

DAMAGE CONTROL

Can you keep HMS Belfast afloat?

Crisis management and decision making under pressure



MAIN THEMES : Critical Thinking, Crisis Response and Education

Alternative Themes : Team Building

Outline

The main aim of the game is to give a flavour of the unusual aspect of damage control in combat in a WW2 warship suitable for non-technical players. This involves fire-fighting and flooding defence as the ship takes damage from enemy bombs, shells and torpedoes. This is an unusual game and creates a tense series of resource allocation decision under time pressure and with limited information.

The game is played on a simplified plan of the deck of a WW2 warship – in this example the famous HMS Belfast.

Gameplay

The players are mainly responsible for Damage Control – that is limiting the effect of battle damage so that the ship can continue to fight, or at least stay afloat long enough to return home for repair. There is a player team for each of the main decks on the ship and they have an array of fire-fighting and counter-flooding resources to deploy. They communicate their situation to a



team representing the damage control centre, who can move resources between teams, and has to advise the Captain of the status of the ship.

The game is run in real time by a Game Controller, who sets out the scenario and describes the damaged caused as it happens – the players then have limited time to respond by deploying the resources of personnel and equipment under their control.

At the end of the game there is a debrief of the process and how decision making and critical information flows occurred (both within and between the teams).

Teams have the opportunity to reflect on how their decision making was affected by the low-information environment and the time pressure and how this might inform their practice and planning in future.

Ideal Audiences

- Organisations wishing to practice rapid decision-making skills.
- Groups wishing to practice critical thinking, crisis management and problem analysis skills.
- Schools wishing to understand an unusual aspect of the operation of warships in World War 2 (perhaps in conjunction with a visit to HMS Belfast, in London, itself).

Example game structures

Damage Control : For 6 players	
Team	Number in team
Damage Control Centre	2
Deck 1 & 2 DC Party	2
Deck 3, 4 & 5 DC Party	2
Total	6

Damage Control: for 15 players	
Team	Number in team
Damage Control Centre	3
Deck 1 DC Party	2
Deck 2 DC Party	2
Deck 3 DC Party	2
Deck 4 DC Party	2
Deck 5 DC Party	2
Medical Team	2
Total	15