Handling public opinion during a corporate crisis

- A case study of Boliden Limited

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to provide a better understanding of how to handle public opinion during a corporate crisis. The research describes, explores and tries to explain what should be included in a crisis communication plan, how the actors involved in a crisis management team can be described and how an organization prepares its management for corporate crises. A case study on Boliden Limited and the crisis they faced in Apirsa, Spain has been conducted. The findings of this study shows that a crisis communication plan should include the issue of conveying a key message, and that internationally diverse organizations use more than one spokesperson when communicating during a crisis. The study further shows that the selection of the members of a crisis management team is based upon their knowledge, rank and position within the company and that organizations provide employees at managerial level with media training.
Syftet med denna uppsats är att skapa ökad förståelse för hur allmänhetens åsikter hanteras under en företagskris. Undersökningen beskriver, utforskar och förklara vad en krishanteringsplan bör innehålla, hur de olika aktörerna i en krishanteringsgrupp kan beskrivas och hur en organisation förbereder och träna sina chefer för en företagskris. En fallstudie av Boliden Limiteds kris i spanska Apirsa har genomförts. Resultaten av denna studie visar att en krisplan för kommunikation bör ta upp det nödvändiga av att överföra ett grundbudskap och att organisationer med stor geografisk spridning använder sig av mer än en talesman under en kris. Resultaten visar vidare att urvalet av medlemmarna i en krishanteringsgrupp baseras utifrån personernas kunskap, position och ställning inom företaget. I undersökningen visas även att företag förser anställda på chefsnivå med mediaträning.
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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the reader will first be introduced into the three different areas of corporate communication. The chapter will then move on and further explain one of these three areas, the field of organisational communication. Organisational communication will be explained and divided up into a number of components, of these components the public relations component will be highlighted and thoroughly explained. The chapter will then move into the problem discussion where public affairs, which is a part of public relations, will be explained and discussed in the setting of an organisational crisis. The chapter will end with the purpose of the thesis and its research questions.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) state that when communicating during a crisis the number one priority is to; - put the public first. This means, according to the three authors, that the public is of utmost importance and by maintaining and nurturing its good reputation the corporation will, in the long run, maintain its market share. Corporate communication is what organisations use in order to influence public opinion. (Wilcox, Ault and Agee, 1998)

Van Riel (1995) states that when an organisation is communicating it runs a risk of supplying fragmented and even contradictory information to outside sources. This due to the fact that internal communication sources are not aware of the messages sent out by the other sources within the organisation. In order to prevent this from happening the organisation needs to harmonise its communication policy. In practice, communication takes many forms. According to van Riel (1995), corporate communication is divided into three basic forms: management communication, marketing communication and organisational communication. (van Riel, 1995)

Management is often described as “accomplishing work through other people”. Typically this includes functions like planning, organising, commanding, co-ordinating and controlling. (Fayol, 1949) Since one cannot manage anyone that does not want to be managed, an important role of the manager is to continuously persuade individual subordinates that the goals of the organisation are desirable. Management Communication is therefore vitally necessary to an organisation, not only to transmit authority, but also to achieve co-operation. (Timm, 1986) The responsibility for communication stretches across all levels within an organisation. Senior management, as well as middle and junior management, use communication to achieve desired results. Externally, management, especially the CEO, has to be able to communicate the vision of the company in order to win support of the external stakeholders. (van Riel, 1995)

Several authors tend to be critical about the effectiveness of communication by managers (Rice, 1991). Nevertheless, more and more people are convinced that organisational success often depends on good communication by managers. This leads to the fact that there is a growing need for better communication. (van Riel, 1995)

Marketing communication consists primarily of those forms of communication that support sales of particular goods or services. This form of communication is often used as a general term to cover advertising, sales promotion, direct mail, sponsorship, personal selling and other, communicational, elements in the promotional mix. The most dominant aspect within
marketing communication is generally viewed to be advertising, which is also by far the largest share of a company’s total communication budget. (van Riel, 1995)

Organisational communication is often used as a general term that covers a lot of different aspects of communication. The term organisational communications generally covers the topics of public relations, public affairs, investor relations, labour market communication, corporate advertising, environmental communication and internal communication. (van Riel, 1995)

Of the three areas covered by corporate communication, organisational communication is the one topic that focuses on the opinion of the public (van Riel, 1995). This thesis will focus upon this area of corporate communication due to the fact that the topic of this thesis focuses on public opinion during corporate crises. In order to give the reader a better understanding of what is covered by the term organisational communication the different aspects covered by the term will be further explained below.

1.1.1 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

According to van Riel (1995), organisational communication is made up by the following components:

**Public relations**- “public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends”

**Public affairs**- “the strategic approach to situations which constitute either an opportunity for the company or a threat to it, and which are connected with social and political changes, formation of public opinion, and political decision-making”

**Environmental communication**- “the policy instrument aimed at realising the organisation’s environmental strategy, by informing, convincing and motivating internal and external target groups and securing their participation”

**Investor relations**- “investor relations is a corporate marketing activity combining the disciplines of communication and finance, providing present and potential investors with an accurate portrayal of a company’s performance and prospects. Conducted effectively, investor relations can have a positive impact on a company’s total value relative to that of the overall market and the company’s cost of capital”

**Labour market communication**- “a management instrument which utilises planned integration and application of various communication disciplines to control and direct the flow of communication both towards potential employees and towards persons or institutions which play an important part in attracting them”

**Corporate advertising**- “paid-for corporate communication designed to establish, develop, enhance and/or change the corporate image of an organisation”

**Internal communication**- “the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in the different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities”
The communication activities described above form a heterogeneous group, organisational communication. The different areas of organisational communication have only a few characteristics in common. Their most important shared characteristic is the fact that all forms of organisational communication are directed primarily at so-called “target groups”, i.e. groups with which the organisation has an interdependent, usually indirect, relationship. Unlike marketing communication, the various forms of organisational communication are less obvious in their attempts to influence the behaviour of groups on which the organisation depends. (van Riel, 1995)

Another characteristic that the various components share is that the different forms of communication that are covered by the term organisational communication are all rooted firmly within the organisation. The many aspects of organisational communication will consequently not fall under the functional management area of marketing. Based on this, van Riel (1995) describes organisational communication as “all forms of communication used by the organisation, other than marketing communication” (p.12-13).

Public relations is the component of organisational communication which basically deals with the execution of programs to earn public understanding and acceptance. (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1998) Due to this fact, this thesis will look deeper into this particular aspect of organisational communication.

Public relations is generally viewed to focus solely on issues such as publicity in newspapers, television interviews or the mere appearance of a celebrity at a special event. What many fail to understand is that public relations is a process that involves many subtle and far-reaching aspects. This component of organisational communication includes research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication and feedback from numerous publics. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)

As stated earlier, public relations is an area, which basically deals with public understanding and acceptance. In order to execute these programs an organisation needs to deal with both internal and external communication. (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1998)

For an organisation it is important to establish internal communication directed towards its own employees. The internal communication does not necessarily have to address day-to-day functions and it is usually carried out through an employee publication within most organisations. The publication is usually produced and edited by the public relations or advertising department. (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1998)

Externally, multinational companies are concerned about establishing global identities to increase sales, differentiate products and services, and attract employees. External campaigns can be achieved through the use of corporate symbols, corporate advertising, customer relations programs and publicity. (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1998)

According to Czinkota and Ronkainen (1998), a significant part of public relations activity is to portray organisations as good citizens of their host countries. This attention should however not be developed as a reaction to a crisis, nor should it be a fuzzy, half-hearted effort; instead corporations should have a social vision and a planned long-term social policy. (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1998)
A number of different definitions on the subject of public relations have been formulated over the years. The British Institute of Public Opinion has defined Public Relations as, “the deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.5). This definition is according to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) widely used within the Commonwealth nations. In 1978 the World Assembly of Public Relations in Mexico City agreed upon the definition; “Public Relations practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which serve both the organisation’s and the public’s interest” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.5). According to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) the best definition is supplied by the professors Lawrence W. Long and Vincent Hazelton who describe Public Relations as “a communication function of management through which organisations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organisational goals” (p.4). According to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) this is the best definition of Public Relations due to the fact that it represents a modern and somewhat newer theory, that Public Relations is something more than persuasion. Public Relations is also the fostering of open communication and mutual understanding between the organisation and its target audience. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)
According to the organisation Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) the basic components of public relations include the following:

### Table 1.1: Components of Public Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS</th>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>Providing advice to management concerning policies, relationships and communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Determining attitudes and behaviours of publics in order to plan public relations strategies. Such research can be used to (1) generate mutual understanding or (2) influence and persuade publics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations</td>
<td>Working with mass media in seeking publicity or responding to their interests in the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>Disseminating planned messages through selected media to further the organisation’s interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee/Member Relations</td>
<td>Responding to concerns, informing and motivating an organisation’s employees or members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td>Planned activity with a community to maintain an environment that benefits both the organisation and the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Affairs</td>
<td>Relating directly with legislatures and regulatory agencies on behalf of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Relations</td>
<td>Creating and maintaining investor confidence and building good relationships with the financial community. Also known as Investors relations or Shareholder relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Relations</td>
<td>Relating with other firms in the industry of an organisation and with trade associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development/ Fund-Raising</td>
<td>Demonstrating the need for and encouraging the public to support an organisation, primarily through financial contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Relations/Workplace</td>
<td>Relating with individuals and groups in various cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Stimulating an interest in a person, product or organisation by means of a focused &quot;happening&quot;; also activities designed to interact with publics and listen to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>Combination of activities designed to sell a product, service or idea, including advertising, collateral materials, publicity, promotion, direct mail, trade shows and special events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Management</td>
<td>Identifying and addressing issues of public concern that affect the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Affairs</td>
<td>Developing effective involvement in public policy, and helping an organisation adapt to public expectations. The term is also used by government agencies to describe their public relations activities and by many corporations as an umbrella term to describe multiple public relations activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As seen above public affairs is the area, which deals with involvement in public policy and public expectations. Due to this the focus for this thesis will be upon public affairs.
1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION

It is important to notice that van Riel (1995) views public affairs to be a component of organisational communications, while the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) choose to look upon this particular topic as a component of public relations (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998). In this thesis, public affairs will be looked upon as a part of public relations.

According to a survey carried out by the Public Affairs Research Group at the Boston University School of management, the top four activities within public affairs are: community relations, government relations, corporate contributions and media relations. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998) In the article “Communicating with the community” the two professors Nelda Spinks and Barron Wells (1999), from the university of South-western Louisiana, state that one of the most important communication activities carried out by an organisation is the communication with the community. This thesis will below focus on this area within the public affairs concept.

Spinks and Wells (1999) further state that maintaining favourable relations with the community is as essential as maintaining favourable relations with other audiences such as customers, clients and employees. Spinks and Wells (1999) arrive at the conclusion that an organisation will not be successful unless it can relate favourably to the community in which it is located. According to the two researchers the community consists of all the people who are affected, in a significant way, by the organisation and who, in turn, affect the organisation. The different parts of the community may consequently be the employees, investors, creditors, consumers, government agencies the media and the public. (Spinks & Wells, 1999)

In towns and cities where an organisation maintains an office, retail outlets, or a manufacturing facility, community relations often follow the advice to “think globally, act locally”(Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.301). Because a corporation has to rely on local governments regarding things such as construction permits, a good working relationship with city hall and community groups is important. Public affairs specialists often serve as representatives of their companies on community boards, task forces and commissions. The purpose with this is to develop a dialogue between the company and the community. The public affairs personnel are monitoring emerging issues and they can therefore inform the management about any public or governmental concerns that directly or indirectly affect the company. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)

Public opinion is an emerging force in the world today, and it is shaped by communication. In an organisation the public relations function attempts to develop, influence, shape and modify public opinion. This opinion is the aggregate views of the individuals in a community on a given issue. Public opinion may be viewed to be dynamic, with each component of its existence interdependent with all other components. (Spinks & Wells, 1999)

Public opinion is a phenomenon somewhat elusive and it is often very difficult to measure. Very few issues create unanimity of thought among people in a community or region, and public opinion on any issue is sprawling in several directions. In their book “Public Relations”, Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) state that it is often a small number of people who, at any given time, take part in public opinion formation on a specific issue. According to the three authors there are two reasons for this. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)
The number one reason is, according to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), that there are few issues that generate an opinion or feeling that is common for an entire community. It is often assumed that a small, vocal group represents the attitude and beliefs of the public, when, in reality, it would be more accurate to say that the majority of the people are passive spectators. This is simply assumed to be due to the fact that the particular issue does not interest and/or affect them. Secondly, one issue may engage the attention of one part of the population, while another issue catches the interest of another segment. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)

These examples lead to the most common definition of public opinion, which states that: “public opinion is the sum of individual opinions on an issue affecting those individuals” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.209). Another popular definition claims that: “public opinion is a collection of views held by persons interested in the subject” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.209). The common denominator of these two definitions is that if a person is unaffected by or uninterested in an issue he or she does not contribute to the public opinion on the subject. Consequently, a person who is not interested in a particular issue does not add to the public opinion. In this thesis the former definition of public opinion will be used. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998)

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) further refer to social studies that emphasise the importance of events, which is a crisis from an organisational point of view, in the formation of public opinion. According to the studies, the public opinion is highly sensitive to crises that have an impact on the public at large or a particular segment of the public. It is also stated that the public opinion does not anticipate crisis/events. It only reacts to them. Crises further act as a formation of public opinion. Unless people are aware of an issue, they are not likely to be concerned or have an opinion. When it comes to crisis/events of unusual magnitude these are likely to swing public opinion temporarily from one extreme to another. (Wilcox, Ault and Agee, 1998) Below it will be further discussed what a crisis is from an organisation’s point of view.

