



ACTIVE SHOOTER 101:

Protecting your organization against the unthinkable

A Bryghtpath LLC Training Course



COURSE OVERVIEW

Thanks for checking out our 12 lesson Active Shooter 101 Mini-Course.

I'm Bryan Strawser, the Principal & CEO of Bryghtpath LLC. I've more than twenty years of experience in crisis management and corporate security and hold professional certifications for physical security, crisis/emergency management, and several other fields. You can learn more about [my experiences at our website](#).

When it comes to active shooter planning, training, and exercises you should know that I've lived this issue extensively. Prior to founding Bryghtpath in 2014, I led the Global Crisis Management program for a Fortune 30 retailer, where I directly managed multiple violent incidents - including active shooter situations, workplace violence incidents, and homicides.

Later in this mini-course, you'll hear [Jennifer Otremba](#), [Lindsay Ward](#), and I talk on our podcast, [Managing Uncertainty](#), about a major active shooter situation that we led together in 2012 and the lessons we took away from that incident as crisis leaders.

How to use this training material

We distribute this material as an electronic book for a reason – this PDF is filled with hyperlinks to other resources, reference material, reflection worksheets, and more!

In order to best utilize the links, we recommend either reading this material electronically so that you can click through to the links as needed – or printing a copy to read and later revisiting the electronic version in order to access the links.

LESSON ONE

Defining workplace violence: why is it dangerous?

Let's start with thinking about workplace violence and how threats within your business can lead to an active shooter situation if not properly managed.

Few events can be more terrifying than facing an active shooter in your business. Unfortunately, the number of active shooter scenarios has risen to a point where statistics are available. Per the [U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational and Safety Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#), active shooter incidents are classified as a type of workplace violence, and in fact, 403 of 4,679 fatal workplace violence incidents were classified as homicides.

While this might be concerning, it does not mean your business must operate in fear.

Instead, you need to understand workplace violence and how it relates to the possible risk of an active shooter incident.

What is workplace violence?

Workplace violence is defined as any act that threatens physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other business-disrupting behaviors in the workplace. Unfortunately, many assume workplace violence only revolves around employees becoming aggressive or displaying violent behaviors. However, any customer, passerby, previous employee or other person in your business could be capable of workplace violence.

More than 2 million Americans encounter workplace violence annually, and certain occupations tend to experience higher prevalence rates.

For example, the following workplace environments have a higher risk of workplace violence:

- Businesses operating alone or in isolated areas.
- Businesses operating at night or in areas of high crime.
- Businesses serving or selling alcohol.
- Any business that exchanges money with public.
- Any business that requires employees to deliver services to a customer's location.
- Health care professions.
- Law enforcement.
- Public service workers.

The list can go on and on. If you are selling something or interacting with people, chance is not on your side.

Why Is Workplace Violence Dangerous?

If you were talking to a customer, you do not expect to suddenly be attacked. But, it does happen. The customer could be angry over a purchase or price point. He or she could suddenly suffer a mental breakdown, or the person could simply decide that enough is enough. Unfortunately, you cannot de-escalate every possible case of workplace violence, but if you learn how to recognize its warning signs, you can help prevent it from worsening.

What about preparation for workplace violence involving active shooter planning?

Before 2000, very few active shooter incidents occurred annually, so tracking their prevalence was not a priority of the FBI. Per the [FBI](#), 160 active shooter incidents occurred in the U.S. between 2000 and 2013. Meanwhile, the annual average of active shooter situations, reports [ABC News](#), has risen to more than 20 between 2014 and 2015.

With the horrors of the Pulse Nightclub still in mind, officials have yet to release final statistics regarding the number of incidents that occurred in 2016. Thus, you cannot assume your business will avoid active shooting incidents in 2017 and beyond. Instead, you need to start preparing a response to workplace violence incidents and complete appropriate active shooter planning and training.

For example, conducting a threat assessment of what factors, such as the factors listed in the aforementioned **bulleted list**, increase your likelihood of encountering workplace violence can help you determine the level of risk you face.

What you need to do immediately

Regardless of political, religious or other group affiliations, your business may not be as safe from workplace violence as you think, and an incident of workplace violence is a precursor to active shooter incidents. Obviously, not all cases of workplace violence will result in homicides or active shooter scenarios, but it is better to prepare now than wait until you are faced with a life-threatening situation. More than anything else, remember these five keys to understanding workplace violence:

- Any type of violent or threatening behavior is workplace violence.
- Workplace Violence is not a "phase" that someone is going through.
- Report all incidents immediately to authorities.
- Do not give up your business without a fight.
- Prepare yourself and your staff for how to respond to workplace violence threats incidents, including active shooter situations.

Time for reflection

After each lesson, we encourage you to take a few minutes and reflect on what you've learned.

To aid you in this process, we've created a brief set of questions that you can complete online and submit. You'll get an e-mailed copy of your responses in a few minutes to keep on-hand. We've found that our subscribers really enjoy taking a few minutes to type out their thoughts and learnings from each lesson, and then file away the e-mailed responses to use as notes - or as a catalyst for future action.

[Click here to complete today's reflection & mastery questions.](#)

In the next lesson, we'll be delving into why you need strong policies and plans in place to deal with threats or incidents of workplace violence.

LESSON TWO

Why your company needs strong workplace violence policies and plans in place

In our previous lesson, you learned about why workplace violence threats and incidents can be so dangerous to your business and workforce. In lesson two, we're going to talk about why you need strong workplace violence policies and plans in place - even for small businesses.

When organizations put together their internal policies and plans, it's easy to overlook workplace violence. It's certainly a concerning thought, but it isn't something your particular organization really needs to worry about. After all, you'd rather spend time educating and training your employees on something that adds a little more value.

Unfortunately, this train of thought is way off base. Having strong policies in place for workplace violence is important for any organization. Violent altercations transform an organization, causing irreparable damage and leaving you vulnerable.

Here are three key reasons that your company needs to adopt powerful workplace policies and plans immediately:

Workplace Violence is More Common Than You Think

Overall, [violence has steadily declined since the early 2000's](#). Both non-workplace violence and violence against non-employees have declined by an enormous amount. Workplace violence is also on the decline, but it has been much more gradual. By 2009, the last year that such statistics are available, we still had an estimated 572,000 nonfatal violent workplace crimes. In fact, these incidents covered about a quarter of all such crimes for U.S. citizens over the age of 16.

