

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS: The Wave of the Future for Workplace Violence Prevention



Presented by:
Dr. Steve Albrecht, PHR, CPP
619-445-4735
DrSteve@DrSteveAlbrecht
San Diego, CA



OUR THEMES

Safety and security at work is everyone's job. We take care of each other here.

Our organization will not tolerate threats at work or acts of workplace violence.

There should be consequences for employees or others who violate our workplace violence policies.

There should be support and assistance for every employee who needs help.

QUESTION

Can we *really* learn about Threat Assessment in two hours?

Yes!

By better understanding the concept of “targeted violence.”

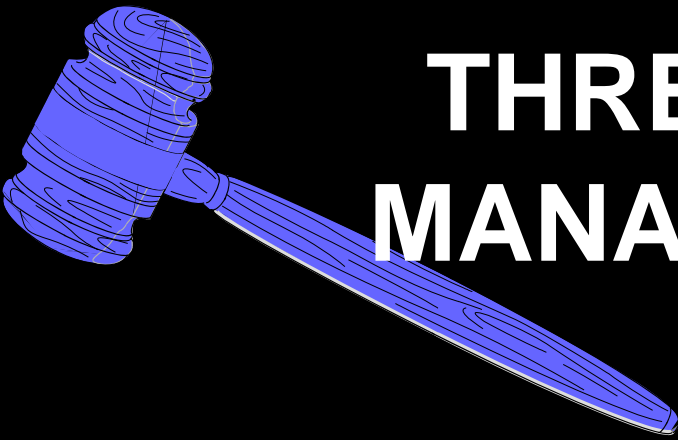
By realizing that violence is a process itself.

By early identification of “attack related” behaviors.

By using Threat Assessment Team concepts.

By looking at each issue from the POV of the victim, subject, organization, and witnesses.

By being proactive.



THREAT ASSESSMENT / MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Human Resources

Police or Sheriff

Legal Counsel

Risk Management

EAP / Psych. Services

Employee's Supervisor

Senior Leadership

Security Dept.

Labor Relations

Union Leaders

Facilities Manager

TA – TM Consultants

ASSESSING OUR EFFORTS

Is our goal “Peace” or “Justice?”

Can we tolerate ambiguous solutions?

(“Case Closed” or “Case Inactive?”)

Can we see beyond our specialty areas?

Can we accept that people do not always want our help or our solutions?

Can we accept the fact we may fail?

Are we really willing to think outside the box?

PERPETRATORS OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

CATEGORY 1: Criminals.

CATEGORY 2: Customers, taxpayers, students, patients, passengers, or vendors of the organization or its employees.

CATEGORY 3: Current or former employees.

CATEGORY 4: Spouse/partner of an employee.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

As defined by the media:

“a disgruntled ex-employee with an AK-47....”

For our purposes, it's any incident that could:

- escalate and threaten the safety and security of an employee, department, or business;
- make any employee feel afraid to come to work, stay at work, or interact with others;
- involve vandalism to company or personal property;
- start at home and crossover to the workplace.

TYPES OF THREATS

Direct threats

Indirect threats

Conditional threats

Unlikely threats

Is the threatener a Howler or a Hunter?



HUNTERS vs. HOWLERS

The Dr. Fred Calhoun text

The United States Secret Service:
The “Exceptional Case Study Project”

&

The “Safe Schools Initiative”
Third-Party Threats

<http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac.shtml>

SUSPICIOUS INDICATORS?

Someone watching our buildings.

Cars parked nearby for too long.

Someone driving by, taking notes, video taping, or asking questions about us.

Mail or packages we're not expecting.

"Vendors" who are not known to us.

In-coming phone calls, e-mails, letters, or visits that concern you.

Anything that's out of the ordinary or not normal for our parking lots, streets, or facilities.

THE FIRST VIOLENCE EQUATION

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Economic Stress} + \\ & \quad \text{Mental Illness} + \\ & \quad \underline{\text{Desire for Revenge}} \\ & = \text{Threat Potential} \end{aligned}$$

Which of these can we alter, deter, change, or provide solutions for?

WHAT IS A THREAT ASSESSMENT?

“Threat assessment is an investigative process leading to an opinion about the seriousness of a situation (Batza, 1990).”