1.2.1 WHAT IS A CRISIS?

Academics have a hard time in agreeing upon one definition of a crisis, from an organisation’s point of view, and a number of definitions are available. Ole R. Holsti who is the author of several articles on crisis theory, defines crisis as “situations characterised by surprise, high threat to important values, and a short decision time” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.179). Pauchant and Mitroff define a crisis as a “disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998, p.179). A third definition is supplied by Steven Fink (1986), who states that; “crises are forewarning situations that run the risk of escalating in intensity, falling under close media or government scrutiny, interfering with normal operations, jeopardising organisational image and damaging a company’s bottom line”(p. 17). According to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) the best definition of a crisis is the one supplied by Pacific Telesis, the parent company of Pacific Bell. Its manual on crisis communications states that a crisis is “An extraordinary event or series of events that adversely affects the integrity of the product, the reputation or financial stability of the organisation; or the health or well-being of employees, the community, or the public at large” (Wilcox Ault & Agee, 1998, p180). This is also the definition that will be used in this thesis.

According to Fink (1986) we often think of a crisis as a disaster or accident, when in fact this is only one kind of a crisis. Fink (1986) further states that crisis is more a matter of
organisational response to business situations, which occurs “when there is a large, important difference between the expectations that corporate management has about the way its plans will interact with the environment and what actually happens” (p.15). Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) agree upon this and write that an organisational crisis is not just a disaster such as an industrial accident or a plane crash. It can be one of numerous situations that put the organisation’s reputation and products in jeopardy. As examples they bring up Sears and Exxon. Sears was charged by consumer agencies in several states when it was found out that the company was making unnecessary repairs at its auto centres and defrauding its customers. This incident is, according to Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), just as much of a crisis situation as the Exxon crises when the Exxon Valdez hit a reef off the Alaskan coast and spilled 240 000 barrels of oil into the sea.

Coombs (1995) has gone one step further. He attempts to classify crisis into four different categories. He calls his matrix for the Crisis Type Matrix.

**Figure 1.2: Crisis type matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unintentional</th>
<th>Intentional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>Faux Pas</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>Transgressions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Coombs, 1995, p. 455*

In the matrix the internal-external dimension corresponds to the locus of control. Internal means the crisis was something done by the organisation itself (i.e., the actions of the management). External means the crisis was caused by something done by some person or group outside of the organisation. The intentional dimension means that the crisis event was purposefully committed by some actor. Unintentional means that the crisis was not committed purposefully. (Russell, 1982)

A faux pas is an unintentional action that an external agent tries to transform into a crisis. A faux pas begins when an organisation takes actions it believes are appropriate. The organisation considers the actions appropriate so there is no intention to do wrong. However, some external agent redefines the organisation’s actions as inappropriate. In other words, an external agent challenges the appropriateness of the organisation’s actions. This means that the publics involved in the crisis must decide which definition of the organisation’s action to accept. (Coombs, 1995)

Dyer (1995) states that with the aid of the matrix an organisation may analyse the situation that they are confronted with and from this they may develop a crisis strategy, which is less fragmented than with a more extensive, list-type categorisation scheme. Dyer (1995) further states that the matrix is particularly useful for organisations developing crisis communication plans since the organisation may develop a situational analysis under each of the major categories.
1.2.2 COMMUNICATION DURING A CRISIS

In a study it was found that 89 percent of the Cease of Fortune 500 companies reported that a business crisis was almost inevitable; however, 50 percent admitted that they did not have a crisis management plan. In another study made by the Institute for Crisis Management in Louisville, Kentucky, it was found that only 14 percent of business crisis are unexpected. Although the data indicated that most of the organisations investigated had a plan for dealing with crisis it was also revealed that the management—or in some cases the mismanagement—actually caused 78 percent of the crises. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998) In an article from 1995 Dyer asks himself; who needs a crisis communication plan? Dyer (1995) moves on and answers the question himself and the answer is; in these media logic times, everyone.

In times of crisis people become more active seekers of information and, hence, rely on the media to supply the information. This puts a lot of pressure on the organisation. Experts say that how an organisation responds in the first 24 hours, often determines whether the situation remains an “accident” or if it escalates to become a full-scale crisis. Consequently it is of utmost importance to make the correct decisions at the early stages of a possible crisis. In order to be able to make the best out of a situation it is important for an organisation to assure itself that the people best suited for the tasks at hand are involved in the crisis management team. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998) In an article in Public Relations Quarterly, Jack Modzelewski (1990) has asked a number of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) regarding who they would turn to first for advice during a crisis. An equal number of the Cease answered that they would either turn to their chief operating officer or their financial officer.

However it is not enough to just have a highly qualified group of people and a great crisis communication plan, the managers involved need to be trained for the situation that they are to deal with. In an article in Public Relations Quarterly, Dyer (1995) stresses the importance of training managers for crisis situations. This is, according to Dyer (1995) best done through simulation. Dyer (1995) writes; “Crisis communication plans are essential. But until they are practised they are just so much paper provided by the external consultant” (p.38).
1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In 1989 the Exxon Corporation faced a huge crisis, which today is seen as one of the history’s worst environmental accidents, when nearly 11 million tons of oil leaked from the tanker Exxon Valdez into the sea. A few months after the accident the President of Exxon, Lawrence G. Rawl, was asked in an interview what advice he would give to other chief executive officers on handling a crisis. He said, “You’d better pre-think which way you are going to jump from a public affairs standpoint before you have any kind of problem. You ought to always have a public affairs plan, even though it’s kind of hard to force yourself to think in terms of a chemical plant blowing up or spilling all that oil in Prince William Sound”. (Wilcox, Ault & Agee, 1998) Considering this comment, we state our purpose.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis.

In order to fulfil our purpose we have stated three research questions.

- How can a crisis communication plan be described?
- How can the actors involved in a crisis management team during a corporate crisis be described?
- How does an organisation prepare and train its management for a corporate crisis?
1.4 DISPOSITION

The figure below presents an overlook of the disposition of the following chapters. Thereafter a brief explanation of the contents in each chapter is provided to the reader.

**Figure 1.3: Thesis Disposition**

- Chapter two consists of a literature review.
- Chapter three states the method of the investigation used in our study.
- Chapter four consists of the empirical data collected, as well as a company presentation and brief introduction to the Apirsa accident in Spain.
- Chapter five provides the reader with an analysis of the literature review and the empirical data.
- Chapter six contains conclusions as well as implications for further research.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter we will introduce the reader to the theories that form the foundation and scientific background for our research questions. The theories will be presented in the same order as the research questions, that is, the first part of the theory chapter will include the theories covering research question number one and so on.

2.1 A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

According to Zerman (1995), a crisis communication plan, or program, includes ten fundamental procedural elements that an organisation should follow when facing a crisis. These elements are the following:

The assignation of one authorised spokesperson and one back-up person who can be contacted 24 hours a day. These people must be in senior position and known not only to the employees of the organisation but also have media credibility. The spokesperson’s job is to attend to the media while other corporate executives fulfil their roles in the disaster management plan.

It is very important for an organisation not to delay when disaster strikes. Act promptly. Go out of your way to be helpful to the media and do not play favourites. Get the news to all the media and do not give exclusives in times of crisis (unless there is an exceptionally good reason).

The organisation needs to permit safe access to the disaster area. You have a job to do-so does the media, it is better to have them on your side.

The organisation should not deny a crisis exists when it is so obvious that one does; silence implies guilt or you have got something to hide.

The organisation should not provide specific information about any victims until their families have been notified.

The organisation should do what it can to console the stricken and reassure the community.

If possible, and appropriate, the organisation should set up a properly equipped media centre. It is important to have a plan in place for monitoring the media at a crisis time.

Keep employees, customers, suppliers, community leaders and shareholders (if necessary) etc. informed of the developments as they occur.

Say thank you. Be profuse with the thanks to those who have helped or who offered their help.

Zerman (1995) further states that when a disaster happens the communicator will be in the firing line, and since no organisation is immune from disaster, the person handling the role of the crisis communicator must be prepared. This person must have a plan to work from, which is definite, practical and have top organisational support. The crisis communicator must know
exactly what needs to be, and what will be, done if a crisis should occur in the organisation. Most importantly, the crisis communicator must:

- develop a crisis communication policy and procedure as part of an organisation’s overall emergency and disaster procedures
- test it out
- refine it
- update it

(Zerman, 1995)

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) have also made a list of the things that they consider to be important to think of, regarding communication during a crisis.

Put the public first. An organisation that focuses on public and consumer safety, in the long run, retains its reputation and market share.

Take responsibility. An organisation does not have to admit guilt or liability, but it should take responsibility for solving the problem.

Be honest. Do not obscure facts and try to mislead the public.

Never say “no comment”. The public often feels that “no comment” means that the organisation is guilty of wrongdoing.

Designate a single spokesperson. The person should be someone that the media trusts and who has authority to speak for the organisation. In many cases, the company’s top executive is the best spokesperson.

Set up a central information centre. This centre should be a place where reporters can obtain updated information and work on stories. Telephone lines staffed with qualified personnel should also be established to handle calls from concerned consumers and the general public.

Provide a constant flow of information. An organisation builds credibility by addressing bad news quickly; when information is withheld, the cover-up becomes the story.

Be familiar with media needs and deadlines. Release information in a timely manner that meets both print and broadcast deadlines.

Be accessible. Provide after-hours phone numbers, return media calls promptly and be open to questions. If the question cannot be answered because of legal reasons or the matter is still being investigated, say so.

Monitor news coverage and telephone inquiries. Find out what the media is saying about the crisis and whether the organisation’s viewpoint is being accurately reported.

Communicate with key publics. All too often, the focus is on media relations. The organisation should also communicate with employees, government agencies and officials, the investment community and any other publics affected by the crisis.
Turner (1999) writes that, “a crisis communication plan should be a part of every manager’s tool box” (p.30). The writer then moves on and lists what is called “The seven steps to highly effective crisis communication”.

The first step is to be prepared. Get a plan in place, and make sure every person in your organisation knows the part he or she plays. Test the staff regularly, so when a crisis hits, their actions are automatic.

The second step is to remain calm. Turner writes that one cannot control a crisis, but one can control how you respond.

The third step is to gather information quickly. Within the first 60 minutes the organisation should pull together all the facts that it can.

The fourth step of Turner’s plan is to identify one spokesperson. The message needs to be clear and direct, and that is most likely to occur when one well-prepared spokesperson delivers the information.

The usage of key messages is the fifth step of the plan. In every communication, whether it’s a meeting with tenants or an interview with a local newspaper reporter, it should always be determined what the key message is. It is important to find ways to continually work the key themes into interviews.

To personally inform tenants or owners is the sixth step of the seven-step plan. The organisation need to make sure that the most valued people hear the news first from the organisation itself and not the newspaper, an unhappy tenant or a competitor.