It's easy to think that while this is a national problem, your employees are responsible, caring individuals. Your workplace is safe. [A survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management found just the opposite.](#) One-third of employees they surveyed were concerned about violent crime in their organization, and two-thirds claimed that there had been at least one violent incident in that organization within the last several years.

Since these violent altercations happen so often at work, you have a responsibility toward your employees and your community to safeguard against them. As overall violent crime decreases rapidly, you can help workplace violence move in the same direction.

Knowledge is power

Having strong policies, plans, and training in place for workplace violence is critical since it's the single best way to nip potential altercations in the bud. The United States Department of Labor claims that [simply being able to identify the risk factors of workplace violence is enough to minimize or completely eradicate it.](#)

For example, here are some common causes of increased risk for workplace violence:

- *Overnight or late shifts.* Violence crimes are more likely to occur in the late evening or early morning, and the workplace is no exception.
- *Monetary exchanges.* If your staff is directly handling money, there's a possibility a criminal will attempt to use violence to grab it from them.
- *Working in small groups.* If somebody is working alone or in an isolated area, there's a greater opportunity for violence to occur.
- *Annual performance reviews.* As you provide feedback to your employees, some of them may be unhappy or disagree with it. This leads to an increased opportunity for violence.

The Costs Are Substantial

Even if you're only worried about the bottom-line, there's still a compelling argument for workplace violence policies and training. You'll need to spend time and resources putting everything in place and educating your workforce, but those costs are minuscule compared to the threat of a violence incident. On average, [companies in the U.S. spend a total of \\$4.2 billion each year due to workplace violence.](#)

Employee morale is going to suffer immediately after an incident. Any employees who were involved will need time off, and may even decide to leave the company. Publicly, your organization will have egg on its face, and the value of your brand will suffer. After everything is considered, the costs of workplace violence can reach well over \$36 billion annually.

Clearly, having a strong workplace violence policy in place is critical to the future of your organization.

Time for Reflection

[Click here to take a few minutes to answer questions for reflection from today's lesson.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll be looking at examples of some notable workplace violence incidents that occurred in the first half of 2017.

LESSON THREE

Six notable workplace violence incidents so far in 2017

In our previous lesson, you learned about why your organization needs strong workplace violence policies and plans in place for threatening behavior and incidents. Today we're going to look at six unfortunate incidents from the first half of 2017 as practical examples of what other organizations have been through with workplace violence.

Workplace violence takes many different shapes and forms, ranging from theft or the threat of violence to full-blown shootings and murder. Despite the amount of time spent studying these incidents, workplace violence remains [extremely](#) difficult to predict, even for experts. The best way to protect yourself, your workers, and your company is by simply learning how to prepare for these incidents and know how to respond when necessary.

To remind you of the looming threat workplace violence presents, we have gathered more examples of recent incidents from companies much like your own.

Here are six violence workplace incidents that have already taken place in 2017:

1. North Park Elementary School

Last month in San Bernardino, CA, a man entered a special needs classroom at a local elementary school and opened fire. He was the estranged husband of a teacher there, and the classroom was hers. In his rage, [he shot her to death and two young students also were shot](#). One of the two students, a boy who was only eight years old, died after he was admitted to the emergency room. After opening fire on the classroom, the man turned the gun on himself and committed suicide.

You don't need to worry about just your employees and patrons. If somebody is having problems at home, or has a reason to believe that somebody could be upset with them, it's important to encourage them to alert you and any necessary personnel. This shooter, for example, checked into the school's front office and appeared to have followed all of their procedures.

Had they been alerted that this person was an estranged husband and no longer a loving spouse, they may have had the necessary knowledge to deny him access and take other actions.

2. Dignity Team Health

Another incident last month occurred in an office tower located in Dallas, Texas. A 60-year-old man entered his workplace, pulled out a gun, and [shot his supervisor to death](#). The victim had just been married and was a mother to seven children. The perpetrator didn't have any criminal history and there wasn't any indication that he was going to commit a crime or had any issues with his supervisor.

This illustrates exactly how difficult it is to predict a violent workplace incident. An older gentleman without a criminal history and no apparent issues with his supervisor doesn't seem likely to be a shooter. In order to truly protect ourselves and our employees, we must remain vigilant at all times and always be prepared to take action against violence whenever necessary.

3. Jordan's Fish & Chicken

Less than a week into 2017, one of the year's first [violent workplace incidents happened at a Jordan's Fish & Chicken restaurant in Indianapolis, IN](#). Early in the morning just after 1 a.m., officers were called into the restaurant and found two men dead. Surveillance footage shows two armed robbers entered the restaurant, hopped over the food counter and then shot the two men in the back of the kitchen. They completed the robbery and immediately left the store.

In this case, it's difficult to say whether or not training could have prevented violence. Even then, it's important to train any employees dealing directly with money and the public on how to handle robberies. It's important to give the robbers what they ask for and never place yourself in any danger. By simply handing them whatever they want and remaining submissive, you'll pose less of a threat and mitigate the chance of unnecessary violence.

4. Jared the Galleria of Jewelry

Later this January, a lady was shot in a jewelry store located in Henderson, NV. An armed robber entered the store and was confronted by an armed security guard employed by the store. He aimed and fired at the robber, but [his shot missed and instead hit an employee](#). She was rushed to the hospital but tragically passed away shortly after. The security guard did not face any charges. Instead, the robber, if caught, will face the murder charges as it was their act that caused the incident.

This is especially tragic as an innocent life was taken by somebody who was only trying to do the right thing. While this guard might not have been at fault, it's critically important to keep in mind the safety of employees and innocent bystanders when hiring and training security staff. If they are too aggressive, they can put even more lives at risk.

5. Yanfeng Automotive Interiors

Only a couple weeks ago in Fountain Inn, SC, [a man fired gunshots in an automotive plant](#). Two employees there had an argument and one man pulled out a gun and fired multiple shots. The man struck two employees, but neither had fatal wounds. The shooter had a criminal background that includes involuntary manslaughter and a prison term of 15 years.

