

PROBLEM SOLVING

EXPERT

**PREPARING FOR HIGHLY
IMPROBABLE PROBLEMS**



SKILL ADDRESSED:

Problem Solving

LEVEL OF CHALLENGE:

Expert

TITLE OF ACTIVITY:

Preparing for highly improbable problems



INTRODUCTION TO THE SKILL

Most of us have a daily routine at work with unexpected problems of a miniscule scale, such as paper jam in the printer or even larger problems such as the bankruptcy of an important supplier. However, the possibility of extremely rare events happening, creating massively disruptive problems, is often not considered in our day-to-day operations. We consider that when the chance of something is one in a million, it is practically zero. However, there are millions of businesses and each business goes through millions of phases, so that one in a million can actually be us, this time. This is why it is important to build the relevant skills to safeguard a company from otherwise unsolvable problems.

THE CHALLENGE

Suppose that you are working for a video-streaming platform. You have read an article which suggests that in the future there might be a technology allowing a completely unimagined way to watch series and movies. Your manager believes that the current state of media streaming will remain the same. However, you remember that streaming completely replaced video rental stores of the past.

If you wish to undertake this challenge individually, you can prepare a report addressing the manager and any other stakeholders where you explain why a strategy is needed to solve this problem and suggest the necessary preparations needed to happen.

If you are playing in teams, you can do a roleplaying activity, where one will be the employee and another will be a manager.

STRUCTURE

How should you counter this black swan?

1. Black swan events are large scale and require the involvement of numerous actors. Nobody is able to solve a black swan alone, which is why the report must not centre on your individual effort to fight back such a force.

2. Communication is key, especially since the report is addressing a position of higher seniority. Will you be appealing to your expertise with little focus on your position?
3. The most relevant part of making the appropriate preparations for problem solving in the future is risk management. It must be stated that it is best to prepare for the [consequences of the black swan](#) event rather than the event itself.
4. To structure your strategy, use the Black Swan management model developed by Dodson and Westney as found [here](#).

DEMONSTRATION AND EVALUATION

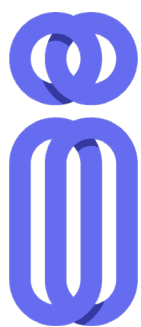
Fantastic! You have completed the advanced level! How do you feel about this broadened understanding of expecting problems you cannot easily expect?

Such future oriented mindset highlights the importance of creating institutional protective measures as communication, teamwork and protocols are required to mitigate the adverse effects of highly disruptive events.



No matter how good or effective our plan is, if we cannot get past the barrier of communication with higher ups, it cannot be implemented. Unfortunately theory on paper cannot avert a crisis. In addition, a well written report or presentation can be used to attract teams and other external stakeholders to the matter. Institutional means, such as the 'memory' created by protocols also offer the necessary versatility on an organizational level. This approach can also help a company reject any older and unhelpful processes of the past.

Finally, how adequate do you think risk management or black swan management models are? Do you think they are definitive, or should they be used as a point of reference and then be adjusted for each potential type of danger?



INTERFACE



Co-funded by
the European Union

"The European Commission's support of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission can not be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information therein." Project Number: 2021-1-DE02-KA220-000034783