

## **REPORT**

### **NATIONAL-LEVEL ONLINE CONFERENCE ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

Category : National level online Conference

Date : 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

No. of Resource Persons : 8

No. of participants : 302

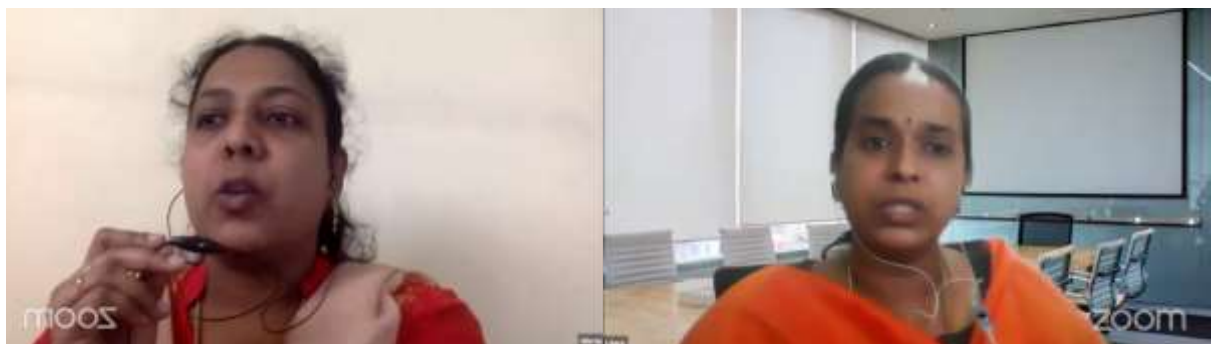
The Department of Management studies (BBA), Women's Christian College conducted a National-Level Online Conference on Crisis Management on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020 with Business Standard as their knowledge partner. The key-note address was delivered by Mr Vikram Cootah, COO, GRT hotels and it was followed by a special address by Dr Samuel Moses, East Kent Hospitals University NHS foundation Trust, Canterbury, United Kingdom. The conference was attended by various other resource persons, delegates, industry experts, academicians, research scholars and students from across India.

The event was conducted through zoom platform and livestreamed on youtube

<https://youtu.be/xLs6DKSd9IE>

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The conference commenced with the welcome address and the conference dynamics, delivered by Ms. Jenelin Kamalam, the Head of the Department and Dr.Usha.S, the Convener of the conference, respectively.



The **key-note address** was presented by Mr. Vikram Cotah, the COO of GRT Hotels. Having completed an advance program on strategic management at IIM Indore, Mr. Vikram Cotah is currently the COO of GRT hotels. He holds a six-sigma black belt, is an ISO 22000 internal auditor and is actively involved in the TTDC advisory committee for Tamilnadu tourism. Having travelled around the world to more than 75 places in 35 countries he brings to this forum a wealth of information from across the globe.



He explained how the Chinese word for crisis is composed of two letters, one represents 'danger' and other one represents 'opportunity'. Thus, a crisis certainly presents an opportunity for the companies and community as whole to emerge better and be more equipped for future crises. He highlighted the 3 elements of crisis management – preparation, recovery and response and also mentioned how it is extremely important for authoritative bodies and businesses to be honest and transparent during such crises. Effective leadership is a key element of crisis management. The leaders must be visible and take crucial decisions quickly and effectively. Further, he mentioned how elements such as people, business continuity, financial viability and situation management should be taken into account while devising a crisis plan. He also suggested that the hospitality firms should rewrite their policy manuals, implement high-level sanitation practices, introduce less-contact service points and reconfigure their structures in order to prepare themselves for post-COVID operations.

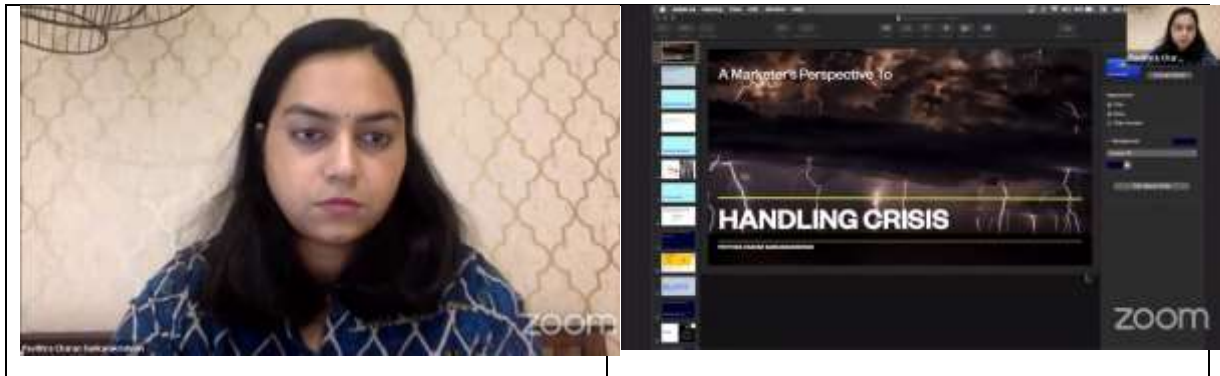
**The special guest** was Mr Samuel Moses of East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, Canterbury, who is a consultant in Virology and Infection at United Kingdom. Skilled in infection, virology, medical devices, good clinical practice (GCP), Molecular Biology, and Epidemiology, he is a healthcare services professional with an FRC Path (Virology) focused in Virology from The Royal College of Pathologists.