It's important to have a management team, supported by a threat response team and process, that is able to identify potential conflicts and de-escalate them quickly. In this instance, the shooter was involved in a workplace argument, which escalated into violence. Given his history shows a propensity for violence, a proper threat management process could have helped nip the incident in the bud.

6. Pine Kirk Care Center

At the very beginning of May, [a police chief and two hostages were killed](#) at Pine Kirk Care Center in Kirkersville, OH. The shooter took two hostages in an alley behind the care center and eventually killed both of them along with the police chief during the incident. He later turned the gun and shot himself. Both of the hostage victims worked as nurses at the care center.

Situations like this are difficult to control and almost impossible to predict. The best thing you can do is prepare your staff to act the right way in any potentially violent situation through strong planning and regular exercises.

Time for Reflection

[Click here to take a few minutes to complete today's reflection questions.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll be taking a look at how to recognize a potential active shooter threat in the making.

LESSON FOUR

Recognizing a potential Active Shooter in the making

In the previous lesson, we looked at several examples of recent workplace violence incidents. Today we're going to talk about an uncomfortable topic - how to recognize a potential active shooter in the making.

It's easy to look back on the bad things in life and think of how you might have handled things differently. Yet, an active shooter incident is not something to reflect on only after it happens. There is a connotation that every active shooter plans to commit an attack for weeks or months in advance. This is not true. One incident of workplace violence could catalyze a catastrophe, and you need to understand how recognizing an active shooter in the making must be part of your threat assessment.

An active shooter can select targets without reason and intends on killing or harming as many people as possible. Per the [FBI](#), active shooter incidents do not involve domestic violence, but that implies a lack of warning signs. Rather than waiting for an incident to happen, you need to know a few things about what does and does not cause an active shooter to go on a killing spree.

There is not a “standard profile” of active shooters

From the tragedy in Sandy Hook to the victims of the Pulse Nightclub massacre, you might think authorities have created a profile of typical active shooters. Unfortunately, the differences between active shooters in past incidents are missing a pattern. Per the [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center](#), fewer than 13 percent of active shooters engaged in threatening behaviors before committing an attack. However, this means that up to 13 percent of active shooter incidents may have been prevented. Somewhere along the way, training and threat assessment fell short of ensuring staff or appropriate personnel could recognize the warning signs of an active shooter.

For example, 19 percent of active shooters exhibited stalking or harassing behaviors. This includes committing physical assaults, threatening bodily harm with a weapon or repeated physical violence to intimate partners. Essentially, this contradicts the stereotypical trends in active shooter personas, but it also indicates the presence of violent behaviors before committing an incident. So, certain signs and indicators of active shooter risk can be derived and included in routine threat assessments and active shooter training programs.

Who may become an active shooter?

Anyone can become an active shooter. Regardless of race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, personal beliefs, business practices and more, the risk of becoming an active shooter is present. Even those you do not suspect can suddenly become your worst nightmare, threatening you, your employees, your customers and even other businesses in your neighborhood. But before engaging in a violent act, an active shooter may display the following behaviors:

- Suicidal or self-injurious thoughts or actions, such as cutting or intentional overdose.
- Homicidal thoughts or actions.
- Engrossment in violent literature, such as weapons' magazines or violent-gear YouTube channels.
- Withdrawal from social activities.
- Development of a personal vendetta against a person, place or thing, including your business.
- Experiencing a profound loss in the time before the attack, such as the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship or employment termination.

It is also important to remember that these behaviors are **not a requirement to committing an active shooter incident**. In other words, even people who have not expressed any of these behaviors can still commit an attack. Additionally, most active shooters do not have a previous criminal history involving violent crimes.

When you should act

IMMEDIATELY.

There is another disturbing fact about active shooter incidents that you might not have realized. **Up to 70 percent of all incidents occur in a business or commerce setting.**

It may seem like they occur in schools or personal settings often, but they occur right where you work more than anywhere else. More importantly, most incidents do not end in a gunfight between police and the shooter.

They end when the shooter stops firing, often turning the gun onto the shooter as a means of suicide. But, what if the situation could be stopped earlier? That's where your role as an executive or manager in your company comes into play.

Next steps

The best way to stop an active shooter from killing you and those in your business is to stop the event from happening in the first place. Let your team know the risk they face, and ensure every person in your business understands active shooter incidents and how to respond. They need to know how to recognize a possible active shooter from behaviors. 13 percent is not much, but what if your business is one of those that could have fallen into that category?

You cannot waste time with active shooter planning or training. It needs to be ingrained in the fundamentals of your business. Depending on your industry, you already have plenty of training required by the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#), such as training to avoid pathogen exposure in the medical field.

Your business takes on these typical risks because the world cannot function in a state of fear or panic. Yet, every employee knows the basics of wearing gloves and trashing items appropriately. If you work with electrical wires, you understand the need to disconnect power before performing maintenance. So, why wouldn't you give them the upper hand by offering and completing active shooter training today? Think of active shooter training like maintenance for your company. It might not be needed today or tomorrow, but at some point, it's going to be needed.

One last thing: **six of the active shooting incidents since 2001 were committed by women.**

Never assume someone that is threatening your **business** is **simply** having a bad day and not likely to commit an **attack**.

Time for reflection

[Click here to take a few minutes to answer today's reflection questions.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll begin discussing active shooter planning by walking through important elements to consider for your plan.

LESSON FIVE

Protect your business and employees with an Active Shooter Plan

In the last lesson, you learned about the uncomfortable topic of how to recognize a potential future active shooter - focusing on behaviors and threats as an early detection method.

Today, we're going to talk about the elements of an active shooter plan - a topic we'll explore in more depth over the coming lessons.

Business survival requires the ability to remain proactive in response to market opportunities and threats. Unfortunately, personal survival in the workplace may necessitate similar tactics. While many companies train staff members on the latest selling techniques or computer models, few take the necessary time to prepare their employees to survive a workplace active shooting incident. This oversight could result in tragic consequences and significant legal costs.

The active shooter

The term "Active Shooter" became part of America's lexicon after the [Columbine High School massacre](#) in April, 1999. Police response at the school was consistent with standard operational protocols but they proved ineffective in addressing this new threat scenario.

