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By Leanne Hoagland-Smith, M.S.

With all the sales noise from value creation to sales enablement, the importance of and necessity for authentic relationships are somehow being lost. President Teddy Roosevelt once said, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Texans are now recovering from Hurricane Harvey. The impact from the loss of lives to the economy for Texas along with the rest of the nation will be felt for months, if not years, to come.

Years ago, I heard this statement: “Everything is bigger in Texas.” This is quite true, given that Texas currently generates a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$503 billion. To put this into perspective, Sweden’s 2016 GDP was \$511 billion.

Hurricane Harvey’s rainfall was bigger than most. The rainfall was a once-in-100-year event according to the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies and Dr. Shane Hubbard, a researcher at the University of Wisconsin. The economic ramifications from this hurricane range from as low as \$40 to \$60 billion per Moody Analytics to as much as \$190 billion per AccuWeather. Risk Management Solutions believes the loss will be somewhere in between \$70 to \$90 billion.

The bad news continues with FEMA expecting more than half a million people will file for disaster relief. Most tragically, this Category 4 (130 mph sustained winds) hurricane claimed the lives of 82 Texans.

The Houston area produces 14 percent of the nation’s oil. With refineries that have been taken offline or that have experienced product reduction, gasoline prices have risen. Before Harvey, U.S. fuel prices per Gas Buddy averaged under \$2.20 per gallon and began to steadily rise from August 26 to September 2. Gas Buddy predicted a national average price of \$2.49 per gallon for September 2017.

Yes, the impact of this storm's devastation is far worse than the \$2 billion in property losses caused by Hurricane Rita in 2005 or the \$10 billion in property damage by Hurricane Ike in 2008.

What we do know is the Texas people have grit. They embrace an attitude of "get it done." Some analysts predict Texas will recover more quickly and actually may be stronger economically from this storm than other states that have experienced large hurricanes. The attitude of seeing the glass half full instead of half empty comes to mind.

Those familiar with American history know the grit of Texans from the Alamo to the establishment of Texas as a Republic in 1836. On December 29, 1845, Texas became the 28th state to join the United States of America.

So you may be wondering where I am going with this article. Let me share some additional insight. After 9/11, I delivered a keynote presentation

HAVE YOU INVESTED THE TIME TO REVIEW THE CRISIS OR DISASTER PLAN WITHIN YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN?

Do your employees know what to do in a time of such calamity? Who will coordinate operations during a crisis?

to over 100 business leaders in Northwest Indiana. I asked two questions.

My first question was, "How many of you have suffered some negative economic impact from 9/11?" About 75 percent of those in attendance raised their hands.

Then I asked, "How many of those who suffered some economic loss returned to their strategic plans with the goal to revise and update those plans?" Unfortunately, less than five business owners raised their hands. Of those five, three were my clients.

During this difficult, post-Hurricane Harvey time, business owners are beyond busy cleaning up flooded stores, finding working vehicles, inventorying damaged products, and filing insurance claims and, possibly, even loan applications. They become consumed by these challenges, leaving them mired in the reeds along the river banks. They can't even see if the river has changed its course.

One of my favorite quotes is by President and General Dwight Eisenhower who said, "Plans are worthless; planning is everything." Plans are the results of planning and are subject to change. Who would have imagined the possibility of nearly 50 inches of rainfall from this storm? Cedar Bayou, Texas, recorded 51.88 inches of rain from Hurricane Harvey. Incredible amounts of rain poured from the skies, leaving homes and businesses flooded with the waters slowly receding.

If you are a business owner who is sorting through all the direct or even indirect damage from Hurricane Harvey, now is not the time to ignore the necessity for planning. Yes, it is time-consuming. Yes, it may require some outlay of cash. Yes, it must be done.

Some Texas businesses have invested the time for planning for disasters. One such business is H-E-B. This 112 year old retailer managed to open 60 of its 83 stores in Houston within hours after Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas coast.

Chip Cutter, managing editor at LinkedIn, interviewed Scott McClelland, the president of H-E-B's Houston division, shortly after the hurricane hit. The interview revealed this organization continues to be forward-thinking and appears to have a disaster plan in place to ensure minimal disruption to its supply chain during such an emergency.

H-E-B put its plan into motion Tuesday, August 29, 2017. With many employees unable to come to work, employees outside of Houston, including those in Austin, San Antonio, and Rio Grande Valley, volunteered to help clean up stores and restock necessary items.

In this interview, management knew what products were priorities for its customers such as bread, water, tuna, other canned meat, and batteries. Then mops and buckets were needed to clean up all the flooding. Frozen foods and flowers were not on people's survival lists.

All of these preparations began somewhere within this organization through its strategic planning process. Disaster preparation, or what some call crisis management, is a sub plan within many strategic plans.

H-E-B has its own bread manufacturing facility where it produces 50 different breads items. The storm reduced those 50 products to just three: white bread, wheat bread, and hot dog buns. By reducing the number of products, efficiency was increased, and far more products were able to be produced in the same time frame.

What is also interesting to learn in this interview is that H-E-B has mobile kitchens that can feed 2,000 people in an hour. These kitchens on wheels can feed first responders as well as evacuees.

McClelland also noted that H-E-B mobile kitchens reach these disaster areas sometimes before the Red Cross.

These mobile kitchens were not just put together 24 hours before this storm or any other crisis. Once again, H-E-B demonstrated forward thinking in their planning and execution.

There are crisis management lessons to be learned from H-E-B's response to Hurricane Harvey for any organization from the smallest single owner/home owner to the entrepreneur with fewer than 20 employees to much larger organizations with 50, 100, 250, or 500 plus employees. How each firm handles any crisis, be it a natural disaster or a man-made one such as a massive security breach (Equifax), will reflect its ability to stay relevant within its industry.

H-E-B clearly illustrates how a brick and mortar store can do what an online store can't do. Its dedication to

its customers, its shareholders, and its stakeholders is a testimony to Texans as well as the rest of the nation.

The question is, *can your organization survive and even thrive during such a crisis?* McClelland stated during the week that Harvey hit, sales dropped 4 percent from the previous year. That drop was due to many stores not being open. However, he predicted sales overall would be up by the end of the week. What was really interesting is that he wasn't concerned about sales as much as he was concerned about the community. The culture of H-E-B is very apparent.

Consider other questions. Have you invested the time to review the crisis or disaster plan within your strategic plan? Do your employees know what to do in a time of such calamity? Who will coordinate operations during a crisis?

For example, H-E-B has command centers in San Antonio and Houston.

Where is your command center? Who manages it?

Yes, Houston and the surrounding areas will come back stronger than before. The grit of Texans is evident through H-E-B and the hundreds of individuals, many of whom came from outside of Texas, who volunteered to help their fellow citizens and thousands of first responders.

Finally, I want to add my thanks to the Texans and the other Americans who helped not only Texans but other citizens who have suffered from these recent disasters. They continue to demonstrate why America is such a great nation. **N**

Leanne Hoagland-Smith is the Clarity Strategist, solving people and process problems. As a thought leader who challenges the status quo, she turns tomorrow's goals into today's results. Follow her on Twitter @CoachLee.