The final step is to understand the needs of the media. Television, newspaper and news radio reporters can show up at the front door and catch the organisation off guard. But they may also help it get the messages out to thousands of people at a time. The organisation need to understand the needs of the reporters and consequently meet their deadlines, and treat them with the same respect given to an owner or tenant. However, the organisation needs to remember that reporters are looking to tell their own story that includes both sides of the situation. The job of the organisation is to make sure they thoroughly understand their point of view. (Turner, 1999)

2.2 THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

According to Regester (1987), different kinds of leadership styles appear during a crisis. He further states that the crisis team should consist of executive officers on a relatively high level or other responsible specialists within the organisation. The members of the team should be carefully selected for their personal qualities and talents as well as their rank, position and knowledge about the organisation and the political environment in which they are operating. The most important issue for the team manager to take into consideration is to respect the different personalities and values of the members so that they can be used effectively during a crisis. The personalities that should appear in a crisis management team during a crisis are, according to Regester (1987), the following:
The idea generator. This person is a creative team member who constantly comes up with new ideas and suggestions. Some of these ideas can be a little bit far-fetched, while others can be very valuable. The important thing for the team manager is to take out the most important or even crucial ideas and reject the rest of the ideas without hampering the flow of ideas.

The communicator. This is the person who speeds up the communication flow within the group and between the group and the world around (this person does not necessarily have to be the team manager).

The “no-sayer”. This person is the one who constantly points out the negative aspects of each idea and suggestion that is put forth.

The protocol keeper. This is the team member who wants to put everything on paper. He is more comfortable in this role as opposed to being the decision maker. Nevertheless this is an important role of the team.

The humanist. This is a “human oriented” person who always takes the human aspects of the problem into account when suggestions and possible solutions are put forth. This person is an important visionary during a crisis.

Regester (1987) claims that the crisis team should be trained so that it can clearly imagine all types of crisis situations that can occur. The team should further develop strategies and procedures for the handling of a crisis. It should also control that the suggested emergency measures are conducted and give advice and guidance if and when a crisis do occur. (Regester, 1987)

In the research carried out by Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) the results indicated that most crisis management teams consisted of six to ten senior executives from the following functional roles:

- chief executive officer
- chief financial officer
- public affairs or public relations officer
- legal officer
- health and safety officer.

Ad hoc senior executive representation may also come from quality assurance, security, operations and human resources. Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) further state that when a crisis occurs, additional experts on the type of incident that has occurred may be drawn temporarily from an function or level of the organisation.

Berry (1999) writes that when designing a crisis management team the first step is to identify the decision maker. She further stresses the importance of a single spokes person. To keep a message clear the public information officer, who usually is appointed by the manager as a crisis spokesperson, must work closely with the rest of the crisis management team. Berry (1999) states that clear and correct communication comes from relying heavily on the support of team members, with each member providing detailed information from his or her field of specialization.
2.3 PREPARATION AND TRAINING OF MANAGEMENT FOR A CORPORATE CRISIS

Bi (1995) states that successful crisis management calls for an understanding of the psychologies involved. Every member of the crisis team must instinctively understand what it is like on the other side of the fence for a frightened consumer or local resident, a distraught relative, a concerned employee, a fanatical press group etc. And then when you know how they are feeling you base your communications on what they need to hear, not on what you want to communicate. Bi (1995) further claims that rather than focusing on fixed responsibilities, each team member should train and prepare on the assumption that when the dreaded call comes it is in the middle of the night on a bank holiday and that he or she is the only person available and must handle the whole thing alone.

According to Bi (1995) a typical development program to prepare an organisation for a major crisis or issue would consist of:

Theoretical training. This gets management thinking about crisis and the psychologies involved. They can agree on a common definition of crisis and be presented with the many questions that will form the skeleton of the crisis plan.

Brainstorming. The now crisis-aware management can trash out the many different crises that could hit them – and how they would respond. Here a “planning by question” approach works well. By asking themselves a set of questions – for example “What types of crises could hit us? Who would the audiences be? How would they react? How do we communicate with them? What would the messages be?” – and coming up with the answers, the team can develop a logical plan.

Planning. Any written plans are now drawn up – usually in the form of a crisis manual.

Media training. Any media spokespeople must be trained in crisis interview techniques.

Simulations. Crisis simulations are a useful way of assessing the team’s strengths and weaknesses and keeping them crisis-aware.

Audits. A crisis auditor should drop in on individual team members unannounced and check their top-of-the-head knowledge of crisis procedures. They should also check that changeable data in the manual (team members, telephone numbers, etc.) are kept up to date.

Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) write that preparation for a crisis within an organisation includes senior executives adopting a crisis management mind-set and the simulation of hypothetical crisis incidents. The four researchers further writes that in the best cases, these efforts are refined and reinforced regularly.

When the crisis management team is practising with hypothetical situations it has the opportunity to consider similar potential problems that could arise for their own organisation. Typically, key questions include:

• What would we do in the given situation and why?
• Who would we contact and why?
Where in the organisation would we anticipate strengths and weaknesses in managing the situation? (Pearson, Misra, Clair & Mitroff, 1997)

According to Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) a hypothetical situation allows participants to discuss potential dangers at “arm’s length”. At the same time, member of the crisis management team can extend the inherent lessons of a hypothetical situation to think about, test, defend and revise their own perspectives regarding the crisis management capabilities of their own organisation. (Pearson, Misra, Clair & Mitroff, 1997)

As the crisis preparation efforts become more sophisticated so do the scenario buildings. The scenarios generally evolve from a script of a few simple paragraphs to a role-play situation, to a full-blown simulation in which internal and external stakeholders outside the crisis management team may take part. The uncertainty built into scenarios pushes crisis management team members to recognise and state their assumptions, learn to reach agreement under the most adverse conditions, tolerate disagreement where they must. These efforts help the members of the crisis management team to clarify:

- What they know
- What they do not know
- What actions they must take immediately to correct unacceptable gaps or ignorance
- What potential problems they should monitor over time

(Pearson, Misra, Clair & Mitroff, 1997)

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to the use of a conceptual framework. They state that, “a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied” (p.18). In order to reach its purpose this thesis has in chapter 2.1-2.3 reviewed previous studies within the area that the thesis is focused upon. In chapter 2.4 these theories will now be, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, “conceptualised”. In the conceptual framework the main topics and issues that are to be studied have been lifted out and presented. These various variables and concepts have then been used when an interview guide was designed. In this thesis multiple authors have been used when designing the research questions, this in order to create an eclectic research.

2.4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: HOW CAN A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN BE DESCRIBED?

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), Zerman (1995) and Turner (1999) discuss a number of different variables as being important to consider regarding the contents of a crisis communication plan.

- Crisis communication plan
  - Designate one single spokesperson
    - senior position (top executive)
    - someone that has the authority to speak for the organisation and that the media trusts
Consider the needs of the media
- meet print and broadcast deadlines
- constant flow of information

Communicate with all publics affected, not just the media
- employees
- customers
- suppliers
- community leaders
- shareholders
- other publics

Do not deny that a crisis exists, assume responsibility

Set up a media centre

Monitor the media
- is the organisation’s viewpoint being accurately reported?
- what is said about the crisis?

Act promptly
- communicate immediately with the media

Convey a key message
- have a key message, independently of who you are talking to

Be honest
- revealing facts to the public

2.4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: HOW CAN THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM DURING A CORPORATE CRISIS BE DESCRIBED?

Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997), Regester (1987) and Berry (1999) all discuss what actors that should be involved and what their roles should be in a crisis management team. The different authors view this issue from slightly different angles. Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) discuss the importance of that all the members of a crisis management team should be top executive officers within the organisation involved in a crisis. Regester (1987) agrees upon this, but he also discusses the importance of a number of different personalities that should appear in a crisis management team. Berry’s (1999) angle on this issue is to identify the steps that are to be taken when designing a crisis management team.

♦ The actors involved in a crisis management team.

- Executive officers
- composition of the team

- Idea generator
- a creative person
Communicator, single spokesperson
- speeds up the flow of information
- handles the communication within the group and between the group and the media

“No-sayer”
- a person who constantly points out negative aspects of ideas and suggestions

Protocol keeper
- wants to put everything on paper

Humanist
- always takes the human aspects of the problem into account

Decision maker
- should be selected first

2.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION PREPARE AND TRAIN ITS MANAGEMENT FOR A CORPORATE CRISIS?

Bi (1995) has listed a six-step program on how to prepare an organisation for a major crisis. Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) also discuss the importance of crisis training and preparation. They have however chosen to focus upon just one step of the six-step program that Bi (1995) discusses, the simulation of crisis.

- Preparation and training of management for a crisis.

  Theoretical training
  - gets management to think about crisis and the psychologies involved
  - agree upon a common definition of a crisis

  Brainstorming
  - crisis that may hit the organisation and possible response alternatives
  - the team ask themselves questions and come up with answers in order to develop a logical plan

  Planning
  - plans are written down

  Media training
  - training the spokespeople in crisis interview techniques

  Simulations
  - assessing the team’s strengths and weaknesses
  - keeping the team crisis-aware

  Audits
  - unannounced tests on the team members’ top-of-the-head knowledge of crisis procedures
  - check that changeable data in the manual are kept up to date
In the first chapter an introduction and a problem discussion that ended with a purpose and three research questions were presented. In the second chapter previous studies done on the issues at hand were presented. The second chapter ended with a conceptual framework. In the next chapter, the methodology chapter, certain justifications and choices regarding the data collection will be presented.
3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the purpose, approach and strategy of the research in this thesis will be described. Furthermore the data collection method, sample selection, the data analysis and validity and reliability will be presented. At the end of the chapter a methodology figure, which shows how the methodology was conducted, is outlined.

3.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE

Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson (1991) state that there are a number of different purposes of carrying out research. Three of these are:

- descriptive
- explanatory
- exploratory

*Descriptive* research aims to describe phenomena of different kinds. One may want to describe for example events, actions or a condition. Descriptive research is not carried out unconditionally. To describe means that the researcher chooses perspective, aspects, classifies, interprets etc. When carrying out descriptive research it should be stated what the description is used for and what knowledge it aims to gain. A good description is often a necessary foundation when one wants to explain, understand, predict or decide. (Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson, 1991)

*Explanatory* research is like descriptive research not carried out unconditionally. The researcher needs to define the different basis for the research. No such thing as only one proper model exists regarding a certain phenomena. For example when explaining a strike the psychologist may choose to explain it through personality factors and the economist through models relating to the economic environment. (Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson, 1991)

*An exploratory case study* is characterised by a high level of flexibility and it is suitable when a problem is difficult to demarcate. This kind of research is also appropriate when it does not exist a clear apprehension about what model should be used and what qualities and relations that are important. (Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson, 1991)

The research purpose of this thesis is mainly descriptive. In the research purpose it was stated that we wanted to gain a better understanding of how to handle public opinion during a corporate crisis. In this thesis a number of variables connected to the issue of handling public opinion will be described. However, we are also somewhat explorative. This due to the fact that we have not been able to find studies that focus on the exact same problem as we have chosen to do in this thesis. This makes this thesis somewhat explorative. Towards the end of the thesis our own conclusions are presented and through this we are beginning to explain the issues we have tried to describe. This makes our study mainly descriptive but with explanatory and exploratory influences.
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two methods to choose between when conducting research: qualitative or quantitative method. (Yin, 1993)

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHOD

Quantitative researches are often formalised and well structured. Selectivity and distance to the source of information also characterise this method. The researcher has beforehand decided what questions should be asked without considering whether the respondent find them important or not. This gives the researcher a high degree of control. In this method the numbers of target investigators are many and usually a generalisation from the gathered information is made. In quantitative research, which often takes the form of a survey, data is presented in figures e.g. diagrams and tables, which are analysed to find a pattern. (Holme & Solvang, 1997)

Qualitative research means gathering, analysing and interpreting data that cannot be quantified. A qualitative survey is characterised by a great closeness to the respondents or to the source that the data is being collected from. The data should be collected in circumstances that are similar to ordinary and everyday conversations. Because the researcher only uses guidelines, which gives the respondent a chance to affect the dialogue, this form of interview will provide him/her with reliable information. (Holme & Solvang, 1997) A qualitative method is used when the researcher wants to obtain detailed data concerning feelings, values and attitudes. The interviews are made in a dialogical way with a few, carefully selected respondents. (Sutherland, 1991)

The method we found to be most suitable for our research is the qualitative method. We chose this approach due to the fact that we wanted to gain a better (i.e. deeper) understanding of how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis. Our research also demanded detailed answers regarding the company’s feelings, values and attitudes about issues involving how to handle the opinion of the public during a corporate crisis.