Active shooters have no financial motive and no intent to take hostages. Their goal is to kill as many people as possible before they are stopped. Law enforcement agencies across the globe have implemented new protocols to deal with this threat and businesses must do the same.

A Growing Concern

One hundred and sixty active shooting incidents occurred in the US between 2000 and 2013, leaving 1043 victims either dead or wounded. Nearly 80% of these events occurred in the workplace and include: 73 at businesses, 39 at schools, 16 at government sites, and four at health care facilities.

In February of 2016, three people were killed and 10 wounded at a lawn care company in [Kansas](#). The shooter was a current employee of the business. Another employee stated: "You think you're safe at work and you're not. It's just scary."

Legal implications

OSHA requires that employers provide a [workplace](#) that "is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees." In 2011, OSHA published several directives regarding violence in the workplace and employers can be cited for failure to implement appropriate safety protocols.

Several civil suits have been filed against businesses by victims of a workplace active shooting incident or their families. Most cite the OSHA requirement identified above as well as lack of a specific active shooting plan and training by the company.

Active Shooter Plan

Every business should have an active shooter plan to protect their workers, customers, and company. At a minimum, this plan should include:

Identification of Potential Threats

Often there are warning signs of potential violence in the workplace, including active shooters. Create a list of behaviors, statements or circumstances, such as staff downsizing, that could trigger this type of incident. The goal is to raise awareness, not paranoia.

Active Shooter Protocols

An active shooter plan should include what actions might be taken during an active shooting scenario. Be mindful that the situations will be chaotic and presenting options for employees is better than establishing requirements.

- Identify a [shelter](#). Most buildings have areas that are easy to secure. Identify these and designate them as shelters.
- Create a code. Use a phrase such as "Mr. Black is on line 7" to alert employees to an active shooter situation.
- Include [Run, Hide, Fight](#). These three options present the best chances of survival in an active shooting scenario. Run – Take a cell phone and leave everything else behind. Run towards exits but be alert for danger as the shooter may be waiting to ambush people as they leave the building. Hide – Turn off your cell phone and find as secure or hidden a location as possible. Fight – Everything around you can be used as a weapon and there is safety in numbers. If confrontation is inevitable, don't hesitate to harm the shooter and use whatever is available to defend yourself.
- Contact [law enforcement](#). Don't assume someone has called 911. Make this part of your plan. Also include what employees need to do, such as keep their hands raised and empty, when approached by officers.

Aftermath Protocol

Develop [aftermath protocols](#) to address communication, safety, building security and other issues after an incident. Where should people meet? How will you determine who may have been injured or killed? How will you contact other personnel or employee families? Do you have a crisis communication plan to implement? Be prepared for what comes next.

Training

Education and training of your staff is critical for several reasons. Specifically, training:

- Prepares people to survive an active shooting incident.
- Identifies problems or inaccuracies in the plan that can be addressed.
- Keeps the plan current to changes in operations or building remodels.
- Protects the company from additional liability.

Sadly, active shooter threats are a part of our lives. OSHA's regulations and recommendations place employers on alert that this risk must be taken seriously. Be proactive by creating and implementing an active shooter plan.

Time for reflection

[Click here to take a few minutes to answer the reflection questions for today's lesson.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll focus on the role of your managers and leaders in an active shooter situation - a topic you'll want to ensure is well covered in your plans.

LESSON SIX

Active Shooter Training: Management Essentials

In our last lesson, we talked about the basics of an active shooter plan. Today we're going to go deeper by learning more about the role of managers and leaders in an active shooter event and how to best train that unique audience.

Run. Hide. Fight.

These words may not seem like much of a battle plan when it comes to dealing with the threat of an active shooter incident in your business. However, they define the fundamentals of responding to an active shooter, and if your employees and managers do not understand them, fatalities during an incident could rise. Fortunately, you can mitigate the risk of an unforeseen active shooter by understanding these active shooter planning essentials.

Active shooter training essentials begin with assessment and review

Like any risk, you need to know where you stand before you can make improvements, and the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) echoes this sentiment in federal doctrine regarding active shooter events. The security and threat assessment reflects an in-depth review of how the risk of an active shooter incident relates to your business.

For example, is your business located in an area with a history of violent crimes, or does your occupation, such as health care, put your employees at a higher risk of experiencing an incident? Upon establishing likelihood, you can begin the process of evaluating the remaining elements of an active shooter plan, which include the following:

- Preparedness training.
- Communication plans.
- Policy governing actions to take during an incident.
- Active shooter training and exercises.
- Post-incident recovery plans.

If your plan does not include these elements, it may indicate higher risk of a failed response to an active shooter incident. In other words, staff members may not know how to respond, leading to additional loss of life.

Remember that active shooter incidents are different from armed robbery or other violent situations. However, such situations could evolve into an active shooter incident. Thus, plans for responding to armed robbery or other violent situations should not be considered replacement plans for responding to an active shooter.

Communicate with managers about key concerns involving active shooter training

Depending on your work schedule, managerial staff may have additional concerns and information that affect your risk assessment. This is especially true in businesses that operate continually, such as 24/7 diners or health care facilities. Ask managers for their input and feedback regarding existing active shooter plans or needs to enhance security during night hours.

Include managerial staff in training exercises

Business owners often make assumptions about managerial staff, such as providing basic materials for managers to conduct training sessions with lower-level employees. However, the danger of an active shooter means managers need to be involved in training exercises from both a managerial and non-managerial standpoint.

For example, managers may conduct active shooter training exercises before conducting additional training with other team members. This is in addition to any enterprise-wide training exercises.

Discuss post-incident recovery options

When a shooter stops firing, your responsibilities in mitigating your company's reputation begin. Although no one wants to assign blame on a company publicly, there will be those who seek to rationalize a shooter's behavior by placing failure in the hands of the affected business or entity. Thus, you must have a post-incident recovery plan ready.

This plan should include protocols for providing first aid to victims, evacuating survivors from your facility and speaking to the media. Depending on your business's location, local police or authorities may handle some media coverage, but you will have a say in how your business will manage the event's effects.

Incorporate the Active shooter plan into existing protocols

Existing protocols exist for different emergencies in each department, and an active shooter plan should be tailored to the needs of each department or person. Some may refer to this part of training and preparedness as a personal active shooter plan.

