

# CANADEM

## Operations Gaming

### of activities and contingency plans

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- ✓ Like a SWOT analysis, Operations Gaming is a heuristic technique to stress test a course of action (COA), ranging from intended activities to contingency plans.  
The aim is to assess:
  1. if current risk mitigation measures, e.g. contingency plans, are sufficient;
  2. Identify risks not currently being considered
- ✓ PROCESS: in sequential stages following the COA timeline.
- ✓ PLAYERS: Usually two sides and a referee:
  - ❖ The **Primary**(ies) planning to carry out a COA/mission/project at each stage will describe what they will achieve at that stage;
  - ❖ **Disrupter**(s) who at each stage will respond and challenge assumptions and expectations with realistic risks ('what-if's');
  - ❖ A **Referee** will facilitate and arbitrate.

# Sample OP-Game single round

Most courses of action (COAs) will have many separate actions/stages, therefore:

1. there will be many Op-Game rounds, e.g. one for each decisive point;
2. the initial Primary statement in each round is quite brief
3. the disruptor's challenge and primary's response may be short statements, or could become a back and forth dialogue/argument arbitrated by the referee.

## Primary's initial statement

We will build a garage beside our house for our new Porsche before winter arrives.

## Disruptor's challenge

1. You will not get a building permit;
2. You will run out of money;
3. A forest fire will burn it down.

**Referee** says #3 is so unlikely that primary doesn't need to respond to that risk.

## Primary's response

- We have the building permit
- We think we can get a loan (will follow-up on this)
- Contingency plan (AKA branch-plan): our neighbor Ted said we can use his garage this winter.

**The referee signals the end of this round; records the 'results'; and moves on to the next round.**

# Each Ops Game is unique and dynamic:

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- ❑ Every ops game is different depending on variables such as the complexity of a COA; the number, likelihood and impact of risks; the time available to ops game; and the results needed e.g. foolproof or good-enough.
- ❑ Usually the COA Primary will convene key participants to agree to stages, timing, goals, and select a strong knowledgeable disrupter team who will prepare their challenges.
- ❑ As it is a heuristic exploration of what could go wrong and whether the organization is sufficiently prepared, there should be latitude as to the agreed process, and flexibility on how the referee facilitates that process so as to not inhibit relevant brainstorming and debate.

# Role of Referee / Facilitator

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This is a contest between

- the disruptor-team with their challenges trying to show how the organization generally and the primary specifically is not fully prepared for risks and eventualities; and
- the primary-team looking to show they are prepared, or not, and so need to do more risk mitigation.

During the ops game, the referee will

1. Facilitate: stay on topic, on time, and let all speak.
2. Referee: judge challenges to be realistic, responses to be sufficient for the time being.
3. Record: possibly using an assistant, capture salient aspects, particularly new risks or seeming insufficient mitigation of known risks.

# Results

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1. Reassure the Primary and management that all of the risks have been identified and sufficiently mitigated; or
2. Enable CANADEM to identify new risks, or known risks that are not sufficiently assessed and/or mitigated. That fuller assessment and mitigation will occur after the op gaming, so the referee will record that there is required follow-up, and keep the game rolling.

# Note to non-CANADEM

- Of course, feel free to use this powerpoint, and adapt it for your use. We hope it is useful.
- Try watching it in presentation mode, as some slides have 'builds' that you might find useful.
- CANADEM's in-house powerpoint is more extensive.
- If you are interested in contracting CANADEM to help you customize this presentation or provide training assistance, please contact

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