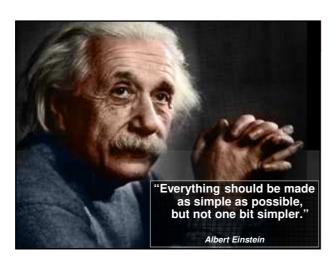- Longer is not necessarily better

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What are YOUR experiences?

- Scenarios
  - ✓ What have you run in the last year or two?
  - ✓ What do you plan to run in 2017 and beyond?
- Challenges
  - ✓ Getting participation in an exercise?
  - ✓ Budget for an exercise?
  - ✓ Overall staff awareness of the planning in place?
- Who are your best participants?
- What is your current level of maturity?

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Wrap Up

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"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler."

Albert Einstein

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Hints & Suggestions…

- The storyline is how it actually happened…
  - ✓ At least for this exercise

- Have clear "rules of engagement"

- Debrief while they're still in the room
  - ✓ Also provide a feedback mechanism for those that will not "open up"

- Commit to a post-exercise follow-up
  - ✓ Share lessons learned, plan improvements, next steps, etc.

"An untested plan is only a strategy."

Richard Gagnon

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