A personal active shooter refers to the preparedness actions individual employees take to help plan for a possible incident, which includes knowing evacuation routes from common areas and individual work areas, such as personal offices.

Another mistake businesses make revolves around creating standalone active shooter training plans. Other emergencies may accompany an incident, such as fires or explosives in the worst-case scenarios.

Consequently, business owners need to integrate active shooter training into standard training protocols, showing how they relate and why sets each type of disaster or event apart.

Managers are your front-line means of implementing and updating active shooter training plans

Workplace violence may precede an active shooter incident, so your managers need to know how to respond to such incidents as well. This includes reporting the incident to executive-level leadership, local authorities and following through on any possible charges or other legal and security options. Furthermore, managers need to understand why active shooter training is essential to ensuring employee and customer safety. By following the essentials of active shooter planning and training, you can reduce risk to your company and possibly save lives.

More than anything else, remember the proper response concept.

Run. Hide. Fight.

Reflecting on today's lesson

[Click here to answer the reflection questions for this lesson.](#)

In the next lesson, we'll focus on ways to help your visitors, guests, or consumers respond to an active shooter incident in your organization.

LESSON SEVEN

Caught in the line of fire: 8 ways to help consumers respond to an Active Shooter incident

In the last lesson, you learned about the role of managers and leaders in an active shooter incident. Today, we're going to focus on how to help consumers respond to an active shooter situation at your organization. The same lessons are also applicable to guests or visitors to an impacted location.

Active shooter planning helps your organization mitigate the risks and damages associated with active shooter incidents. Unfortunately, your active shooter plans are incomplete if you do not consider third-party victims or witnesses to the event. In other words, your team needs to understand how to help customers and visitors respond, as explained by the [Department of Homeland Security](#), if an active shooter event occurs.

Unfortunately, there is not any definitive source on steps to protect your customers, excluding government-mandated areas that require security, such as jails, prisons or transportation centers. This can make you feel lost trying to figure how to help those caught in the vicinity or crosshairs of an active shooter in your business, so use these tips to keep those without training from becoming a fatality.

1. Keep evacuation plans posted and free of obstruction

Evacuation plans and active shooter plans should be posted throughout your business. This will help customers and new employees respond in the event of an attack. Consider posting plans at the entrances, around the perimeter, near the customer-accessible areas and around emergency exits.

2. Install an alert system for emergencies, including active shooter incidents

Federal or state laws require most businesses to install fire alarms or other alert systems, and modern systems can have customized alerts to help those in your facility understand what is happening. Ultimately, any alarm should signal an evacuation, but unit-specific or zone-specific alarms can be used to identify an active shooter's current location in your business.

3. Instruct employees to help customers run and hide, assuming it is safe

Employees will be the first people to react if an incident occurs. They should help customers get out of your facility if possible. If not, employees can help with barricading doors and entryways to keep an active shooter from claiming more lives.

4. Spread awareness in your community about active shooter planning

Your customers know your business, but what difference does your business make in your community? Consider hosting a community event to sponsor public active shooter training. This will help spread awareness, which will hopefully prevent future incidents. In addition, it can help some customers know how to respond.

5. Ensure employees know where to hide

This is obvious, but panic has a way of making the obvious seem out of touch. Go through possible hiding places with your staff members. For example, ask staff members to list appropriate hiding places as part of their active shooter planning exercises.

6. Make emergency evacuation routes obvious

Emergency evacuation routes need to be obvious. In other words, "EXIT" signage and clear paths are critical to helping the most people escape from an active shooter. Clear paths are also critical to helping police stop an active shooter.

7. Use video and intercom systems to distract active shooters from a secure location

Video and intercom systems are vital tools in aiding police and stopping an active shooter. If your staff members can get to your security area, they can use these tools to distract or startle the shooter. However, this is only possible if the security area is away from the actual space where the shooter is.

8. Keep emergency exits unlocked during business hours

Some businesses fail to recognize the point of emergency exits by locking them during normal business hours. Although the doors should be locked from the outside, an override must be present on the inside. In other words, anyone pushing on the door's interior face for more than five or six seconds should be able to open the door. Audible alarms on these doors are key to preventing theft and other shrink from emergency exits, eliminating much of the worry that stems from their use.

Next steps

You cannot prepare every customer to respond to an active shooter incident, but you can do something by ensuring your staff members have completed an appropriate active shooter training program. Ultimately, staff members that know what to do are more likely to help customers and victims caught in the fire if an active shooter incident were to occur in your business.

Time for reflection

[Click here to take a few minutes to complete today's reflection questions on this lesson.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll focus on ideas and methods to make active shooter training effective across your organization.

LESSON EIGHT

Six tips to make enterprise-wide active shooter training successful

In the last lesson, we looked at 8 ways to help consumers, visitors, or guests respond to an active shooter incident. Today, we're going to take a look at methods and ideas to make active shooter training successful for your organization.

Conducting active shooter training across your organization is not a small task, especially if your company extends across large geographic areas. Rather than leaving your employees to fend for themselves with PowerPoint presentations exclusively on workplace violence and active shooter planning, consider using these tips to make enterprise-wide training successful.

1. Use workshops to highlight workplace violence, risk of active shooter incidents and response to active shooters

Active shooter training workshops are an easy, fast way to get your employees together to complete active shooter exercises. However, the size of the convention or event determines the size of appropriate drills. In other words, conducting one drill for 1,000 people is not effective, but using breakout sessions to conduct multiple, mini drills can address this issue. Additionally, breakout workshops and sessions can be used to teach groups how to recognize active shooter warning signs, issues involving workplace violence and how to respond during an incident.

2. Create an itinerary to help employees go through training completely

Enterprise-wide training programs should follow an itinerary. While this may seem superfluous, it will help employees keep track of what sessions have and have not been completed. More importantly, an itinerary or agenda can help you manage other training needs simultaneously.

For example, a training event might focus on the importance of customer service in preventing workplace violence over several days, giving employees more tools and techniques to manage each situation.

3. Use drills for evacuation, hiding and contacting authorities

Drills should be created to teach employees how to evacuate, hide and contact authorities in the event of an active shooter incidents. Active shooter plans should also specify what evacuate routes are appropriate for each zone in your various business facilities. Since this depends on the setup of your business, drills may be conducted both during the training event and at the physical location with that location's staff members.