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

There are a number of different ways in which one may conduct social science research. Yin (1994) lists five primary research strategies in the social sciences. These are experiments, surveys, histories, analysis of archival information and case studies. Each of these strategies have their certain advantages and disadvantages. However, these advantages and disadvantages depend upon three conditions:

- the type of research questions
- the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events
- the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena

(Yin, 1994)

Table 3.2 displays these three conditions, in each of three columns, and shows how each is related to five major research strategies within the social sciences. Below the table the different research strategies will be further explained.
Table 3.2: Conditions for Research Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH STRATEGY</th>
<th>Form of Research Question</th>
<th>Requires Control Over Behavioural Events?</th>
<th>Focuses on Contemporary Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how many, How much</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis (e.g., economic study)</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how many, How much</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 6

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis. Due to this we do not require the control over behavioural events. This rules out experiments as a research strategy. Furthermore we want to focus on an event, which has occurred recently, which rules out the historical strategy. Yin (1994) writes that surveys or the analysis of archival records are advantageous when the research goal is to describe the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon or when it is to be predictive about certain outcomes. This leaves us with only one research strategy, the case study.

In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. (Yin, 1989) Holme and Solvang (1997) writes that the characteristics of a case study is that it provides a realistic description and it makes it possible to investigate many different variables. They further state that case studies give detailed knowledge about the problem but it might be difficult to generalise from the conclusions that are drawn.

Since the research questions that we base this thesis upon are of “how” character, we have chosen to adopt case study as our research strategy. Other reasons for choosing this strategy were because we wanted to look at a number of variables in order to gain detailed knowledge and because we wanted to investigate the chosen company from many different angles and considerations.
3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process for case studies is more complex than those used in other research strategies. If the researcher chooses to conduct a case study he needs to maintain, what Yin (1994) refers to as, a methodological versatility. This versatility is not necessarily required when using other strategies. The researcher also needs to follow certain formal procedures to assure quality control during the data collection process. Data for case studies may be collected through six different sources. These will be presented below in table 3.2 along with the strengths and weaknesses of the respective sources. (Yin, 1994)

Table 3.2: Six Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF EVIDENCE</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTATION</td>
<td>♦ Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly ♦ Unobtrusive: not created as a result of the case ♦ Exact: contains exact names, references and details of an event ♦ Broad coverage: long span of time, many events and many settings</td>
<td>♦ Retrievability: can be low ♦ Biased selectivity: if collection is incomplete ♦ Reporting bias: reflects (unknown) bias of author ♦ Access: may be deliberately blocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHIVAL RECORDS</td>
<td>♦ (Same as above for documentation) ♦ Precise and quantitative</td>
<td>♦ (Same as above for documentation) ♦ Accessibility due to privacy reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEWS</td>
<td>♦ Targeted: focuses directly on case study topic ♦ Insightful: provides perceived causal inferences</td>
<td>♦ Bias due to poorly constructed questionnaires ♦ Response bias ♦ Inaccuracies due to poor recall ♦ Reflexivity: interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECT OBSERVATIONS</td>
<td>♦ Reality: covers events in real time ♦ Contextual: covers context of event</td>
<td>♦ Time consuming ♦ Selectivity: unless broad coverage ♦ Reflexivity: event may proceed differently because it is being observed ♦ Cost: hours needed by human observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS</td>
<td>♦ (Same as for direct observations) ♦ Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives</td>
<td>♦ (Same as for direct observations) ♦ Bias due to investigator’s manipulation of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL ARTEFACTS</td>
<td>♦ Insightful into cultural features ♦ Insightful into technical operations</td>
<td>♦ Selectivity ♦ Availability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 80
Due to the fact that we are conducting a qualitative and not a quantitative case study we are not able to utilise **archival records** as a source of evidence. **Direct observations** and **participant observations** are also ruled out as possible sources of evidence for this case study, due to limitations regarding time and financial resources. We furthermore do not need insights into cultural features and technical operations and therefore we choose not to use **physical artefacts** as a source of evidence. This leaves us with two sources of evidence, **interviews** and **documentation**.

According to Yin (1989) one of the most important sources of case study information is the **interview**. There are three different types of interviews, these are:

- open-ended
- focused
- survey

Most commonly, case study interviews are of an **open-ended nature**, in which an investigator can ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents’ opinions about events. In some situations, the investigator may even ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. (Yin, 1989)

In a **focused** interview the respondent is interviewed for a short period of time. In such cases, the interviews may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but the interviewer is more likely to be following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol. (Yin, 1989)

The third type of interview entails more structured questions, along the lines of a formal **survey**. Such a survey can be designed as a part of a case study. (Yin, 1989)

Yin (1989) concludes that overall, interviews are an essential source of case study evidence, because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a certain issue.

Except for studies of preliterate societies, **documentary information** is likely to be relevant to every case study topic. This type of information can take many forms and should be the object of explicit data collection plans. The different types of documentation are:

- letters, memoranda
- agendas, announcements and other written reports of events
- administrative documents
- formal studies
- news-clippings and other articles appearing in the media

For case studies, the most important use of documents is to confirm and augment evidence from other sources. (Yin, 1989)

As mentioned above Yin (1994) talks about maintaining a methodological versatility in order to gain a better quality of the case study. Yin (1994) further states that one of the major
strengths of the case study is that it enables the researcher to use multiple sources. Yin (1994) writes that an important clue is to ask the same question to different sources of evidence; if all sources point to the same answer the researcher has successfully triangulated his data. Consequently Yin (1994) calls the use of multiple sources, when conducting a case study, for triangulation.

For this thesis we have chosen to use interviews as our main source of evidence. The type of interview that we found to be the most appropriate was a focused interview. This due to the fact that we only had a limited amount of time with the interviewees and we wanted to carry out the interview with questions that we had derived from already existing research on the topics that we were interested in. For the interviews we used an interview guide, which was derived from the conceptual framework. The questions that we asked were of an open-ended nature. In our case this meant that before asking for any details, we wanted to know what the respondents felt regarding the main topics. First we asked the research questions and then we moved on by asking about the subtopics.

Along with interviews, we also chose to use documentation as a source of evidence. Information gathered from documentation, together with the interviews, gave us the necessary material for our thesis. For documentation we have used articles and books. We have used books from the library at the Technical University of Luleå. Furthermore we have used a number of different articles. These have mainly been found in the database EBSCOhost, which is provided by the Technical University of Luleå.

3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION

Johansson-Lindfors (1993) argues that selective sampling is used in qualitative case studies and that it involves purposive sampling. Purposive sampling implicates that the information units should be selected based on theoretical purpose and relevance. This implies that it must be assumed that the phenomenon or problem exists within the sample of information units. The sample is dependent on the purpose of the study rather than on whether the sample is representative or not. (Johansson-Lindfors, 1993)

When we reviewed previous studies of crisis communication we found that Carney and Jorden (1993) noted that if a company has one of the following situations, it probably needs a crisis communication plan:

- merger/acquisition/take-over,
- government investigation
- layoffs
- lawsuit
- reorganisation
- sale of subsidiary
- product recall/product tampering
- boycott or strike
- bankruptcy
- scandal
- proxy fight
- environmental problem.
Since we wanted to derive our sample selection from issues already covered by previous studies we combined the Carney and Jorden (1993) list with the crisis type matrix provided by Coombs (1995), (see figure 1.2, p.8). We decided that we wanted to focus on “accidents” within the crisis type matrix. When we reviewed the Carney and Jorden (1993) list (p. 26) we found that only two points, environmental problems and product recalls, in that list could be classified as accidents in the crisis type matrix. We knew that Boliden Limited, which is a Multinational Corporation (MNC), had experienced a crisis in Spain when a 5 million m$^3$ of contaminated water broke through a tailings dam at a mining site owned by Boliden. The breakthrough of the dam could definitely be classified as an accident, which caused large-scale environmental damage. Boliden Limited has also classified this incident as an organisational crisis. Based on the literature that we reviewed, combined with the fact that Boliden Limited viewed this incident as a corporate crisis we chose to do our case study on Boliden Limited’s accident in Apirsa, Spain.

We knew that Christina Baptista, who works as a teacher at the Technical University of Luleå, had earlier been working at Boliden Limited. We asked her if she knew of anyone within the Boliden organisation that could help us. She gave us the phone number to a person called Kerstin Johannesen, who in turn passed us on to a man called Lage Fagerlönn. He was however not the person that possessed the knowledge we were looking for. Consequently he sent us to the Chief Information Officer, Lennart Marklund, who stated that he could, and would, help us. We scheduled an interview with him. He said that there was another official within Boliden that could help us gain the knowledge we were seeking. His name was Vagn Englyst and he was working in the Department of Occupational Health within Boliden Mineral. The interviews were carried out on May 23rd and May 24th and they lasted a little more than an hour each.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Yin (1994) writes that the ultimate goal of analysing data is to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions and to rule out alternative interpretations. Yin (1994) writes that before data may actually be analysed, a researcher using case studies may choose from two general analytical strategies:

- **Relying on theoretical propositions** is according to Yin (1994) the most common strategy. This means that the researcher derives his research questions from previous studies. The data collected is then compared to the findings of previous studies. This strategy helps the researcher to focus on relevant data and to ignore other, not relevant, data.

- **Developing a case description** is according to Yin (1994) less preferable than the use of theoretical propositions. This strategy may serve as an alternative to theoretical propositions when little previous research has been done. (Yin, 1994)

In this thesis we have chosen to rely on theoretical propositions. This due to the fact that we wanted, and it was possible, to derive our research questions from previous findings and studies. Furthermore we wanted to compare the data that we found to the findings of previous studies.

When writing about qualitative data analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the focus is on data in the form of words. These words require, according to the authors, some sort of processing. This processing is itself a form of analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) have
defined data analysis “as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: Data reduction, Data display and Conclusion drawing/verification”. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain these three stages as follows:

*Data reduction* should not be considered to be separate from analysis, but as a part of it. This reduction of the data is analysis that helps to sharpen, sort, focus, discard and organise the data in a way that allows for “final” conclusions to be drawn and verified. The two authors add that data can be reduced and transformed through such means as selection, summary, paraphrasing or through being subsumed in a larger pattern.

*Data display* is the second stage that the researcher needs to go through. This stage includes taking the reduced data and displaying it in an organised and compressed way so that conclusion can be more easily drawn. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that good displays are “a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis”

*Conclusion drawing and verification* is the third and final stage of the data analysis. In this stage the researcher starts to decide what the different findings means. This is done by noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) also add that the competent researcher should hold such conclusions lightly, while maintaining both openness and a degree of scepticism.

When we have analysed the data that we had gathered for this thesis we have followed the three steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The data reduction and the data display have been combined in the analysis chapter. In chapter 6, where we start to draw conclusions we have, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggests, started to decide what the different findings of our research mean.

### 3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Due to the fact that a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statements, one can also judge the quality of any given design according to certain logical tests. (Yin, 1989) According to Yin (1989) four tests exist when judging the quality of the design of a research. These four tests are:

- construct validity
- internal validity
- external validity
- reliability

*Construct validity* includes the establishment of correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. Yin (1989) writes that there are three tactics available in order to increase construct validity. The first is to use multiple sources of evidence during the data collection. The second tactic is to establish a chain of evidence. This should also be done during the data collection. The third and final tactic is, according to Yin (1989), to construct a case study report, which is reviewed by the key-informants.

*Internal validity* is used for establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from false relationships. It should be noted that internal validity is a concern only for causal or explanatory studies, where an investigator
is trying to determine whether event x led to event y. (Yin, 1989) Due to the fact that this thesis is mainly descriptive, no further consideration has been taken to internal validity.

**External validity** deals with the establishment of the domain on to which a study’s findings can be generalised. Yin (1989) writes that the external validity problem has been a major barrier in doing case studies. Critics have typically stated that single cases offer a poor basis for generalisations. This is however, according to Yin (1989), wrong, due to the fact that case studies rely on analytical generalisation. When making an analytical generalisation the analyst should try to generalise findings to “theory”, which corresponds to the way a scientist generalises from experimental results to theory. (Yin, 1989)

To conclude the discussion regarding validity it should be noted that Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson (1997) state that validity is defined as a measurement instrument’s ability to measure what it is intended to measure. They further state that a good methodology affects the validity in a positive direction.

Yin (1989) states that **reliability** demonstrates that the operations of a study - such as the data collection procedures - can be repeated. Yin (1989) further states that the objective should be to make sure that, if a later investigator followed exactly the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions. It is concluded by Yin (1989) that the goal of reliability is to minimise the errors and biases in a study.