Threat Assessment is not so much a science as an “intuitive art.”

Beware of statistics or profiles.

Threat Assessment is just a “Window in Time.”

More than just warning signs or threats alone, it's a unique and overall view of changing, relevant, and related *behaviors in context*.

THE TARGETED VIOLENCE PROCESS

A key to identification and resolution of threat cases is early identification of “attack related” behaviors. Perpetrators of targeted acts of violence engage in covert and overt behaviors that precede and are linked to their attacks:

- they consider
- they plan
- they prepare
- they share (often with third parties)
- they move from ideas to actions

Source: USSS

ON-GOING TRENDS (BAD):

- “Zero tolerance” policies.
- “The Empty File Syndrome,” i.e. “We can’t fire him!”
- Fear of lawsuits by disgruntled ex-employees.
- Labor shortages and sliding workplace behavioral norms.
- Police as a late arriver.
- No background or poor reference checks.
- No on-going or database tracking of troubled or terminated employees.
- Misreading boundary probing behaviors.

ON-GOING TRENDS (GOOD):

- Flexible, thorough policies; covering DV, TRO's, discipline, termination steps.
- Good documentation and courageous managers.
- Attorneys who add value and defend their organizations.
- More 80-20 interview questions.
- The police as partners.
- Effective pre-employment background investigations.
- “Case Inactive” versus “Case Closed.”
- Site Vulnerability Assessments.
- Threat Assessment Teams.

STRONG WPV POLICIES

Away from “zero tolerance” language.

More “duty to report” language for employees.

DV support and TRO notification language.

Progressive discipline and law enforcement consequences for perpetrators, including retaliation warning language.

Victim support, EAP information, and related self-help resources.

Copy the language of other well-crafted policies.

TA BASICS

Do we know who it is? (Do we manage the victim or the suspect?)

What does this person want? Can we solve his / her problem? (Cause, demand, or threat?)

Troubled or troubling?

Hunter or Howler?

Ideas to actions?

Homicidal or suicidal?

Repetition, escalation, or boundary probing?

HR issue, Police issue, or mental health issue?

Internal or external liaison partners?

INHIBITORS VS. IGNITORS

Money

Job security

Family presence

Love relationship(s)

Friends / social
connections

Religious beliefs

Interests / hobbies

Rules and norms

Economic stress

Job loss / Grades issue

Family crises

Broken heart

Loner behavior

Irrational religious
beliefs / thoughts

One-dimensional life

“Interference”

INDICATORS OF HIGHER RISK

Psychotic, Schizophrenic, Bi-Polar

Antisocial, Borderline, Paranoid, Narcissistic

Substance Abuse

Albrecht's "Big 4"?

Violent History

Mullen's "Big 3"?

Blaming Behavior

Severe Depression

BENEVOLENT SEVERANCE?

(a/ka/ “lovely parting gifts”)



Post-employment letter.

Uncontested unemployment insurance claim.

Resigning in lieu of termination.

Continuation of EAP benefits.

Severance package.

Outplacement services.

Quick access to final paycheck, vacation pay,
retirement accounts.

Agreement on reference check calls.

Single point of contact.

THE DANGER GUESS

Predicted Behavior

Yes

No

No

False
Positive

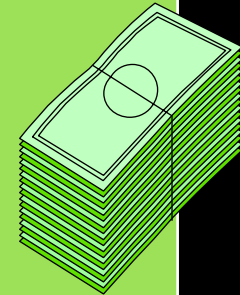
True
Negative

Actual
Behavior

Yes

True
Positive

False
Negative



Do we create more / higher “False Positives”
when we use case management strategies?

THE LAST VIOLENCE EQUATION

Motive + Opportunity = Threat Potential

We will not always know the motive nor *ever* be able to change it.

Attacks are usually preceded by *surveillance*.

Bad people are deterred by good security, sound HR policies, constant awareness, sharing information with others, and reporting hunches, feelings, and *suspicious indicators*.

KEEP / STOP / START

To work more effectively in TMT groups, we can ask and answer three questions:

What do we need to **KEEP** doing, because it's working?

What do we need to **STOP** doing, because it's not working?

What do we need to **START** doing, because it will work better?



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The International Consortium For Organizational Resilience

www.theicor.org