4. Practice a relocation drill for industry-specific needs, such as health care facilities

Some businesses cannot simply release employees from duty following an active shooter incident. For example, health care facilities may have to relocate patients and their family members to alternate care sites. This technically falls under the evacuation drill, but you must consider the added burden of moving equipment and people from location A to location B. Additional relocation measures may be required for industry-specific needs, such as those involving chemical production or hazardous materials.

5. Make evaluation a break-out session

Evaluating the effectiveness of your active shooter plans should be your top priority. If your plan is outdated, you could miss important information that could help save the lives of your employees, yourself or even your customers. Unfortunately, getting wrapped up in training and drills leaves plan evaluation on the back-burner, so make plan evaluation an essential topic in breakout sessions during your training event.

6. Make it realistic, using props and character makeup as necessary

During an active shooter incident, there is nothing funny, nothing remarkable or enjoyable to think about. But, that does mean exercises should avoid props or the use of acting to ensure employees know how to react. Training should be as realistic as possible, excluding the use of actual weapon to complete the training.

For example, using props and character makeup as necessary may help employees recognize which participants were "wounded" during the simulation and encourage them to respond appropriately, including helping coworkers or customers evacuate, as explained by the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#). The realism experienced will provide the closest representation to a real threat possible.

Adjust your active shooter plans and training to meet your unique needs

There is not a wrong way or right way to conduct active shooter training. The important thing is that training is conducted. Obviously, your organization may have certain preferences for how you approach re-enactments, dissemination of information and training for large-scale operations. Instead of forgoing active shooter exercises and training, adjust the training plan as needed to get the most staff participation out of it. In the interim, consider using these tips to improve your enterprise-wide active shooter training plans.

Time for Reflection

[Take a few minutes and complete today's reflection questions centered on this lesson.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll be focused on how to evaluate active shooter exercises - and how to use exercises as a way to rapidly improve your planning and training over time.

LESSON NINE

How to evaluate plan effectiveness after active-shooter exercises

In the last lesson, you learned ideas, tips, and approaches to make active shooter training successful across your organization. Today, we're going to focus on evaluating your plan effectiveness after an exercise.

Having an active shooter plan ready is not enough to prevent an incident from growing worse, or even a guarantee of success during an actual event. A strong active shooter program will involve an evaluation of plan effectiveness through an after-action process following each active shooter exercise – including conducting a new threat assessment, and using drills in your business to ensure everyone understands how to respond.

Assessing your active shooter plans

An active shooter plan needs to evolve with your business. If you have multiple locations, your plan should include details for allowing employees to relocate customers or personnel following an incident. However, not every field should require staff to relocate to the second site.

For example, health care professionals may need to evacuate patients to a second care facility and provide services throughout the remainder of the day.

Meanwhile, the active shooter plan should provide directions for each class of employee, including managers, supervisors, custodians and office staff. Your plan should go further by encouraging staff members to help one another and customers flee in the event of an active shooter incident. The plan must be in an easy-to-access location, and evacuation routes should be posted throughout your business. This will help those who do not have anywhere to hide escape from the incident, and all staff members must understand that going back for belongings is dangerous.

This [poster](#), created by the Department of Homeland Security, also offers a brief review of how people need to react to an active shooter in the area.

If nothing else, you need to re-evaluate your active shooter plan and preparedness training program annually and every quarter following the hiring of new employees. But, the best-laid plans are useless without drills. So, use the next section to help you conduct and assess the success of your active shooter training drills and plans.

Reviewing the outcome of drills

Here are a few tips to enhance your drills.

1. Never conduct active shooter drills without announcing it as a drill.
2. Use at least two different Christmas ornaments to symbolize the weapon.
3. Have one team member portray the active shooter.
4. Attach one of the ornaments to the pant leg and another ornament to the hand of the person portraying the shooter.
5. Have each team member recount their memory of the incident on a document following the drill.
6. Ensure a space is available for participants to describe the types of Christmas ornaments used as weapons.
7. Christmas ornaments might seem odd, but they can vary heavily in color, shape and size. This variance helps to teach participants about the importance of looking to see what type and number of weapons a potential shooter has.

Section A

Please indicate "Yes or No" to each of the following questions:

- How successful was your drill?
- Did you conduct training in advance of your drill?
- Were emergency exits accessible during the drill?
- When "police" arrived, did your team members come out after being advised to do so?

Count the number of blanks that had a "Yes." Use the following rubric to determine a preliminary drill score.

4 – 90 Percent.

3 – 80 Percent.

2 – 40 Percent.

1 – 10 Percent.

Section B

Answer the following questions.

- How many employees were involved in the drill?
- Did your team members have their hands up and in clear sight?
- If yes to the above question, how many?
- How many employees refused to participate in the drill?
- Does your organization allow employees to refuse to participate in active shooter drills?
- How many team members had their bags or personal belongings, excluding cellphones that were already in their pockets, on them when evacuating?
- Did any team member appear unnerved by the training?
 - If yes, how many?
- How many employees did not appear to know where to go in the event of an active shooter?
- Did managerial staff fail to contact authorities, including cases where the "drill call" was to human resources or other departments?
- How many participants were unable to identify the number and type of Christmas ornaments attached to the person carrying the role of the active shooter?
- Did any employee actively try to engage the shooter when hiding or running was an option?
 - If yes, how many?

Count each “Yes” as one point. Add the total number of points accumulated in your score.

Subtract the total from your score in Section A. This your general success score for your active shooter training drill.

If your score is anything less than 80 percent, you need to review your threat assessment and active shooter training plan. You will also need to have any team member who was included in the numbers listed in Section B complete active shooter preparedness training again.

Time for Reflection

[Please take a few minutes and complete today's questions for reflection.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll focus on lessons learned from recent active shooter incidents, providing you with additional practical examples of recent incidents.

LESSON TEN

Lessons learned from recent active shooter events

In the last lesson, you learned an approach to evaluating plan effectiveness after active shooter exercises. Today, we're going to focus on lessons learned from recent active shooter incidents.