. He described the various stages of crisis management- preparedness, acute response, sustained maintenance, and learning and review exercises. The preparedness stage involves the detection of early warning signs, then, planned actions are taken to stabilize the situation, the maintenance phase necessitates effective communication between the local and national governing bodies. Several valuable lessons are learnt while dealing with the crisis, which would help mankind prepare better for future crises. He pointed out how panic and misinformation could prove exceedingly harmful during crises like these, and hence it is important to provide clarity to the public.

### **The first session was on crisis management – a business perspective**

The speaker, Pavithra Charan, founder of Inception Business Services, a marketing consulting and services business, discussed about handling crisis from a marketer's perspective.



She threw light on the various types of crisis- internal, market led and reputation. Internal crises arise due to issues related to leadership and malpractices within a firm; market led crises emerge due to changes such as shift in consumer behaviour. Crises relating to reputation occur when there are perceived problems or real problems affecting the reputation of the company. She gave examples of how companies diverged from their normal line of business to prove their usefulness and contribute to the battle against the pandemic. For instance, companies producing ear buds started manufacturing COVID test swabs, textile firms began making Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and food delivery platforms started delivering grocery items. Further, she elaborated the different strategies brands can use to tackle a crisis. The brands can offer immediate clarification, re-establish the facts and reconnect with their customers. Another strategy is the silence strategy, wherein the firm remains silent so as to not add fuel to the fire and they wait for the fire to die out automatically. In case of the 'Own Up' strategy, the brands take ownership of their mistakes that led to the crisis, offer a whole-hearted apology, and take measures to resolve the issues.

Dr.Roy John, the co-founder of ConSoul Associates LLP, a management consultancy firm, explained how to handle a crisis from a financial perspective through three steps- assess, resolve and reform.



Financial elements such as inventory, receivables and payables must be assessed by the firms. Similarly, the players of the business environment- the market, suppliers and logistics should be analyzed too. The 'resolve' element implies the measures taken by the government to handle the crisis. For instance, the deadline for deployment of EMIs has been extended to August 31, 2020 and banks like SBI allow the firms to revise working capital limits. Also, the managers must communicate frequently to the stakeholders – employees, suppliers and clients to provide them a sense of assurance. In order to reform, certain factors such as Business Continuity Plan (BCP), diversification, process re-engineering must be considered. Lastly, he emphasized the significance of marketing activities during the crisis and advised against cutting down on marketing expenses.

Mr. Sherry Mathew, the founder of Rightsketch Business HR solution, elaborated on crisis handling from an HR perspective.



He explained how the HR facilitates business sustainability by restructuring teams, resetting goals, developing new skills, providing continuous leadership coaching. It promotes employee welfare by implementing effective employee engagement practices

and following strict physical and mental health safety norms. Further, he highlighted the strategies to be followed during different stages of a crisis. During the pre-crisis phase, the businesses must ensure that they have a comprehensive plan in place and train the employees to deal with unprecedented crises. During a crisis, an efficient leader is expected to be communicative, resilient, innovative, strategic, influential and supportive. During the post-crisis phase, the managers should focus on providing counselling to their employees to recover their mental health and arrange safe travelling facilities to bring the migrant workers back to the units.

### **The second session was on crisis management- a societal perspective**

Ms. Madhu Saran, the director of STC Skills Pvt Ltd. and founder of River NGO elaborated on how the community deals with difficult times, from the perspective of an NGO.



She explained that during a crisis, most NGOs focus on feeding the hunger. River NGO has joined hands with Chennai Corporation to support street vendors and hawkers. She also assured that her NGO would put in tremendous efforts to provide sufficient support to women entrepreneurs in order to help them sustain their businesses.

Aishwarya Kalpathi, the founder and CEO of Yuva active advocacy forum, threw light on the political and policy dimension of crisis handling.



She stated many facts relating to how the Indian Government responded to the COVID crisis. India has insufficient healthcare infrastructure. She opined that though the lockdown was imposed earlier than in other countries, it could have been planned and controlled better and also suggested that if solidarity actions had been communicated more clearly, chaotic situations and social distancing violation might have been avoided. She also pointed that the informal sector was affected the worst. It is essential to understand what resources the nation lacks and take measures to acquire those, and the government should update legislative policies relating to disaster management.



After the paper presentations, Ms. Janet Glory, Assistant Professor, Technical Manager of the conference, proposed the vote of thanks. On the whole, it was an extremely informative, engaging and comprehensive session as experts from various fields covered different perspectives of crisis management. They also analysed the measures taken by

the government and recommended strategies that can help businesses recover from the crisis.

The Department of Management Studies (BBA) of Women's Christian College remains thankful to the Principal Dr Lilian I Jasper for providing us the opportunity to host the event.

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