As stated above Yin (1994) describes three tactics to increase the construct validity of a case study. The first is to use multiple sources of evidence. For our case study we had two respondents who answered the same set of questions. The construct validity was further increased by the fact that the respondents possessed a genuine knowledge within the area of interest. We have also tried to find as many different researchers as possible that supported the same theories, when reviewing the literature. The second tactic presented by Yin (1994) is to establish a chain of evidence. Throughout the thesis we have tried to build our writing around the interview guide, which was derived from our research questions. This was done in order to maintain a clear structure of the thesis and hence, establish a chain of evidence. The third tactic, which is to give the key-informants a draft of the case study report, was not possible to carry out, due to time limits.

Regarding external validity we have gathered information from two different sources within Boliden Limited. It may be hazardous to make any generalisations based on the findings of this study.

To improve the reliability we tried to formulate relevant questions that would neither lead nor influence the respondent in any way. The data was collected in a way similar to ordinary and everyday conversations, which lets the respondent affect the dialogue. As the complex nature of our problem demands more than “yes/no”- answers, the interview was conducted with an interview guide. Prior to the interviews our supervisor reviewed the interview guide. The interviews were carried out in Swedish, this due to the fact that this was the mother tongue of both the researchers and one of the respondents. One of the respondents was however of Danish nationality. The interview was still carried out in Swedish due to the fact that he mastered the Swedish language perfectly. To further improve the reliability the interviews were recorded. This gave us a chance to listen carefully to the respondents and detect possible misunderstandings of the questions. What might have affected the reliability negatively is the
translation of the interview from English to Swedish. Reliability might also have been affected negatively due to the fact that the answers given by the respondents needed to be translated from Swedish to English. This should however be a minor problem due to the fact that the two researchers have both studied and worked abroad in English speaking countries.
3.8 METHODOLOGY FIGURE

1. Choice of Research Purpose
   - Exploratory
   - Descriptive
   - Explanatory

2. Choice of Research Approach
   - Quantitative
   - Qualitative

3. Choice of Research Strategy
   - Survey
   - History
   - Case Study
   - Experiment
   - Archival Analysis

4. Data Collection Method
   - Participant Observation
   - Archival Records
   - Direct Observations
   - Physical Artefacts
   - Interviews
     - (secondary source)
   - Open-Ended
   - Focused
   - Survey

5. Sample Selection
   - Boliden Limited

6. Data Analysis
   - Within Case Analysis

7. Quality Standards
   - Validity
   - Reliability
4. DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter will begin with a short presentation of Boliden Limited and the crisis that the company was faced with on its mining site in Apirsa, Spain. The chapter will then move on to the presentation of the data collected in the two interviews that were conducted with two Boliden Limited officials. The data collected will be presented in the order of the three research questions, which will also serve as headings. It should be noted that the information presented in sections 4.2-4.5 was obtained in interviews carried out with Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst on the 23rd of May and on the 24th of May.

4.1 BACKGROUND

The data presented under this heading is based on material given to us by Boliden Limited. In the first two sections a brief presentation of Boliden Limited and the accident in Apirsa will be conducted. Information on the respondents, Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst, and their roles within Boliden Limited and their roles during the Apirsa Crisis will be presented in the last section.

4.1.1 COMPANY PRESENTATION

Boliden Limited originated in Sweden and traces its history back to 1924 to the discovery of a large gold ore near the village of Boliden in the Skellefteå mineral district in the north of Sweden. Boliden has mining and milling operations in Canada, Chile, Spain and Sweden and smelting and refining operations in Norway and Sweden. The company is also engaged in the fabrication and sale of copper tubing and brass products, with fabrication facilities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In 1997, Boliden moved its head office from Stockholm to Toronto and on the 17th of June the same year the company became a Canadian public company on the successful completion of the initial public offering of its common shares. Today the company employs approximately 5500 people all over the world. (Boliden Limited Annual Report, 1999)

4.1.2 THE ACCIDENT

On the night of April 25, 1998 the process keepers of the mill in the Boliden mine in Apirsa received an error message: One of the pumps that was installed at the sand storage facility had stopped. The electrician that was sent out to check on the problem soon concluded that a serious accident had occurred. In the dark night he could establish the fact that the dam was damaged and that big amounts of water and sand was leaking out. An alarm immediately reached the board of directors and the police force Guardia Civil and actions were taken along the Guadimar River in order to prevent injuries. At dawn, the total extent of the damage could be assessed. A 60-meter wide hole had been formed in the dam. The dam was nearly empty, which meant that around 5-million m$^3$ of contaminated water had leaked out. The river was, ranging a distance of 40 kilometres, full of silt water and the riverbanks were flooded several hundred meters on to nearby land. Fortunately, neither people nor cattle had been injured. This was mainly due to the swift measures that were taken by Boliden and the Guardia Civil. However, the damages on the environment still proved to be fairly extensive. The most urgent issue was that a flood wave was on its way to the national park of Coto Doñana situated at the mouth of the Guadimar River, which is an area used by a lot of migratory birds during the
spring and the fall. This flood wave was however redirected by the Andalucian authorities and the national park was saved. (Lindvall, 2000)

4.1.3 THE RESPONDENTS

Mr. Lennart Marklund, who was the person that we first interviewed, holds the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Information Department within Boliden Limited. During the crisis he maintained the same operative role within the organisation. Dr. Vagn Englyst, the second respondent, has been working as a corporate doctor in the Department of Occupational Health for thirteen years. Dr. Englyst went down to Spain as a support for the doctor at the site who needed help. However, it is mainly due to his research after the accident that makes his opinion valuable for this research. He has on behalf of Boliden Limited investigated how the crisis was dealt with from an organisational point of view. Dr. Englyst has stated in the report, called the Apirsa Follow up Project, that “the aim of the project was to gather information from people at all levels and from different parts of the company as well as from consultants and to use the information and views of these people to identify problems of a generic nature as well as good examples” (Englyst p.2).

4.2 HOW CAN A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN BE DESCRIBED?

Both the respondents stated that Boliden did not have a specific crisis communication plan, on paper, at the time of the Apirsa accident. However they both stated that the personnel involved still knew what to do, in terms of communication issues. It should however be noted that while Mr. Marklund felt that all communication was dealt with on a satisfactory level Dr. Englyst stated that the communication within the company and the communication with people within the community could have been dealt with in a better manner.

Regarding the designation of a single spokesperson both of the respondents felt that this is the ultimate alternative. Mr. Marklund referred to this as a “dream situation”. In the case of Boliden this was however impossible to fulfil due to geographical reasons. Instead of using just one single spokesperson Boliden had to settle for a solution where the company initially communicated out of three geographical locations. This due to the facts that the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Anders Bülow is stationed in Toronto, Canada while the Information Officer, Mr. Marklund is stationed in Boliden and the accident occurred in Spain, where the site manager initially needed to respond to local needs of information. Both of the respondents stressed the importance of having a spokesperson who has a great deal of authority within the organisation. They both agreed upon that, if possible, this single spokesperson should be the CEO.

Considering the needs of the media is something that both of the respondents felt was important. Dr. Englyst stressed that he did not have a professional opinion on this issue but “personally” he stated that “we need to respect the press since they are just trying to do their job”. The Information Officer, Mr. Marklund stated that the company policy was to be as open to media as possible and to maintain a constant flow of information. Since Boliden chose not to speculate on issues on which they did not have any “hard facts”, a pressure from the media to supply them with new information arose. Five days after the accident, Boliden held a press conference in order to decrease the media pressure and to assume responsibility
for the clean-up work. The two respondents both felt that Boliden had a very open attitude towards the media during the whole crisis.

Regarding communication with all the affected publics after the accident Dr. Englyst chose to use the metaphor of how circles spread on the water. The first circle were the employees at the site of the accident, the second circle consisted of the affected farmers and the people living in the vicinity of the dam and the third circle was the Spanish people and the Spanish authorities. The final circle was the rest of the world. These circles also include the different levels of media, ranging from local newspapers to global news agencies. According to Dr. Englyst these circles should have been dealt with in order, starting with the first one and then moving outwards, this due to the fact that the need for immediate information is greater near the centre of the circles. Dr. Englyst felt that communication at large worked very well. However, Dr. Englyst felt that the communication with the two inner circles, i.e. employees at the site and the community, was dealt with in a manner that could have been improved while communication with the media of all levels worked very well. Regarding communicating with the community Dr. Englyst points out the fact that it took Boliden one month to set up a information centre to which the local population could turn to regarding financial and damaged property inquiries, while the media had immediate access to the information sources that they needed. Dr. Englyst was of the opinion that a good internal flow of information brings with it a good external flow of information and therefore it is important to have a well working communication with all employees within the company. Mr. Marklund merely pointed out the fact that employees, both at the site and elsewhere, found out about the accident through the media. According to Mr. Marklund the communication with the employees at the site was later on handled by the union at the Apirsa mine. Both of the respondents stated that they felt that it was important to communicate with all affected publics. Mr. Marklund, however, pointed out the importance of maintaining a good dialogue with local authorities and politicians. It should be noted that Mr. Marklund concluded that he felt that communication was handled satisfactorily on all levels.

On the issue of assuming responsibility and not denying that a crisis exist both the respondents stated that the company policy was never to cover up or to deny that a crisis existed. Mr. Marklund stressed the importance of assuming responsibility when a crisis, caused by the company, arises. He also stated that at Apirsa Boliden immediately claimed a co-ordination responsibility for the clean up activities. The organisation also paid the affected farmers 50 million SEK, although the organisation did not have to do so from a juridical point of view. Boliden were however very clear on the point that they did not pay this sum because they felt they were to be held liable of the accident. Both the respondents stated that their professional view on the issue of assuming responsibility, that an organisation will never benefit, in the long run, if they try to cover up that an accident or a crisis has occurred. Dr.Englyst further added that he did not think that one should cover up a crisis, partly due to the fact that a crisis is impossible to hide.

Dr. Englyst did not have any comments on the issue regarding the setting up of a media and information centre. Mr. Marklund stated that Boliden did not provide a centre merely for the press. He stated that an information centre was put up in the small village of San Lucar, near the site of the accident. This centre was however mainly set up, as stated before, in order to provide juridical and financial expertise to the local population. Mr. Marklund further stated that he felt that the press did not need to be facilitated in terms of telephone lines since reporters have their own cellular phones and laptops. He also added that the question of a media centre might be viewed differently depending upon where a crisis has occurred.
Regarding the issue of monitoring the media, the two respondents both found this to be fairly important. Mr. Marklund stated that the media in Spain did not always interview people at Boliden, but instead they wanted the opinion of other people involved in, or affected by the accident. This made it hard for the people at Boliden to monitor and influence what was said in media. There was however a few occasions when Mr. Marklund, or someone else at Boliden, was allowed to see the draft of an article before it was printed, which made it easier to influence what was to be said in media. Dr. Englyst said that an important issue to think of is that the spokesperson, or the persons responsible for supplying media with information, should always be following the debate in media. This in order to be able to participate in the ongoing media debate. It should be noted that both respondents claimed that Boliden tried to monitor the media to a certain degree. However, they both agreed that this was not an established task during the crisis.

On the issue of acting promptly, the two respondents both claimed that Boliden acted very rapidly in response to the crisis. They were both very pleased with the fact that the C.E.O., Mr. Bülow, was very fast in appearing in the media where he stated that Boliden assumed responsibility of the accident. On a more general level they both agreed that acting fast is something that an organisation should always do. Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst were both of the opinion that an organisation should not only try to act as rapidly as possible, but they also stressed the importance of conveying a message which was based on “hard facts” and evidence. A company should always, according to the respondents, communicate what they believe to be the truth.

Regarding conveying a key message both of the respondents felt that this was an important issue. According to Mr. Marklund, the people in Boliden held a telephone conference, shortly after the accident had occurred, with the executive officers in Spain and Canada. During this conference they agreed upon what they felt was important to convey.

Being honest is something that Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst both found to be of great importance. According to Mr. Marklund, the company did not try to conceal any information from the public. The local people were able to obtain all relevant facts about the accident, mainly through the information centre.

When asked if the respondents had anything to add, Mr. Marklund stated that he think it is of utmost importance that everybody within the organisation knows their job and what they should do if a crisis occur. He further stated that the accident had brought with it a lot of experience to the organisation, regarding how a crisis should be handled.

Dr. Englyst stated that he believes that it is very difficult to establish one general crisis communication plan for an organisation of the size of Boliden Limited. He claimed that on a corporate level it might be useful to establish certain crisis guidelines. On “site” level he feels that it is useful to have a more specific crisis communication plan.
4.3 HOW CAN THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM BE DESCRIBED?

