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Katrina Cash Crisis Continues

By J Square Humboldt

The need to continue giving aid to the victims of Hurricane Katrina must remain a priority ...

It's now months after the American Gulf Coast was devastated. Billions have been spent in relief, but billions more are needed. Such is the scope of a storm that ranks among the most severe in modern North American history.

To this day, residents' lives are still wrecked. Vital services are still wanting. Homes and businesses remain unrepaired. The effort to do so is not lacking; far from it. The hard fact is that the resources available are still spread too thin.

Recently, the Washington Post conducted a survey to determine an accounting of the charitable aid that has been provided to date. The results are impressive, showing this to be the largest donation drive in American history. Almost \$3billion has been raised and approximately \$2billion of that amount has already been disbursed.

It's a mind-jolt to grasp the concept that, even with a record level of heartfelt giving, only a dent has been made in improving lives there and that the remaining \$1billion will be impossibly stretched in order to have any overall impact. Very little has apparently slipped into administrative hubris. Virtually all monies, says the Post, have gone toward cash, food and temporary shelter, medical care, tarps for damaged homes and school supplies for displaced children.

Here are other facts which were determined by the Post's survey:

The Red Cross , which was criticized for slow distribution of donations after the Sept.11, 2001, terrorist attacks, has given out 84 percent of its Katrina and Rita donations.

Fifty cents of each donated dollar went out in cash to victims.

Six percent of contributions came in the form of supplies --- building materials, food, water, clothing, heavy equipment --- contributed mostly by corporations.

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Fifty–six percent of remaining donations are controlled by faith–based organizations. They include such well–known institutions as Catholic Charities USA and the Salvation Army but also lower–profile groups like the United Methodist Committee on Relief and United Jewish Communities.

It's estimated that the American government will need to spend a minimum of \$200billion, simply to rebuild infrastructure and re–establish basic services in the region. There will be budgets for housing grants, low–income food support and medical care, but longstanding parameters on those programs will still leave many hurricane victims out in the cold. Literally.

Some of the Gulf states, such as Mississippi and Louisiana, were far from the richest in the USA before the disaster struck. Now, with much of their tax base blown away, their resources are hardly sufficient to cope with anything more than the most urgent requirements.

Americans should take great pride in going to amazing lengths to look after their own. That those being assisted are doing all they can to become self–sustaining again makes the act of donation feel even more rewarding.

It is still time to experience that feeling. There are many causes in life, but this one is about providing fundamental needs to people who are aching to provide for themselves. If you're visiting the Longer Life site, don't make those Red Cross boxes on each page fade into your background. Once a month, or more if you can, use them. When you're out on the town, instead of ordering an extra round of beer, wine or spirits, re–direct that amount to the Katrina relief fund. When you're in the store, instead of purchasing an extra snack item, re–direct that amount to the Katrina relief fund.

Those proceeds will be used for so much more by people who are grateful to receive because they have no other choice.

It's still difficult to comprehend that a few dollars can do so much good when billions are needed, but we can never 'massify' the human condition in the Gulf states or anywhere else. The few dollars you give will help one person, or one family, who will then be allowed a welcome moment of respite for at least another day.

To them, your donation would seem like a million dollars. Maybe even a billion.

J Square Humboldt is the featured columnist at Longer Life's website, which provides information designed to improve the quality of living. He's at

<http://longerlifegroup.com/cyberiter.html>

Crisis Management Tips

By Colin Ong TS

The term crisis management has different connotations. In this article, I will try to provide pointers that can be used in most situations:

Is It A Crisis In The First Place?:

This question is important to ask, as there are many situations that go wrong because the right person to handle it is not around. You may be in charge of a project until your supervisor comes back and are unable to contact him during a crisis. You have to make your own decisions in his absence and your action is dependent on the level of authority given.

The Big Picture:

It is not easy to handle a crisis if you are not aware of all the facts. If your role is a leader, you have to be detached from the emotional side of the crisis and rationally take stock of how to move on. Again, this is not as easy as it sounds as you may have long-time colleagues who are involved in this crisis.

The Relevant Team:

It is important to be able to meet up with the relevant team to discuss about the situation. This is to ensure that the team is able to analyse and make a united stand about handling this crisis. This team should also comprise of the authorities, if the crisis is serious.

The Timeline:

You must construct a timeline and ensure that each process scenario is highlighted. This practice will be a check to prevent your team from spending too much time in one aspect of handling the crisis.

Procedural Manual:

Is there an organizational situational manual that you can use for this situation? Are you able to recollect the tips that were given to you when you participated in a mock drill?

External Experts:

You should get external experts to assess the situation if the crisis is totally unanticipated. However, you must have had a close-door meeting with your inner circle. This is essential, as you do not want to unnecessarily reveal confidential information to external parties.

Speaking To The Media:

It is important to prepare a press kit—which provides a full detailed report about the crisis. If you are comfortable to conduct a press interview, you have to ensure that you have the full details first.

Your Communication Style:

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You have to ensure that your communication style is in sync with the crisis. Remember to be forthcoming with reliable information and try not to speculate. This will also ensure that the victims' immediate families do not overly worry. It will also not help if you come across as very emotional in the media as you want to communicate that your organization has everything under control.

Beyond Your Control:

If the crisis involves the loss of lives, it is not unthinkable that your credibility and organisation's reputation is put into question. Assuming that the crisis was beyond your organisation's control, you have to stick to your best judgement and not be led into a debate that may open your organisation to possible legal action.

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Crisis Management Tips

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