

STOP THE BLEED

A red ECG (heart rate) line graphic that spans the width of the cover, positioned below the main title. It features several sharp peaks and troughs, with the most prominent peaks occurring on the left and right sides, framing the central text area.

**FROM BATTLEFIELD TO BUSINESS:
PROVEN LEADERSHIP TACTICS
FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

DR. AARON DILLINGHAM



Book Overview

Based on his experience as a U.S. Army combat medic and Fortune 50 executive, Dr. Dillingham combines principles of battlefield triage with corporate strategy to describe approaches for effective leadership during periods of uncertainty. *Stop the Bleed* outlines a framework for executives to manage organizational crises by identifying primary risks, prioritizing effort, aligning teams, maintaining cash flow, and supporting workforce stability. The book provides a tactical and evidence-based methodology suited for modern business environments.

About the Author

Aaron Dillingham, Ed.D., is a combat veteran, academic, and executive. He formerly served as a U.S. Army combat medic and wildland Firefighter before entering corporate management, where he leads large-scale operations and technology transformation in a fortune 50 company. In addition to his corporate leadership work, Aaron also serves as Chief Marketing Officer for a national nonprofit, where he advances mission-driven strategy and stakeholder engagement. He earned a doctorate from Vanderbilt University, with research focusing on motivation and leadership, and holds an MBA from Texas A&M. Through Dillingham Capital, he consults and publishes on leadership and decision-making frameworks.



Interview Topics

- The application of battlefield triage methods to executive decision-making.
- How technology (GenAI and the internet age) is making crises more frequent and why leaders must adapt faster to survive.
- An overview of the MARCH Protocol: Five steps for stabilizing a company during crisis.
- Insights from neuroscience related to crisis leadership.
- Techniques for maintaining composure when team confidence diminishes.
- Perspectives on how veterans contribute operational discipline within business contexts.

Media Inquiries

Email: aaron@dillinghamcapital.com

Linkedin: linkedin.com/in/aaron-dillingham

Phone: 469.318.0087

Publication and Rights: © 2025 Dillingham Capital. All rights reserved.
Published by Dillingham Capital, LLC. For podcast appearances, media, or speaking engagements: Aaron@dillinghamcapital.com Release Date: October 20, 2025 Available on Amazon, Kindle, and IngramSpark. Unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this material is prohibited

STOP THE BLEED

**From Battlefield to Business:
Proven Leadership Tactics for Crisis
Management**

Aaron Dillingham, Ed.D.

Preface

As a former combat medic in the Iraq war, I learned protocols that kept people alive through some of the most chaotic, stressful situations imaginable. Now, as a leader and entrepreneur who has seen his share of crisis that can threaten business survival, I've realized that those combat medic protocols can profoundly help modern businesses survive in times of crisis. The rules of combat medicine can turn good managers into decisive crisis leaders. This book shows you how—without ever putting on a uniform.

The book is written for business or organization leaders who land in crisis and need to confidently reestablish order from chaos, a situation that arises all too often these days. It seems as though every quarter carries the volatility that once spanned a decade. Board agendas rewrite themselves overnight, supply chains fracture before the morning stand-up, and a single mistimed decision can vaporize a year of earnings.

Many great leaders are trained to operate in calmer, more stable scenarios and lack the tools to succeed in high-stakes, high chaos moments. Leaders rarely fail for lack of intelligence; they fail for lack of a repeatable operating process, especially when the data is incomplete and the pressure is extreme.

This book delivers that process. Adapted from the U.S. military's

Tactical Combat Casualty Care Handbook to the messy routines of enterprises and organizations. Anchored in research, case studies, experience, and tested military frameworks, MARCH can show business leaders how to command in a crisis by spotting the most lethal threat, buying precious time, safeguarding cash, and rallying talent before outsiders seize the narrative. This is how to convert uncertainty into your most reliable strategic advantage.