The recent active shooter events in Orlando, San Bernardino, Paris, Munich and beyond have provided some important lessons for every human being. If we learn from these lessons and respond in a proactive manner, those hundreds of lives will not have been lost completely in vain. Those who work in enclosed facilities can draw especially valuable lessons from the recent active shooter events.

The options: run, hide or fight

Instead of asking employees to make split-second decisions in the midst of a dramatic active shooter scenario, employers are now actively addressing the uncomfortable possibility of violence in the workplace. A growing number of employers are asking employees to develop a plan of action in the event of such a dire scenario. Employees are taught that there are three possible reactions to an active shooter: Run, hide or fight. They are encouraged to choose the active response of fighting rather than the passive response of running or hiding. Even the Department of Homeland Security has endorsed the "fight" response. Though most authority figures recommend that employees exit the building if they have a direct means of exiting, those who are in a position to take the shooter down are encouraged to do so. The logic in this "fight" approach is that it will take a while for police to arrive on the scene. If those who are closest to the gunman are able to disarm him, they could save numerous lives.

It is no longer about hiding

Businesses, schools, government offices and organizations of all different varieties are implementing active shooter training for employees. It wasn't long ago when the average workplace had absolutely no standard operating procedures for such dire scenarios. People would instinctively run in response to shootings as they had no other planned method of recourse. Now, employers across the globe are training workers to stand up for themselves and their co-workers by engaging in active shooter mock scenarios. This sort of charade might have seemed egregiously paranoid half a decade ago. In light of the seemingly never-ending string of shootings, such training scenarios are welcomed with open arms.

The point of practicing active shooter scenarios is to empower employees to prevent a massive loss of life and debilitating injuries. After all, these disastrous events typically involve a lone wolf shooter and plenty of employees. Employers are hiring former SWAT team officers, military veterans, actors and others to make role-playing exercises as close to reality as possible. Employees are trained to respond to active shooters in a strategic manner rather than simply running as fast as they can to the nearest building exit point or ducking in a space with little visibility. Hiding in a supplies closet or crouching beneath a desk does nothing to stop the bloodshed. Employees are now being trained to respond to shooters in a proactive manner by rehearsing responses in which they attempt to bring the shooter to the ground and disarm him. This offensive approach to shootings is quickly gaining ground throughout the world. Even college students are getting in on active shooter role playing scenarios. University of Toledo students are taught specific techniques to successfully swarm a gunman and disrupt him to the point that he can no longer fire his weapon. It is a stark contrast to the decades upon decades during which students and employees were told to go into "lock down" mode and take shelter until armed authorities arrive.

A heightened awareness

It wasn't long ago when employees would shrug off co-workers' angry utterances and questionable behaviors. Nowadays, employees are encouraged to call attention to such red flags by notifying their superiors and human resources managers. Those who have paid close attention to the string of shootings over the past couple of years are becoming increasingly aware of violence indicators. Whether it is cursing out a co-worker, expressing sympathy or solidarity with terrorist groups or displaying signs of violence, more and more people are paying closer attention to those who work and live around them. The importance of this heightened awareness cannot be overstated. If more employees, students and everyday people report suspicious behavior to those in positions of authority, the odds of even more active shooter incidents will be greatly reduced.

Everyone has the potential to be a hero

Stopping an active shooter does not always require a gun. Though an armed response to a gunman will certainly decrease the odds of mass casualties, it is not feasible for every employee to carry a gun. In many instances, it is illegal for employees to bring a gun to work even if it is for purposes of self-defense against a cold-blooded killer. However, everyone has two hands, muscles and a brain. If a group of employees were to charge a gunman from different angles, hit him over the head with a heavy object or tackle him, he would not be in a position to wreak havoc on a workplace. Running in fear is not always the best course of action. In the end, everyone should realize they have the potential to be a hero by saving their own life as well as the lives of those around them.

Shooters aren't always the likely suspects

Omar Mateen shot up Orlando's Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016. He was a young, attractive, married man who once worked as a security guard. Such an individual does not seem like the type to shoot up a nightclub full of partiers. This is an extremely important lesson everyone must learn: Shooters might not look or sound the part. They aren't always the extremely quiet lone wolf types who do not interact with their co-workers and community members.

Psychopaths are awfully skilled at presenting a highly polished public image while keeping their true motives and feelings a secret. If certain factors trigger a potential shooter's rage, he can quickly transform from a seemingly normal person into a raging lunatic who shows no regard for humanity. This is not to say that every human being is capable or likely to become a killing machine. Rather, it is a testament to the fact that you can never really get inside another person's mind even if you think you know him well. It is our hope that we have all learned to never let our guard down while at work, school or in any other public arena. There is always the potential for a shooting scenario to unfold, even in the safest suburb or seemingly civil public space.

Time for Reflection

[Please take a few minutes and complete today's questions for reflection.](#)

In the next lesson, we're going to take a slightly different approach and provide you with a podcast discussion between myself and two other crisis leaders from Bryghtpath talking about leading through an active shooter situation that we experienced together in 2012 with our former employer.

LESSON ELEVEN

Listen to three of our experts discuss leading in an active shooter incident

In our last lesson, we focused on lessons learned from recent active shooter incidents. Today, we're going to listen to an episode of our Managing Uncertainty podcast where two other crisis leaders from Bryghtpath and I discuss a major active shooter incident that we were involved in back in 2012 at a Fortune 30 corporation in Minneapolis.

In the episode, you'll hear senior consultant [Jen Otremba](#) and consultant [Lindsay Bradford](#) discuss leading through an active shooter incident. Fortunately, this incident turned out to be a false alarm caused by construction noise. However, that outcome was determined only after four hours of watching law enforcement clear a 600,000-square foot office tower in Minneapolis room by room.

Jen, Lindsay, and I share lessons learned for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from an active shooter situation in your workplace. Topics discussed include crisis leadership during an active shooter situation, the perspectives of an incident leader in the midst of the crisis situation, communicating and making decisions, and sound strategies that can be used to prevent situations from reaching the point that gunfire is involved.