Both Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst found this issue important to consider. However, none of them was certain that a crisis management team should be put together beforehand. Mr. Marklund stated that he thinks that the persons who are responsible for the different operative areas involved in the crisis should be the ones that form the crisis team. This was also what happened when Boliden faced the crisis in Spain. As soon as the news of the accident reached the people in Sweden and Canada, a management team was put together. The team consisted of the C.E.O., the Executive Officer of the business area Mining, the Executive Officer of Information, the Executive Officer of Human Resources, the site manager in Spain and the Executive Officer of Environmental Affairs.

Mr. Marklund claimed that it is very important that the team is composed of persons who possess a great deal of authority within the company and knowledge regarding the issues that are to be solved. Dr. Englyst agreed upon this, but also emphasised the need of a strong leader in a crisis team. This leader should be the one that keeps the team together and makes sure that the communication within the group is working well. Dr. Englyst further believed that the management people should have some sort of knowledge of how to handle crisis. He claimed that “just because you are in the management does not mean that you can solve problems”.

Mr. Marklund further stated that once the team has been put together it is natural that the different members fall into the different personalities of an idea generator, communicator, “no-sayer”, protocol keeper, and humanist. Mr. Marklund added that he believes that one person can possess more than one of these personalities and that there is no need to “go looking” for these personalities when composing a crisis team, since they will “appear” anyway among the different team members.

Dr. Englyst pointed out the importance of the role of the humanist. Dr. Englyst stated that his experience from the Apirsa crisis was that within the group there is a need for a person who is able to spot when people are showing symptoms of stress. According to Dr. Englyst this needs to be dealt with on at an early stage, this in order to avoid that people break down later in the process. Dr. Englyst stated that this does not necessarily have to be a doctor, the crisis team should however consist of one member who has the ability to see these signs.

Regarding the issue of appointing a decision-maker, Mr. Marklund believed that the C.E.O. always, even if he is not part of the crisis team, is involved in making the big decisions. Due to this fact he felt that it could be difficult to appoint one person, apart from the CEO, within the crisis management team, that will make all decisions.

When Mr. Marklund was asked if he had anything to add he stated that after the initial phase of the crisis a new crisis team was put together. Boliden decided that they would look upon the accident as a project and due to this view, a project team was put together. Mr. Marklund claimed that this group was put together based on the skills of the different individuals but he also felt that the different personalities, that were described earlier, existed within the group. He further added that Boliden contracted a bureau with experts on mining operations. The main task of the bureau was to read all the reports of the project team and to supply the team with a second opinion on everything that they did.
On the question if Dr. Englyst had anything to add he once again returned to the importance of a strong crisis team leader. Dr. Englyst stated that during the crisis in Apirsa he felt that Boliden lacked a strong leader of the crisis management team. This was further emphasised in the post crisis report, which was written by Dr. Englyst, where it is stated that some of the persons involved in the crisis management group stated that they felt “a need of senior management at site, a team-leader” (Englyst, p.5). Dr. Englyst feels that the groups that were put together in Apirsa immediately after the accident managed to do a great job. However, he feels that the organisation maybe should have looked into the composition of the groups more closely. That the groups actually worked so well might have been due to pure luck. Dr. Englyst concluded that he feels that it is very important to establish the financial and authoritative borders of the crisis management team, which could have been handled better in Apirsa. The team will work under an enormous stress and they therefore need to be aware of what they can do and what goes beyond the scope of their authority. The group needs to have complete freedom within the borders that are given to them.

4.4 HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION PREPARE AND TRAIN ITS MANAGEMENT FOR A CORPORATE CRISIS?

Both Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst stated that Boliden does not have any specific training and preparation program for its personnel. Nor does the corporation have a corporate crisis manual; this is handled on a local level. They both further claimed that, although the company does not follow any specific steps in order to prepare and train its personnel for a crisis, there are some issues that the employees are taught. For example, the company supplies all new employees, at a managerial level, with media training. Mr. Marklund believes that it is important to teach new co-workers how to handle the media, because during a crisis it might not be the most experienced and most prepared person who needs to deal with the media. Mr. Marklund further claimed that, during a crisis, a person could have a different role than he/she usually has and therefore it is important for nearly all employees to know, for example, how to handle the media. Due to this fact, both respondents feel that Boliden is a very open company that is good at dealing with the media.

Another issue that Boliden, according to the two respondents, is dealing with regarding preparation and training, are simulations. However, Dr. Englyst claimed that, for these simulations to be relevant in a big company like Boliden, they need to be made on a local level. He feels that it is very hard to administer a scenario building where the entire organisation participates, this mainly due to the geographical spread of the company. Dr. Englyst further stated, that if conducting a brainstorming, it is important to “stretch the imagination” and think of the absolute worst-case scenario. Dr. Englyst said that in the Apirsa Follow up Project, the majority of the respondents thought that this kind of accident was unimaginable. The respondents further claimed that, when faced with the accident on site, they found the scene of the accident to be worse than what they had imagined. Dr. Englyst concluded that he does not believe in audits, such as testing top-of-the-head knowledge, due to difficulties in constructing such a test. On the issue of theoretical training neither one of the two respondents felt that this was important and they chose not to make any further comments.

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1 Local level indicates each site where operations are conducted. This could for example be the Rönnskär Smelting Plant or the Apirsa mine.
On the question if they had anything to add, Dr. Englyst stated that the most important issue to look into when conducting a crisis simulation, is how well the communication works. He further claimed that, although not trained, there are always competent personnel within an organisation that knows how to act in stressed situations.
5. ANALYSIS

In this chapter a within case analysis will be presented. For this analysis, the gathered data will be analysed against previous research, as brought up in the conceptual framework. Furthermore, the data will be, as suggested by Miles and Hubermann (1994), reduced and displayed. This will first be done in paragraph form and at the end of each section a table will summarise what has been discussed in the paragraphs. In the tables a special column is assigned to the question whether the empirical data is in accordance with previous studies or not. This will be visualised by using a coding system.

5.1 HOW CAN A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN BE DESCRIBED?

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), Zerman (1995) and Turner (1999) all claim that it is of utmost importance for every organisation to have a crisis communication plan to work from when facing a crisis. This plan should be put together beforehand, so that the organisation knows what needs to be done if a crisis should occur. Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst both stated that Boliden did not have a specific corporate crisis communication plan to follow, but that the personnel involved still knew what to do, in terms of communication issues. The two respondents further stated that it is very important that everybody within an organisation knows their job and what they should do if a crisis occurs. However, Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst were both doubtful of establishing one general crisis communication plan for a corporation of the size of Boliden. They felt that crisis communication plans at a local level would be more useful and easier to establish. Although Boliden did not have a general corporate crisis communication plan a number of issues brought up in previous research were still considered to be important. These issues will be further analysed below.

When constructing a crisis communication plan the researchers Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), Zerman (1995) and Turner (1999) stress the importance of designating a single spokesperson in order to convey a clear message. At Boliden the officials agreed upon the importance of this. However, in the case of the Apirsa accident this was not possible due to the geographical spread of the company. Both of the respondents referred to the possibility of appointing a single spokesperson as a dream scenario. Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) suggest that the CEO is quite often the person best suited to be appointed as a single spokesperson. This is confirmed at Boliden where both the respondents mentioned that if it would have been possible to appoint a single spokes person the CEO, Anders Bülow, would have been the most suitable for this role.

Mr. Marklund, who is the Information Officer at Boliden, stated that during the crisis it was company policy to release information as soon as it was confirmed to be "hard facts". Furthermore Boliden stated that they tried to be as open to media as possible and to maintain a constant flow of information. These empirical findings fit well with what is being discussed by Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), Zerman (1995) and Turner (1999). These authors point out the fact that an organisation, which is experiencing a corporate crisis, needs to understand the needs of the media, in terms of deadlines and the need for information, and should therefore consider this in their crisis communication plan. In Apirsa, Boliden felt that since they chose not to speculate upon issues where they did not have any "hard facts" this sometimes created a "vacuum" that the media felt needed to be filled.
Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998), Zerman (1995) and Turner (1999) agree upon the importance of including the issue of communicating with all the affected publics, not just the media, into a crisis communication plan. Both the respondents at Boliden stated that they felt that this was a very important issue, which should be included in a crisis communication plan. It should be noted that Boliden, to a certain extent, used the Union to handle the communication with the employees.

On the issue of assuming responsibility and not denying that a crisis exists, the empirical data from the Apirsa crisis verifies what has been discussed in previous research. In studies made by Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) and Zerman (1995) it is stated that an organisation does not have to admit guilt or liability, but that it should take responsibility for solving the problem. Both the respondents stated that this issue was very important. They further claimed that it was company policy to assume responsibility and not denying that something had gone wrong.

The researchers Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) and Zerman (1995) bring up the issue of the setting up of a media and information centre when an organisation is facing a crisis. Mr. Marklund felt that it was important to provide the affected inhabitants with access to an information centre where juridical and financial issues could be discussed. However, Mr. Marklund did not agree upon the issue that it was important to provide the media with a special centre. Mr. Marklund felt that the media is capable of handling their own communication through cellular phones and laptops.

On the issue of monitoring the media the empirical data found in the case of the Apirsa crisis is critical of what is being discussed in previous studies. Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) and Zerman (1995) claim that it is important that an organisation is following what is being said in the media during a crisis. This to control that the organisation’s viewpoint is being accurately reported. This is the reason why the issue of monitoring the media should be included in a crisis communication plan. Both Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst stated that this may be done to a certain extent but it is not something that an organisation needs to put a lot of effort into. Dr. Englyst concluded that perhaps this should be a task designated to the spokesperson.

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) and Zerman (1995) have stated the importance of acting promptly. They also claim that it is very important for an organisation, when facing a crisis, to gather information quickly and be helpful to the media. At Boliden they agree upon the importance of this. The respondents however added that even though it is extremely important to act rapidly, one need to remember that the information that is being released should be based on “hard facts”.

At Boliden it is claimed that conveying a key message is something very important. In order to agree upon a key message a telephone conference was held on the morning of the Apirsa accident between the executive officers in Spain, Canada and Sweden. This verifies the fifth step of the crisis communication plan constructed by Turner (1999). In this step Turner state that an organisation should have a determined key message when communicating out of a crisis.

Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998) have emphasised the importance of being honest and not trying to obscure facts and mislead the public, during a crisis. This is something that Boliden agree to be very important to live up to. Mr. Marklund claimed that the company did not try to
conceal any information from the public and that the local people were able to obtain all relevant facts about the accident, mainly through an information centre.

In order to give the reader a short summary of what has been discussed in the past section a table will be presented below. In the table the first column has been assigned the variable investigated, the second column brings up a short summary of previous research while the third column is assigned to the findings of this study. Regarding the final column a coding system has been developed, this in order to make the analysis easier to understand and more accessible to the reader. The coding system is explained below.

++ indicates that Boliden Limited views the variable to be important and that the company also considered this variable during its crisis in Apirsa.

+- indicates that Boliden Limited views the variable to be important, but that it was not possible to consider this aspect during the Apirsa crisis.

+- indicates that Boliden Limited only agrees upon parts of what the previous studies suggest.

-- indicates that Boliden Limited does not consider this variable to be important.
Table 5.1: Summarised analysis of how a crisis communication plan may be described

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH</th>
<th>EMPIRICAL DATA FOUND IN THE CASE OF THE APIRSA CRISIS</th>
<th>SUPPORTS/IS CRITICAL OF PREVIOUS STUDIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designating a single spokesperson</td>
<td>Designate only one spokesperson in order to convey a clear message</td>
<td>This is a dream scenario made almost impossible due to the geographical spread of Boliden</td>
<td>−−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the needs of the media</td>
<td>Meet media deadlines and provide media with a constant flow of information</td>
<td>The company policy is to be as open as possible. At Apirsa it was however impossible to maintain a constant flow of information</td>
<td>+−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with all the publics affected, not just the media</td>
<td>In times of crisis an organisation needs to consider the need for information to all the affected actors</td>
<td>Considered as being an important part of a crisis communication plan</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not deny that a crisis exists, assume responsibility</td>
<td>Silence implies guilt. An organisation should assume responsibility although it does not has to admit liability</td>
<td>At Apirsa Boliden chose to reveal “hard facts” as soon as they were confirmed. They furthermore assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the clean up work</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up a information and media centre</td>
<td>Provide a centre where affected people and reporters may obtain information</td>
<td>A centre for the affected people is considered to be important. However not necessary to provide reporters with a media centre</td>
<td>−+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor the media</td>
<td>Control that the organisation’s viewpoint is being accurately reported</td>
<td>Not considered to be a crucial part of a crisis communication plan</td>
<td>−−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act promptly</td>
<td>Do not delay when disaster strikes. Gather information quickly and be helpful to the media</td>
<td>Viewed to be very important</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convey a key message</td>
<td>A key message should be worked into the information released by the company</td>
<td>State that this is very important. At Apirsa a telephone conference was held in order to decide upon a key message</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
<td>Do not try to mislead the public and do not obscure facts</td>
<td>Considered as being an important issue. At Apirsa Boliden tried to be as open as possible. The public could obtain information at a special centre</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 HOW CAN THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM BE DESCRIBED?