Introduction

In Iraq, I never planned to write about cash flow or product-market fit. My only goal back then was to keep the soldiers beside me alive. Years before I stowed a laptop in my briefcase, I packed a trauma kit and morphine. When someone yelled “Medic!” I sprinted toward the noise, scanned mangled bodies, and made the 180-second calls that decided who went home and who didn’t. No strategy sessions. No six-point plans. Only training, pressure, and one immutable sequence:

- **M**assive hemorrhage
- **A**irway obstruction
- **R**espiratory compromise
- **C**irculatory collapse
- **H**ead injury and hypothermia

It was always in that order. Always treat what kills first.

Picture this: A Humvee convoy is rolling through hostile terrain. An improvised explosive device (IED) detonates under the lead vehicle, tearing through metal and bodies. The radio crackles. You leap from your truck hauling a fifty-pound aid bag, sprint through gunfire, and crawl into the

wreck. Blood slicks pool on the cabin floor; adrenaline hammers your pulse. You're racing to staunch the arterial bleeding that can drain a life in three minutes. It took a minute to get there and will take a minute to apply a tourniquet. You have less than one minute to assess the scene and act.

One: You ignore the soldier screaming about his broken arm and cinch a tourniquet on the one quietly losing consciousness. Two: You stabilize the airway of the soldier gasping from inhalation burns. Three: You address the broken arm. Three lives are saved. Sequence, not sympathy, saved those lives.

Boardrooms bleed, too

Years later, I traded the Humvee for conference rooms and watched seasoned executives crack under another kind of pressure: revenue free falls, client defections, culture fractures. Nobody bled on the carpet, yet the wounds felt just as lethal. Meetings multiplied, decisions stalled, morale flatlined. The decision-makers were not rookies; they had MBAs and glossy résumés. None of that mattered when uncertainty surged and systems fractured.

Yet I remained calm and I continued to run the protocol. Pause. Scan. Prioritize. Fix the arterial bleed first, whether that was, in this case, a runaway burn rate or a toxic supplier contract. A colleague finally asked, "Why are you steady when everything goes to hell?" My answer shocked me: "I'm just triaging," I replied.

That realization exposed an industry-wide blind spot. Most leadership training assumes peacetime operations with time to align, inspire,

and iterate. In a crisis, there's no time for that. It strikes hard and demands an immediate answer. Even capable, talented leaders have failed in that moment because they'd never trained for it, never rehearsed for ways to confront the chaos.

At such uncertain times, volatility is now the default, not the exception. Technology compresses product cycles from months to days. Geopolitical aftershocks travel the globe in minutes, turning cost projections into fiction overnight. Crisis is the operating system, and leaders these days need a crash kit, not a committee.

Complicating this volatility further, business organizations are not simple, one-dimensional entities. They resemble living bodies. Each have complex, interdependent systems that sustain life. When one system weakens, pressure builds in another, and collapse follows a recognizable sequence. In trauma medicine, unchecked bleeding starves the brain of oxygen before the lungs or heart ever fail. In business, runaway costs suffocate strategy before culture or vision can matter. This parallel matters because the MARCH protocol is not a loose metaphor. It reflects how complex systems actually fail, in human physiology and in corporate operations.

To quickly treat the bodies complex interdependent systems, combat medics train relentlessly to ingrain their casualty treatment protocol into reflex. This protocol, called MARCH, is outlined in the *Tactical Combat Casualty Care Handbook*.¹ Medics endure mud, blood, and months of training to master it. The same triage sequence that has kept soldiers alive for generations can be transplanted by leaders onto a corporate anatomy—

without months of grueling preparation. Here’s how MARCH can be applied to leadership:

MARCH	Business Translation	Typical Symptoms
Massive bleeds	Out-of-control costs, wasted hours, low-ROI pet projects	Expanding burn rate, duplicate tools, bloated org chart
Alignment	Foggy goals, conflicting KPIs, chronic silos	Teams busy but misaligned, endless turf wars
Revenue flow	Weak pipeline, long cycles, shrinking retention	Sales stuck in “almost,” product usage flatlining
Cash flow	Liquidity gaps, bandwidth collapse, energy drain	Payables balloon, overtime spikes, team exhaustion
Human resilience	Burnout, cynicism, erosion of trust	Rising attrition, whisper-network negativity

Figure 1: How MARCH translates to business.

Medics live by a few, simple rules. Crisis leaders should, too:

- Stabilize before you optimize.
- Prioritize the vital over the visible.
- Move fast, but never in every direction at once.

