

Dealing with Risks and Threats

What steps should event strategists take to make sure they are prepared for a crisis?

By Boardroom editors



Steff Berger

Steff Berger is managing director of [VOBE — Inspires People GmbH](#), which organises events of up to 20,000 people for mainly European associations. Here the conference consultant and event planner shares her expertise in crisis management.

Is there a fixed set of counterterrorism measures for all kinds of venues and events?

Different countries have different levels of risk and threat, and therefore you need to consider the situation in each region. The nature of the event also matters: A political meeting or event with very important people will have different security standards and risk level than an industry B2B meeting. A venue's layout, access points, and location will also have an influence.

There is also a cultural aspect to this topic. [If] airport scanners, for example, [are] already accepted at a venue, [that] doesn't necessarily mean immediate acceptance at a different venue with no risk of threat.

What is the biggest challenge you face when proposing that a conference organizer implement counterterrorism measures?

The greater challenge is to get the trust and the understanding from local venues and authorities that the organizers need to be involved in the planning. We rent the venue and

we need to know that our standards ... are included, or which measures are not included, as it is our responsibility to take care of our participants. I hope in the future we will see all experts from the police, the venue, and the organizers of the event working on one complete concept together.

It is the same for crisis management: Everyone has their own plan, but finally we all run the same event together. If something bad happens, this will be seen not only by the participants but by the city, the country, and even by the whole world, so we all need to work with the same information and the same communication strategy.

Do you usually work with the local authorities?

Without involving the authorities and the venue you are not able to implement any kind of counterterrorism strategy. And it would be a big mistake not to involve them — they have specialist knowledge of their region, as well as their field. If there is a real threat, then the police and their counterterrorism experts only should be in charge. But organizers and venues need to talk to make a plan for the time until the police arrive in the case of any attack.

How do you manage to balance security without ruining the experience for the attendees?

In terms of crisis management and counterterrorism strategies, we highly recommend thinking about what could happen and to include a threat risk analysis in your planning.

Also, we advise talking with the authorities and the venue at a very early stage, in order to be prepared and to know the costs of any implementation. You may also not have the choice to not implement greater security measures. The country where your event takes place may have compulsory regulations to include certain measures, and if you do not prepare this in advance you might be denied [the required] additional budget for your event.

In countries with no potential terrorist risk, we might not implement additional visual security measures. Again, different cultures react differently to the measures and therefore you need to be careful in your implementation. And if you have decided to implement a new security standard once, then you should consider that you might need to keep that standard for future meetings.

How do you handle cyberattacks?

Luckily, we have not yet had any cyberattacks at events. I just have learned that in [the] future, cyberattacks may carry a different potency. In 2020/21 there will be around 2.5 million drones in use privately and governmentally. I am sure these will pose new risks and also new opportunities for both sides.

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