

Volume	1	Introduction and Overview
Chapter	03	Business Stages
Section	01	Business Stage Descriptions
Key Word Tags	Responding versus Reacting, Expecting the Unexpected	
Stage	8 Having operational issues	

## HAVING SOME OPERATIONAL ISSUES

File No. 1.030108 | 2017-06-01

Quick Summary: Planning for the unexpected is an effective way to address operational issues in advance.

### Abstract:

*Unexpected operational issues are common, daily occurrences that appear across every business stage and will continue to recur. The key is to attempt to forecast them and, most importantly, develop standard approaches to respond and not react. Most surprises are really not surprises: someone already knew. Thinking in terms of “what-if” will result in far more effective resolutions when the issues appear.*

The initial reaction to reading the title of this stage, Having Operational Issues, may elicit the quick response of “Of course.” Operational issues occur every day and every night, non-stop.” It is hard to argue with that observation. Clearly, operational issues occur across all of the business stages previously described. The overlap is obvious when the articles included in this stage are compared to the articles included in most of the other identified business stages. This stage was created expressly for users who have likely not reviewed the previous stages and are seeking guidance to address a current, seemingly critical issue.

For individuals seeking guidance on addressing a critical issue, the best place to start is Chapter 4.02, Responding versus Reacting. The articles in that chapter discuss the fundamental difference between responding to an event instead of reacting to it. In the day-to-day, interrupt-driven climate, reacting quickly instead of responding thoughtfully is easy. Two of the articles in that chapter, “Stop, Look, and Listen” and “When Things Go Wrong,” make the same recommendation, which is repeated below. It suggests a method for addressing unexpected operational issues.

When you receive the email, the phone call, or when someone comes bursting into your office with an apparent crisis, follow a simple method that will help you stay in control.

- First, count to 100 by seventeens (17, 34, 51, 68...). That exercise will force you to slow down for a few seconds. When you get good at counting by seventeens, pick another prime number and do the same thing.
- Second, ask one question: “Is this issue fatal to the business now?” If it truly is, drop what you are doing and respond.
- Third, if not fatal, ask another question: “Who is best equipped to handle this issue besides me?” At first, as a lone entrepreneur or in a very small organization, you may be the only

available person. Independent of the answer to the “who is the best person” question ask one more question.

- Fourth, ask: “How does this issue compare in importance to all of the other issues we are dealing with at this moment, and how should it be prioritized?”

Think of the articles associated with this stage as arrows already in your quiver ready to be selected and fired at the operational issue that has suddenly appeared. As described above, if you have pre-read the articles, you can remember the appropriate one when you are in the midst of counting to 100 by seventeens and formulating a response, not a reaction.

Of the almost 700 articles written for the CxO-Atlas website, 265 relate to this business stage. Twenty-seven of those articles have been tagged on the website with “S8\_Has Issue.” The user can use the website’s “All Documents Tag” filter function to select these articles. For reference, they are listed below.

<b>Article</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Quick Summary</b>
1.030108	Stage 8: Having Operational Issues	Planning for the unexpected is an effective method of dealing with operational issues beforehand.
2.050207	Explanations and Expectations: Two E's to Avoid Two E's	Upfront explanations can set proper expectations to avoid future exasperation.
3.040301	When Things Go Wrong	Do not try to control situations; instead choose how to respond and not react.
3.040302	The Could Versus Should Trap	Creeping feature requests can easily add undue complexity and lengthen the time to market.
3.040303	Time: Is it a Friend or Foe	Break up serial events and address them in parallel to minimize overall cycle time.
4.010201	Overview Chapter 4.1_ Growing Pains	Company and business expansion invariably leads to growing pains and uneasiness at all levels.
4.010202	Changing Attitudes	Changes cause disruptions and can result in negative attitudes that, left unchecked, can spread.
4.010203	Emergence of Rigidity	New employees without the benefit of past experiences can quickly become rules based.
4.010204	Silo is a Four-Letter Word	As organizations grow, more specialization occurs and communications can become ineffective.
4.010207	It's Different Now	Change is constant, often moving us out of our comfort zone, we all must get used to it.
4.010301	Frustration with Colleagues	Individual and department goals vary which cause a seemingly purposeful non-cooperation.
4.020201	Reacting and Responding Differences	We often react without considering factors; when we do, we are more likely to respond.
4.020202	Responding or Reacting: How Do You Know?	Reacting can become addictive and inappropriate; can you ignore your cell phone for an hour?
4.020203	Interrupt Driven Impacts	Jumping from one activity to another is inefficient; there is really no such thing as multitasking.
4.020301	Stop, Look, and Listen	Taking a deep breath implies, stopping for a moment to think, not to fill up the lungs to scream.

4.020302	Fast But Thoughtful	Many times speedy responses are made without reasonable deliberation of facts.
4.020303	Is Culture the Problem?	Practice makes permanent, consistent reactive behaviors can become the norm.
4.020304	Deliver Bad News Quickly	When the answer is clearly known, in most cases it should be delivered quickly.
4.020401	Response Formulation	Take the time to ask a few others to help you develop a reasonable response.
4.020403	The Root Cause and The Route	Find the route that led to the root cause and eliminate it.
4.030402	Issue Identification Exercise	Providing a non-threatening open environment to identify business impediments is easy.
4.030405	Are the Doors Really Open?	Open-door policies only work if employees truly feel that managers are approachable.
4.030506	Thunder in the Distance	There are advantages and pitfalls in recruiting individuals with vastly different work experiences.
4.040503	Scratch the Itch	Address disappointing results with others nonconfrontationally to help resolve the issue.
4.040506	Disagreement versus Contrarian Views	Discussing disagreements leads to effective decisions while contrarian views can be destructive.
5.060503	The Resource Battle	Resources are always in short supply. Focus on de-risking your approach to gain acceptance.
5.060606	Failure Root Causes	Ego, timing, and execution are three major root causes of strategy failures that can be avoided.