McKinsey reports that many leaders underestimate the cost of a brewing crisis by as much as ten times and often slide right into trouble without realizing it.² Did they ignore the warning signs of trouble; were they even aware of them? Or maybe they were afraid to take decisive steps that could be risky for the company or themselves? Gallup finds that during a disruption, employees crave stability, trust, and hope, which link directly to a leader's engagement and performance.³ The pattern is clear: In high-stakes windows, sequence beats speed and discipline beats brilliance.

The new normal: gen AI, speed, and structural fragility

Why does it seem as though crisis is no longer the exception but the expectation? One major driver is the unprecedented acceleration of technology, which is most evident in the meteoric rise of generative AI.

Gen AI is not just transforming how fast companies can generate content, automate code, or analyze data. It's fundamentally altering the tempo of competition as well, compressing innovation cycles and collapsing response windows. According to McKinsey & Company's 2023 global survey, three-quarters of business leaders expect generative AI to cause significant or disruptive change in their sectors within just three years. Yet, in a troubling contrast, fewer than 20 percent of organizations report having a clearly defined strategy in place to navigate that disruption.⁴

This growing gap between exposure and readiness is not just a risk, it's a structural vulnerability. Generative AI, or exponential technologies more broadly, are doing more than accelerating existing workflows. They are dismantling the timeframes business was built on.

A new competitor product that once required six months to develop can now launch in six days. A public relations issue that previously unfolded over a twenty-four-hour news cycle now goes global in under an hour, amplified by AI-powered sentiment tracking, synthetic content, and global connectivity. Internal strategy memos leak, social media reacts in real time, and large language models (LLMs), although still imperfect, allow competitors to pivot at machine speed.

This compression of time shrinks the margin of error. It also demands that leadership decision-making operate in real time—not quarterly or biweekly but continuously. As the World Economic Forum recently warned, over 80 percent of global risk experts expect “persistent volatility” over the next two years, driven by rapid technological disruption, geopolitical instability, and compounding systemic shocks.⁵ In parallel, more than 70 percent of CEOs surveyed by PwC in 2024 say they expect gen AI to significantly and rapidly reshape how their businesses create, deliver, and capture value.⁶

Generative AI is only one example today; even more powerful technological improvements and innovations are on the horizon. Put simply, we’re not just facing more crises—we’re facing a new typical business structure where crisis is embedded into the operating environment. The old model assumed periods of stability punctuated by shocks. The new model assumes constant shocks, with temporary periods of calm.

If your leadership systems, information flows, and decision rhythms were built for slower times, they are already out of sync with reality. In this

world, volatility isn't the bug, it's the feature. And your leadership operating model must evolve accordingly.

What to expect from this book

This book blends these insights with case studies, data, research, experience, and combat-tested tools that give you a proven protocol to face moments of upheaval with equanimity.

Whether you run a startup that's in free fall, a department that has drifted, a project on the brink, or a team in grave disarray, this book will help you lead through triage rather than routine management. The MARCH model scales to any level. If you guide a team, own a function, or answer for results, this process will enable you to find a way, whether you oversee five or five thousand.

Every chapter supplies protocol, guides, examples, and tools that help embed MARCH into your leadership reflexes. In business as on the battlefield, the ability to assess, prioritize, and act under pressure does more than improve outcomes; it saves lives, teams, and companies.

What you see here is a field manual, not an encyclopedia. It offers a high-level triage framework for assessing, prioritizing, and responding to critical issues when time is short and stakes are high. It does not dive into the academic roots of leadership theory, financial modeling, team psychology, or operations design. You will not see lengthy balance sheet analyses or exhaustive management taxonomies. Those resources exist elsewhere, and I encourage you to explore these ideas deeper during the

calm. This book is for the moment when study is a luxury you no longer have.

Think of it as a trauma kit rather than a textbook. The goal is not full knowledge but structured response. It gives you a lens to see what matters first so that you can act decisively and stabilize fast.

Welcome to triage leadership. Let's get to work.

¹ Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) Handbook*. 2017.

² Kalavar and Mysore, "Are You Prepared for a Corporate Crisis?" 2017.