Regester (1987), Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) and Berry (1999) all discuss the importance of having a crisis management team, selected beforehand, that knows what to do when a crisis occurs. Both Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst felt uncertain of the fact that the team should be put together beforehand. Mr. Marklund stated that he thinks the persons responsible for the different operative areas involved in the crisis should be the ones forming the team. This was also what Boliden did when facing the crisis at Apirsa.

According to Regester (1987) and Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) the crisis management team should consist of executive officers. Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst agree upon the importance of this issue. At Apirsa the crisis management team solely consisted of executive officers of different operative areas. The officers involved were: the CEO, the Executive Officer of the Business Area Mining, the Executive Officer of Human Resources, the site manager in Spain and the Executive Officer of Environmental Affairs.

Regester (1987) claims that a crisis team should be carefully selected for their personal qualities and talents as well as their rank, position and knowledge of the organisation. The personalities that should be included in a crisis management team are: an idea generator, a communicator, a “no-sayer”, a protocol keeper and a humanist. Mr. Marklund stated that once the team has been put together, it is natural that the different members fall into these different personalities. He further stated that it is not necessary to consider the different roles, described by Regester (1987), when putting together a crisis management team. This due to the fact that the appointed members usually possess at least one of the qualities described.

It should be noted that Dr. Englyst stated that it is important to have a humanist as a part of a crisis management team. When Dr. Englyst stated this his thought of a humanist was however different from what Regester (1987) suggested. Regester (1987) stated that the humanist should always take the human aspects of the problem into account when solutions are put forth. Dr. Englyst’s view of a humanist was that this person needs to be able to spot when people, within the crisis management team, is showing symptoms of stress.

Berry (1999) writes that when designing a crisis management team the first step is to identify a decision-maker. Mr. Marklund agreed upon this, however he felt that it might be hard to appoint a decision-maker, apart from the CEO, in a crisis management team due to the fact that the CEO always has the final responsibility in making the big decisions. According to Mr. Marklund at Boliden it may however be hard to designate the role of a “decision-maker” to a certain person, apart from the CEO.

In order to give the reader a short summary of what has been discussed in the past section a table will be presented below. In the table the first column has been assigned the variable investigated, the second column brings up a short summary of previous research while the third column is assigned to the findings of this study. Regarding the final column a coding system has been developed, this in order to make the analysis easier to understand and more accessible to the reader. The coding system is explained below.

++ indicates that Boliden Limited views the variable to be important and that the company also considered this variable during its crisis in Apirsa.
+- indicates that Boliden Limited views the variable to be important but that it was not possible to consider this aspect during the Apirsa crisis.

++ indicates that Boliden Limited only agrees upon parts of what the previous studies suggest.

Table 5.2: Summarised analysis of how the actors involved in a crisis management team can be described.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH</th>
<th>EMPirical DATA FOUND IN THE CASE OF THE APIRSA CRISIS</th>
<th>SUPPORTS / IS CRITICAL OF PREVIOUS STUDIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officers</td>
<td>CEO, Chief Financial Officer, Public Relations Officer, Legal Officer, Health and Safety Officer</td>
<td>Agrees upon the importance of including executive officers in the crisis management team</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea Generator</td>
<td>A creative person who constantly comes up with new ideas and suggestions</td>
<td>Team members are not selected based upon what personalities that are thought to be needed.</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>A person who speeds up communication both within the group and with the world around</td>
<td>Team members are not selected based upon what personalities that are thought to be needed</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No-Sayer”</td>
<td>A person who constantly points out the negative aspects of every issue</td>
<td>Team members are not selected based upon what personalities that are thought to be needed</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocolkeeper</td>
<td>A person who wants to put everything on paper</td>
<td>Team members are not selected based upon what personalities that are thought to be needed</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanist</td>
<td>A person who always takes the human aspects into consideration</td>
<td>Team members are not selected based upon what personalities that are thought to be needed. However a person who can spot symptoms of stress should be part of a team</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Maker</td>
<td>This is the first person that should be identified.</td>
<td>Agrees upon the importance of appointing a decision-maker. Should be the CEO</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 HOW DOES AN ORGANISATION PREPARE AND TRAIN ITS MANAGEMENT FOR A CORPORATE CRISIS?

Bi (1995) and Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) discuss the importance of a crisis training and preparation program. Both Mr. Marklund and Dr. Englyst claimed that Boliden did not have any specific program for training and preparing its personnel for a crisis. The two respondents however stated that, although the company does not follow any specific steps drawn from an established preparation and training program, there are some issues that employees are taught in terms of handling a crisis.
The first step of preparing and training management for crisis situations is according to Bi (1995) to carry out theoretical training, which makes the management think about crisis and the psychologies involved. During this step the management also agrees upon a common definition of a crisis. This was not considered to be important at Boliden.

Bi (1995) suggests that a crisis-aware management needs to brainstorm. This is done by asking themselves questions such as “What type of crisis could hit us?” and “How would this affect us?”. Dr. Englyst at Boliden agrees upon the importance of this. He further added that it is important to really stretch the imagination when carrying out this kind of activity. Dr. Englyst concluded that the worst-case scenario is not always easy to imagine. In the case of brainstorming the empirical data verifies what was found in previous research.

The third step of preparing and training management for corporate crises is according to Bi (1995) to write down plans, usually in the form of crisis manuals. At Boliden crisis plans on a corporate level do not exist. Plans do however exist, but on a local level. For example the Rönnskär Smelt Plant has a specific crisis plan, which is to be used if an accident should occur. On this issue empirical data agrees upon what is being suggested by Bi (1995).

One of the issues suggested by Bi (1995), that is viewed to be important at Boliden is media training. Bi (1995) claims that this is a crucial point of a crisis preparation and training program. At Boliden all new employees, at managerial level, are supplied with media training. Mr. Marklund stated that during a crisis it is important that everybody knows how to handle the media since it is not always the most experienced and best-prepared person that will be interviewed.

Bi (1995) and Pearson, Misra, Clair and Mitroff (1997) agree upon the importance of simulations as a way of assessing an organisation’s strengths and weaknesses in terms of crisis awareness. At Boliden this is viewed to be an important issue. However it is according to Dr. Englyst very difficult to carry out simulations where the whole organisation participates. At Boliden simulation are carried out, but only on a local level.

On the question if audits is an important way to check personnel for “top of the head knowledge” Dr. Englyst stated that this was not viewed to be important at Boliden. Bi (1995) however talks about the importance of this issue in his suggested program for organisational crisis training and preparation.

In order to give the reader a short summary of what has been discussed in the past section a table will be presented below. In the table the first column has been assigned the variable investigated, the second column brings up a short summary of previous research while the third column is assigned to the findings of this study. Regarding the final column a coding system has been developed, this in order to make the analysis easier to understand and more accessible to the reader. The coding system is explained below.

++ indicates that Boliden Limited views the variable to be important
+- indicates that Boliden Limited does not fully agree upon what previous findings suggest
-- indicates that Boliden Limited does not consider this variable to be important
Table 5.3: Summarised analysis of how an organisation prepares and trains its management for a corporate crisis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH</th>
<th>EMPIRICAL DATA FOUND IN THE CASE OF THE APIRSA CRISIS</th>
<th>SUPPORTS / IS CRITICAL OF PREVIOUS STUDIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Training</td>
<td>Management agrees upon a common definition of crisis</td>
<td>Not considered to be important at Boliden</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>What possible crisis could hit the organisation</td>
<td>An important issue. Important to really stretch the imagination</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Usually a crisis manual is drawn up</td>
<td>Plans exist, but only on a local level</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Training</td>
<td>Training in interview techniques</td>
<td>Crucial issue. All new employees at managerial level receives media training</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>Should be seen as a valuable tool in assessing strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>Considered to be important. Difficult to conduct on a corporate level</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audits</td>
<td>Unannounced checks of top of the head knowledge</td>
<td>Not considered to be important</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter we will try to answer our research questions. We will further provide the reader with some comments regarding the differences, similarities and gaps between the empirical data found in this case study and the findings of previous research. In order to do so we present a few fragments of empirical data and previous research and then draw our own conclusions from this. At the end of the chapter a section with implications for management, previous findings and future research is presented.

6.1 HOW CAN A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN BE DESCRIBED?

Previous research has stated the importance of having an established crisis communication plan. At our chosen company a corporate crisis plan does not exist. Officials of the corporation stated that at a corporate level it is not possible to have one general crisis communication plan. However, crisis communication plans on a local level do exist within the company. It was further stated that although a plan does not exist, the employees still know what to do if a crisis should occur. Based on our research, evidence suggests that it might be wise for an organization to implement some sort of crisis communication plan. However, these plans should be assigned on a more local level. This due to the fact that it may prove impossible for a multinational corporation to have all the different aspects and angles of all possible crises that could hit the company fitted down into one single manual. Although our sample did not have one general crisis communication plan, a number of issues brought up in previous research are still considered by the company when communicating during a crisis. Considering the empirical data collected and what has been found in previous studies, we will below present our conclusions regarding the different topics of a crisis communication plan.

Regarding designating a single spokesperson during a corporate crisis it appears that in “real life” situations it seems nearly impossible to follow this advice, at least for organisations that are spread geographically over the world. We do however agree upon the desirability of the use of only one single spokesperson. We conclude that the best option that is available for a global organisation is to designate spokespersons on major locations of the company. The organisation’s outward communication is then handled by these spokespersons, after they have co-ordinated their intended actions.

Our sample indicates that regarding the needs of the media an organization needs to be aware of that during a crisis sometimes information gaps occur. An organisation may have an established policy regarding supplying facts that are confirmed and not speculative. This is probably a wise strategy, however the organisation needs to be aware of that if it cannot supply information the media still needs to report something. This makes the organisation vulnerable for speculative stories. In order to avoid this an organisation that is experiencing a crisis perhaps should have bits of information, regarding the plant, site or the company, prepared beforehand, which later are used to fill up possible information gaps during the crisis.

On the issue of communicating with all the affected publics we found that this is an important issue to include in a crisis communication plan. Everyone affected by the crisis have the same rights, and maybe the same needs, as the media to obtain information. Another finding of our
research is that when communicating with the affected employees the Union should not be overlooked as a channel of communication.

On the issue of assuming responsibility and not denying that a crisis exists the empirical data was in accordance with what previous research suggests. On this issue further conclusions do not need to be drawn. We can only conclude that it is advisable to assume responsibility but also to keep in mind that this does not include assuming liability.

Regarding setting up a media and information centre the empirical data was critical of the media part of this issue. This is probably due to the fact that the media is believed to be able to handle their own needs in terms of telephone lines and computers. On the issue of information centre the empirical data was in accordance with what previous research suggests. We believe that this is an important issue and we find the metaphor of a crisis described as circles moving outwards, used by one of the respondents, very appealing. In our research, the importance of setting up an information centre where affected people may turn to was pointed out. We can only agree upon this, since we believe that it is important that the community, in which an organisation is active, is treated with a degree of respect.

On the issue of monitoring the media our study shows that the designated spokesperson(s) should be the one monitoring the media. If this is done, this person is able to keep himself updated upon what is being discussed in the media and by doing so he/she should be able to anticipate quite a few of the questions that he/she will be asked.

The empirical data was in accordance with what previous studies suggested regarding the issue of acting promptly. The only additional thoughts upon this is that it is, as it was stated in the empirical chapter, important to only release information which has been confirmed internally. If an organisation starts to release information, which is based on internal speculation, it is definitely opening up its guard for speculative stories in the press. We think that when an organisation is facing a crisis it is advisable not to say anything rather than to speculate.

This case study has definitely verified the thought of conveying a key message. Our sample went to great lengths in order to co-ordinate what it felt would be its key message. On this issue the company further felt that it succeeded and that it was worthwhile making these efforts. We can only concur with what has been stated in the media that during a crisis it is important to convey a key message.

During the crisis our selected company chose to be honest when communicating with the actors involved. We have not found any evidence that suggests that this was a mistake. From this we conclude that it is a wise strategy to be honest in times of crisis. This is further shown in previous studies.

Below the most important conclusions regarding a crisis communication plan are listed.