Key learning points:

- Mitigation and preparedness strategies for active shooter situations
- Crisis leadership during an active shooter situation
- Helping your employees recover from workplace violence incidents
- How to communicate and make decisions during a crisis

[You can listen to this episode by clicking through to our web site at this link.](#)

If you enjoy our podcast, [Managing Uncertainty](#), you can subscribe via [iTunes](#), [player.fm](#), or your favorite podcast player. We release an episode on average every other week.

Time for Reflection

[Please take a few minutes and complete today's questions for reflection.](#)

In our next lesson, we'll have a brief lesson on available **free online** resources for active shooter planning.

LESSON TWELVE

What free resources are available online for active shooter planning?

In our last lesson, we listened to three of our crisis experts at Bryghtpath discuss leading through an active shooter situation. Today, we're going to share some free online resources that can assist you with active shooter planning.

You can find endless training resources for your employees online. However, some of the best resources available are free and published by major government organizations. Rather than wasting time looking for online active shooter training resources, consider downloading the information presented by these entities.

[BusinessUSA](#)

BusinessUSA offers resources tailored to employees, managerial staff and security personnel. Furthermore, they include video links to YouTube active training plans, ways to improve active shooter exercises and pocket-sized review cards. These pocket booklets make BusinessUSA an essential resource in providing some training to new hires. Of course, all new hires should complete a comprehensive active shooter training program as soon as possible.

[FBI Office of Partner Engagement's Active Shooter Training Portal](#)

The FBI provides additional resources on active shooter incidents as well. Built with a flowchart-guided lesson, the FBI Office of Partner Engagement provides training for virtually any organization or entity, including public awareness of active shooter incidents and exercises among law enforcement, businesses and the public.

[FBI and DOJ Initiative on Workplace Violence](#)

The absolute resource for information on workplace violence is the joint publication by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI. While the document is long and lacks graphics, it provides a comprehensive overview of workplace violence and how it relates to active shooter incidents.

[Readiness and Emergency Management For Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center](#)

Depending on the nature of your business, this resource can be a useful tool when you operate an organization that provides services to clients on an ongoing, repetitive basis. For example, the tools and techniques found here can be useful for businesses involving the care or supervision of children and adolescents.

[National Association of School Resource Officers](#)

Businesses operating counseling or therapy-based services may benefit from the information gathered by the National Association of School Resource Officers. This guide explains drill approaches, how to plan active shooter exercises, considerations in completing drills while caring for those with intellectual or developmental disability and other best practices. Ultimately, this guide can be adapted to meet the demands of mental health workers, rehabilitation facilities and health care centers as well.

[Department of Homeland Security](#)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is probably among the easiest-to-understand resources on active shooter incidents. DHS provides free videos, posters and booklets on responding to an active shooter event. Furthermore, each DHS publication touches on workplace violence warning signs, which are essential to recognizing people who might be at risk of committing an attack. Meanwhile, DHS also offers online workshops and testing materials to ensure comprehension among participants.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Emergency Management Institute

The FEMA Emergency Management Institute is well-known among health care providers as this organization oversees all emergency preparedness programs and training scenarios used in such facilities. However, the number of possible training programs numbers well into the thousands, so be sure to look for the IS-907 course. This course can easily be adapted for display to large groups of people, including employees and volunteers in your business, and it includes PowerPoint presentations, videos, graphics and online exams to test participants' proficiency. This resource does require those taking the exam to register for a student ID number, which allows employees and supervisors to access and track students' scores upon taking the exam.

Start using these free active shooter resources today

You have options when you start thinking about active shooter plans and training, but it helps if you have a few resources at your fingertips. None of these resources require email signups or extensive registration. It's easy to get started and use these resources to improve active shooter planning at your organization.

There are no questions for reflection for this lesson.

TAKE OUR POST-COURSE SURVEY

Thanks for reading through our Active Shooter 101 Mini-Course over the past several days. I truly hope that you picked up some valuable tips and ideas throughout the course material.

I did want to take a moment and request your help - we'd love your candid feedback on this course, ideas on how we can improve, and your needs for future training courses.

[Could you take a few minutes and click here to take our post-course survey?](#)

Thanks again for taking our course and for your candid feedback!

FREE THIRTY MINUTE CONSULTATION

Bryghtpath has designed and implemented the business continuity & disaster recovery strategies used today by organizations ranging from small businesses, to global Fortune 30 corporations, and major law enforcement agencies.

We're happy to have a thirty-minute consultation with you and your team completely free – there is zero obligation to you following our discussion.

We guarantee you'll leave with some ideas about how to move forward and improve your business continuity and disaster recovery strategies.

To get started, visit us at bryghtpath.com/freeconsult or give us a call at +1.612.235.6435.

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Bryan Strawser is a globally recognized strategist and thought leader who founded Bryghtpath LLC in 2014 after a 21-year career at Target Corporation where he built and led the retailer's Global Crisis Management and Business Continuity function. Under his leadership, Target received numerous awards from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), and the Business Continuity Institute (BCI).

A valued industry leader, Bryan previously served as a board member and Chair of the Private Sector Committee for the National Emergency Management Association (2011 – 2013) and as the Vice Chairman of the Retail Industry Leader's Association's Disaster Recovery and Preparedness Committee. In these roles, Bryan worked closely with FEMA to develop the Private Sector Representative position in FEMA's Office of the Private Sector and with leaders across state and federal government, including the US Department of Homeland Security and the White House, to build stronger connections between the public and private sectors.



Bryan holds multiple professional certifications in business continuity, emergency management, information security, project management, and physical security.

He is a member of the International Association of Professional Security Consultants, the Private Sector Committee of the National Emergency Management Association, the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House, London).

Bryan holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration from the University of Phoenix and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. He is a graduate of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative Program at Harvard University's School of Government. Bryan was a Humphrey Policy Fellow at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs during the 2016 – 2017 academic year.

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ABOUT BRYGHTPATH LLC

Bryghtpath LLC is a strategic advisory firm that specializes in global risk, business continuity, emergency/crisis management, and crisis communications.

Our team of globally recognized experts offer strategic counsel on identifying, preparing for, and managing risk to your company, non-profit, or public-sector agency.

Bryghtpath works with the world's leading brands, public sector agencies, and nonprofits to develop strategies to help them strategically navigate global uncertainty.

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We're always happy to provide examples of our work, free proposals, or to talk through any services that you may need. All of our services are customized for your specific needs.

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