³ Gallup, "State of the Global Workplace." 2023.

⁴ Chui et al., "The State of AI in 2023: Generative AI's Breakout Year." 2023.

⁵ World Economic Forum, "The Global Risks Report." 2023.

⁶ PwC, "PwC's Global NextGen Survey 2024: Success in an AI World." 2024.

The MARCH Pocket Guide (General)

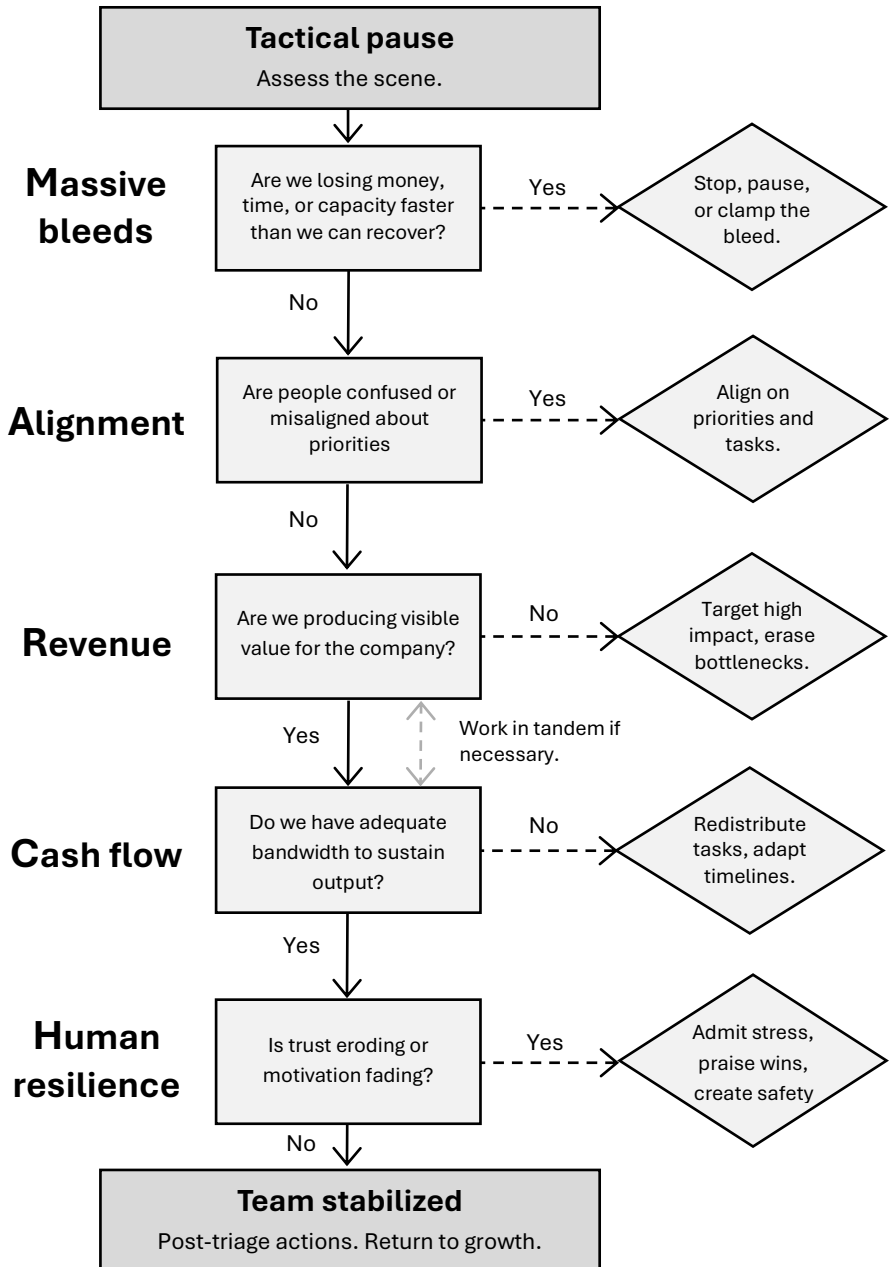


Figure 16: The MARCH pocket guide (General).