- Our sample showed that a crisis communication plan existed, but only on a local level.

- When communicating during crisis, internationally diverse organisations should consider internally agreeing upon, and conveying, a key message.
Our sample showed that when communicating during a crisis, internationally diverse organisations use more than one single spokesperson.

6.2 HOW CAN THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM BE DESCRIBED?

Findings from previous studies claim that it is important to have a crisis management team put together before a crisis occurs. The findings of this thesis indicate that this is not necessarily true. Our research indicates that a crisis team should consist of the persons responsible for the different operative areas involved in the crisis and therefore it should not be put together beforehand. From this we draw the conclusion that the empirical data does not support the findings of previous studies, which claim that a crisis management team should be put together before a crisis occurs.

Even if officials in our chosen company do not support the fact that a company should have a crisis team put together beforehand, they believe that it is very important to have a crisis management team that handles the crisis. Considering the empirical data collected and what has been found in previous studies, we will below present our conclusions regarding the different actors involved in a crisis management team.

Regarding the issue that the crisis management team should consist of executive officers, the empirical data is in accordance with what is found in previous studies. Our study shows that the crisis team should consist of different executive officers within the company. From this we can draw the conclusion that this is an important issue to consider when putting together a crisis management team.

When comparing what previous studies state about what personalities should be included in a crisis management team and what we found in the empirical data, one can see that there is a difference of opinion regarding this issue. In previous research it is claimed that a crisis management team should include the personalities of an idea generator, a communicator, a “no-sayer”, a protocol keeper and a humanist, which should be identified before putting together the team. Our sample does not quite agree upon this, instead it is suggested that that the different members naturally fall into these personalities, when the team has been put together. From this we conclude that the findings of previous studies do not correlate with those of the empirical data on the issue of identifying the different personalities before putting together the team. However, we could see a correlation regarding the fact that these personalities do exist and that they are all, to a certain extent, important to have in a crisis communication team.

On the issue of identifying a decision-maker, we can draw the conclusion that the empirical data agrees with the core essence of what previous studies suggest. Our sample agreed upon the fact that a company should identify one decision-maker in the crisis management team. However, it was found that it might be hard to designate the role of a decision-maker to a certain person, other than the CEO, since the CEO always has the final responsibility in making big decisions within an organisation.

Below the most significant conclusions regarding a crisis management team are listed.

- This research has shown that the members of a crisis management team are selected solely based on their rank, position and knowledge within the corporation.
This research has further revealed that within the selected sample a crisis management team consists of the persons responsible for the different operative areas involved in the crisis.

6.3 HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION PREPARE AND TRAIN ITS MANAGEMENT FOR A CORPORATE CRISIS?

In previous research it is stated that an organisation should have a program for training and preparing its personnel for crisis. In our study we found that our sample do not have an established training and preparation program, but that there are some issues that employees are taught in terms of handling a crisis. The conclusions that can be drawn from this are that, what is stated in previous studies does not fit completely with what can be found in the empirical data. Although conducting certain steps to prepare and train its personnel for handling crisis, it is not considered to be crucial to have an established crisis training and preparation program, with specific steps to follow, within an organisation.

The first step to follow in a crisis training and preparation program, according to previous studies, is to conduct theoretical training. When comparing previous research with empirical data, we found a mismatch. Our research indicates that this step is not important for a company to consider when training and preparing its personnel for a crisis.

In the case of brainstorming, we found that the empirical data verifies what was found in previous studies. Our findings regarding this issue will therefore be that brainstorming should be a part of a crisis training and preparation program.

On the issue of establishing crisis plans and manuals, on a corporate level, the empirical data disagrees with what is being suggested in previous studies. However, our sample agreed upon the fact that there should exist some sort of plans and manuals on how to act when facing a crisis, but that these should be on a local level and not common for the entire corporation. This research suggests that crisis plans and manuals should exist within an organisation, but that these plans should be on a local level. One general crisis plan, common for the whole organisation, will be difficult to obtain.

In the case of media training, a strong correlation exists between the empirical data and previous research. Our research shows that media training is a very important part of preparing and training personnel for corporate crisis.

On the issue of simulations, the empirical data verifies the core essence of previous research. Our findings show that it is very important to carry out simulations in order to train and prepare its personnel for a crisis. These simulations should however be conducted on a local level, since it may be nearly impossible to carry out simulations where the entire organisation participates.

When comparing previous studies with the empirical data, regarding the importance of carrying out audits, no correlation can be seen. Our study shows that these kinds of audits, which include checking top-of-the-head knowledge, would be difficult to carry out. Our chosen company did not find audits to be a relevant part of a training and preparation program for crisis.
Below the most significant conclusions regarding a crisis training and preparation program are listed.

- Our research showed that crisis plans and manuals are not established on a corporate level, however evidence suggested that such plans and manuals exist on a local level.
- This study revealed that multinational organisations consider media training to be an important part of preparing and training its personnel for corporate crisis.
- Evidence suggested that crisis simulations are conducted, but only on a local level.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS

In this final section we will give our recommendations, which are based on the findings of this research, to the management of companies who one day may need to handle public opinion during a corporate crisis. We will also present implications for theory and future.

6.4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

This study has investigated how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis. The implications for management concern both the specific company in our sample and other companies facing or preparing for a crisis.

The findings of this study indicate that it is advisable for geographically diverse companies to have crisis communication plans established on local levels of the organisation. When these plans are established there are a number of issues that need be included. The issues that we found to be the most important include the establishment and conveyance of a key message during a crisis and the setting up of a public information centre. Furthermore it is important to consider the needs of the media. An organisation should try to maintain a constant flow of information. If this is not possible it should try to supply the media with “pre-made” information rather than speculate on important issues. To conclude the implications for management, regarding a crisis communication plan, we believe that an organisation should not overlook the possibility of using the union as a channel of communication during a crisis.

On the issue of establishing a crisis management team the findings of this research pointed to the fact that the members of a crisis management team should be picked based upon the different persons’ rank, knowledge and position within the company. This research further indicated that one of the persons included in the crisis management team should be trained in spotting stress symptoms in order to avoid psychological breakdowns among the team members.

When preparing and training its management for crises one of the most important issues for an organisation to consider is to conduct media training. Media training is important due to the fact that it is not always the most experienced and the best prepared person that will be interviewed in times of crisis, it is important that as many as possible, within an organisation, knows how to deal with the media. Furthermore it is advisable to conduct crisis simulations and establish crisis plans and manuals on a local level. Our research shows that it is nearly impossible to carry out simulations where the entire organisation participates.
6.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Our overall purpose with this thesis was to gain a better understanding of how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis. In order to fulfill this purpose we explored how an organisation handles public opinion during a corporate crisis. In order to explore this issue, we have described a crisis communication plan, the actors involved in a crisis management team and how an organisation trains and prepares its management for a corporate crisis. When we analysed the empirical data and drew our conclusions we began to explain these issues for the reader and by doing so we feel that we have reached our purpose.

6.4.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After writing this thesis we have found a few areas where we would like to see further research carried out. These areas are listed below.

- The findings of this research have highlighted the problems of designating a single spokesperson during a crisis were highlighted. Due to this it would be interesting to see some research carried out in the area of “how a geographically diverse organisation communicates during a crisis.”

- In this thesis it was shown that the Union could be used as a channel of communication with the employees during a crisis. This is something that we had not expected, but found to be very interesting. Due to the fact that this is not brought up in previous studies we feel that “the use of the union in times of crisis” would be an interesting topic for further research.

- In this thesis we have looked upon simulations as a part of a crisis training and preparation program. We drew the conclusion that these may be hard to conduct on a corporate level, due to the fact that it is hard to simulate crises and how they affect the top management of a global organisation. It would however be interesting to see future studies on this subject. We would like to see an explorative study on “how should a crisis simulation program be designed in order to be applicable on a corporate level within a globally diverse company”. 
REFERENCE LIST


**Interviews**

Personal interview with Mr. Lennart Marklund, Executive Officer of Information at Boliden Limited, 13.00, May 23rd.

Personal interview with Dr. Vagn Englyst, Department of Occupational Health at Boliden Limited, 09.00, May 24th 2000.

**Other sources**


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Guide

APPENDIX 2: Intervju Guide
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Background

- Corporation background
- Position of the interviewee

2. How can a crisis communication plan be described?

- Designate a spokesperson
  - senior position (top executive)
  - someone that has the authority to speak for the organization and that the media trusts

- Consider the needs of the media
  - meet print and broadcast deadlines
  - constant flow of information

- Communicate with all publics affected, not just the media
  - employees
  - customers
  - suppliers
  - community leaders
  - shareholders
  - other publics

- Do not deny that a crisis exists, assume responsibility

- Set up a media and information center

- Monitor the media
  - is the organization’s viewpoint being accurately reported?
  - what is said about the crisis?

- Act promptly
  - communicate immediately with the media

- Convey a key message
  - have a key message, independently of who you talk to

- Be honest
  - revealing facts to the public

- Anything to add

3. How can the actors involved in a crisis management team be described?

- Executive officers
  - composition of the team
- Idea generator
  - a creative person

- Communicator, single spokesperson
  - speeds up the flow of information
  - handles the communication within the group and between the group and the media

- “No-sayer”
  - a person who constantly points out negative aspects of ideas and suggestions

- Protocol keeper
  - wants to put everything on paper

- Humanist
  - always takes the human aspects of the problem into account

- Decision maker
  - should be selected first

- Anything to add

4. How does an organization prepare and train its management for a corporate crisis?

- Theoretical training
  - gets management to think about crisis and the psychologies involved
  - agree upon a common definition of a crisis

- Brainstorming
  - crisis that may hit the organization and possible response alternatives
  - the team ask themselves questions and come up with answers in order to develop a logical plan

- Planning
  - plans are written down

- Media training
  - training the spokespeople in crisis interview techniques

- Simulations
  - assessing the team’s strengths and weaknesses
  - keeping the team crisis-aware

- Audits
  - unannounced tests of the team members’ top-of-the-head knowledge of crisis procedures
  - check that changeable data in the manual are kept up to date

- Anything to add
INTERVJU GUIDE

1. Bakgrund

- Företagets bakgrund
- Den intervjuade personens position i företaget

2. Hur kan en kommunikations plan för kriser beskrivas?

- Utse en talesman
  - hög position (någon i ledningen)
  - någon som har befogenhet att tala för organisationen och som medias litar på
- Tänk på medias behov
  - möt skrift och sändnings deadlines
  - konstant flöde av information
- Kommunicera med alla berörda, inte bara media
  - anställda
  - kunder
  - leverantörer
  - kommunalpolitiker etc
  - aktieägare
  - allmänheten
- Förneka inte att en kris existerar, ta ansvar
- Sätt upp ett media center
- Övervaka media
  - blir organisationens synpunkter framlagda korrekt?
  - vad sägs om krisen?
- Agera snabbt
  - kommunicera omedelbart med media
- Framför ett grundbudskap
  - ha ett grundbudskap, oavsett vem du talar med
- Var ärlig
  - avslöja fakta för allmänheten
- Något att tillägga

3. Hur kan aktörerna som är involverade i en krisanteringings grupp beskrivas?

- Höga beslutsfattare
  - sammansättningen av krisanteringings gruppen
Idé kläckare
- kreativ person

Kommunikatör, en enskild talesman
- skyndar på kommunikationsflödet
- hanterar kommunikationen inom gruppen och mellan gruppen och media

Nejsägare
- en person som konstant pekar ut de negativa aspekterna av varje idé eller förslag som läggs fram

Protokollförare
- en person som vill fästa allt på papper

Humanist
- en person som alltid tar hänsyn till de mänskliga aspekterna i varje problem

Beslutsfattare
- den som bör utses först

Något att tillägga

4. Hur förbereder och tränar en organisation sin ledningspersonal för en företagskris?

Teoretisk träning
- får ledningspersonalen att tänka på kriser och de psykologier som är inblandade
- kommer fram till en gemensam definition på en kris

Brainstorming
- kriser som kan drabba organisationen och möjliga åtgärds alternativ
- gruppen ställer sig frågor och kommer fram till svar på dessa för att kunna utveckla en logisk plan

Planering
- planer skrivs ner

Media träning
- träna talesmän i olika krisintervju tekniker

Simuleringar
- bedöma gruppens styrkor och svagheter
- håller gruppen kris medveten

Granskningar/Tester
- oannonserade tester av gruppens grundkunskaper i krisåtgärder (vad de minns/"har i huvudet")
- granska att förnyelsebar data är aktuell (up to date)

Något att tillägga