



# Managing Disruption

## *Summary*

A review of the arrangements for managing disruption is usually undertaken following regular and sustained disruptive events. These events lead to significant performance impacts for customers and a review can be useful when it is not clear that lessons from these events are being captured and procedural changes made to improve future performance in this area. The review can capture any gaps in:

- the strategy or vision for managing disruption and ownership across the business;
- any existing initiatives in place and their effects;
- embedding of key processes within key roles;
- cohesion across functional areas in responding to disruption;
- awareness of roles and responsibilities during disruption; and
- fitness for purpose of the existing arrangements.

The review may help in translating feedback and research to better understand customers' concerns into real action to meet their aspirations and deliver the opportunities for growth and expansion to meet emerging needs.

## *Methodology*

The most significant threat to service delivery is disruption. Transport providers must make every effort to minimise the effects of disruption. When disruption occurs, whether minor, major, planned or unplanned, transport providers need to be prepared to deal with every eventuality with confidence and ensure that they:

- put the customer first in decision making;
- keep employees and customers fully informed of progress in dealing with an incident and service recovery throughout its course;
- be prepared at every level and in every role to manage disruption in whatever form; and
- be an industry leader in the field of managing disruption.



Customers are usually very clear about their view on the management of disruption yet it remains a critical challenge for transport providers if they are to meet and exceed this expressed customer need. In order to achieve this aspiration they need to ensure that:

- processes, procedures and systems cover all eventualities and are able to meet the needs of customers and staff;
- contingency plans are in place that deal with disruption to a degree of depth that supports decision making;
- training and resources cater for the needs of every employee in meeting the needs of customers during disruption, including information provision;
- customer information is provided that is consistently timely, freely available and useful; and
- measures of response to disruption are in place along with an effective lessons learnt process to support continuous improvement.

Most importantly such a strategy signals commitment to ensuring that this very important issue is managed with and resourced to the satisfaction of the key stakeholders. It requires the commitment of everyone associated with operations so stakeholder engagement is the key.

In order to achieve a step change in the management of disruption, a management systems approach should be taken to address this complex problem. In addition to clear strategy and policy intent, a series of processes should be developed and documented to set out key roles and responsibilities at times of disruption. This enables a structured and consistent approach to be taken in the event of disruption and facilitated measurement of performance and continuous learning. A disruption management system may be used to set out key process.

A summary of the likely processes and their scope is outlined over the next two pages:



Process	Summary
Policy	Sets out company strategy and policy relating to management of disruption.
Planned Disruption	Sets out the arrangements for identifying, assessing, planning, resourcing and executing service provision during planned disruptive events.
Major Disruption	Sets out the arrangements for responding to major service disruption including implementation of contingency plans that are customer led. Also details how escalation of disruption from normal to minor to major disruption is managed. Additionally identifies key major disruption risk areas and actions to avoid/mitigate impact on customers.
Minor Disruption	Sets out how minor disruption should be managed to minimise/avoid impact on customers.
Service Recovery Implementation	Sets out how service recovery should be managed to ensure customer service properly balanced with the need to return to normal service considering the range of service recovery techniques, flows and timing.
Pinch points	Sets out the arrangements for avoiding disruption in high risk areas through range of proactive monitoring techniques and deployment of technical and operational staff.
On-call Arrangements	Sets out arrangements for use of on-call staff to support disruption management.
Disruption Management Centre	Sets out when and how the incident room will be initiated, its function, facilities and resourcing.
Disruption Conference Calling	Sets out how conference calls will be initiated and managed to deliver effective support to management of disruption.



Process	Summary
Customer and Staff Information	Sets out arrangements for the provision of timely information to staff and customers, the channels to be used and how information will be maintained.
Operation of information technology	Sets out how the disruption IT will be initiated, what information will be provided and how it should be used.
Disruption Resourcing Arrangements	Sets out how support resources can be requested and how these will be despatched to support the management of disruption at key locations.
Communications Team Support	Sets out how the communications support team will ensure that key media and stakeholder information is developed, issued and maintained in a timely manner.
Substitute Services	Sets out how substitute services are planned and initiated for planned and unplanned disruption.
Post Disruption Reviews	Sets out how disruption management performance will be assessed and how improvements will be identified and tracked for implementation.
Customer and Staff Feedback	Sets out how customer and staff feedback will be gathered post disruption and how this will be disseminated within the organisation to ensure staff are aware of the impact (positive and negative) on customers and staff during disruptive events.

These processes may be used to form the Disruption Management System (DMS).



Also critical to success is the development of Customer Service Contingency Plans. These plans identify the most likely disruption scenarios and their impact on customers both in journey time and journey options.

They also set out:

- where additional staff will be required;
- what information should be given to customers (a prewritten script specifically for the disruption scenario), where replacements are being provided; and
- what alternative journey options exist.

### *Implementation*

However, having processes and plans documented will achieve little without effective training and briefing. A blended learning approach to managing disruption should be adopted.

This approach takes real life scenarios and looks at these from both a customer and staff member view. Training is also cross functional to ensure cross fertilisation of views and to support cross role understanding at times of disruption.

To further support the implementation of this approach, table top exercises can be held to ensure key on-call staff and managers are aware of the arrangements and are able to implement them effectively.

### *Conclusion*

The management system approach to managing disruption provides structure to the response to disruptive events using a systematic yet pragmatic approach. It makes sure that customer information is integral to any disruption recovery providing customer service recovery in parallel as part of real time operational processes.