

Organizational Integrity Group

Solving The Whole Problem™

First Principles
*Slow Down
the Scene*



Learning from Law Enforcement...

Some of us have had the good fortune to work with police departments and S.W.A.T. teams as part of our practice. As a result, Sheppard Mullin's Organizational Integrity Group has incorporated some novel "lessons-learned" into how we think about organizational challenges.

Ask any police officer who has been on the streets for a while and he/she will tell you the dangers of being in a hurry. You miss things — sometimes obvious things. You make mistakes. You lose sight of opportunities for safer resolutions of problems.

To fight against these risks, police officers are taught to take a breath and give themselves a chance to break through the tunnel vision that often goes hand in hand with high stress situations. Police officers call this "slowing down the scene."

"...police officers are taught to take a breath and give themselves a chance to break through the tunnel vision..."

...And Surgeons to Slow Down

Study after study confirms the wisdom of slowing down the scene in areas well beyond policing. A university president — who was also a skilled surgeon — once explained how he relied upon his medical training when responding to organizational challenges. He said that surgeons are trained to slow down when responding to problems in the operating room. While he noted that surgeons would tend to any truly emergent task without delay (i.e., controlling bleeding), they are encouraged to slow down before otherwise responding and to think critically about the issue or problem they have encountered.



Sheppard Mullin's Organizational Integrity Group embeds these lessons from law enforcement, medicine, and other contexts in the way we think about problem solving. We know that when lawyers don't take time to think, evaluate, and deliberate, we similarly risk tunnel vision and miss opportunities for more effective, comprehensive solutions.

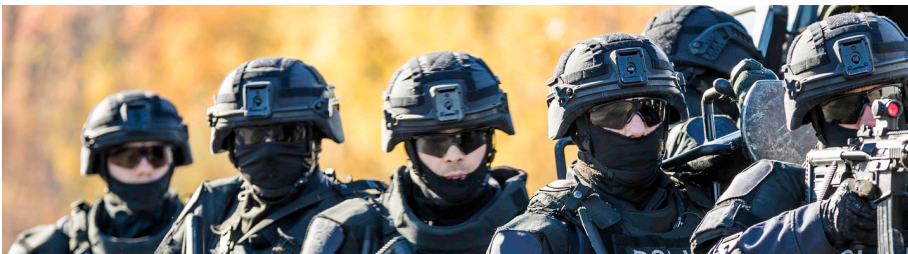
When we work with an organization confronting a challenge or crisis, we encourage its leadership to do as police officers and physicians do – to slow down the scene. Too often, in our experience, organizations respond hastily without completely thinking through the problem – or considering the range of responses available to the organization. This is not to suggest, of course, that an organization has unlimited time to respond, or can slow down in responding to a true emergency (just as the surgeon cannot delay in responding to a bleeding artery). But in most instances, an organization can take a moment to step back and assess the situation confronting it and determine how to respond.

Slowing down the scene enables organizations to consider a broader array of response options. For example, an organization confronting a news story that threatens its reputation might consider responding with an internal review or investigation rather than a statement or blanket denial that may come back to haunt it later (and potentially further damage its credibility). Likewise, an organization may identify creative alternatives in responding to emerging crises rather than suffer from tunnel vision that would otherwise limit the responses available.

Like S.W.A.T. teams and surgeons, organizations better preserve themselves and their integrity when they slow down the scene.

Slowing Down the Scene

- **Take a moment to consider the situation.** You may not have weeks to consider a response, but you probably can take a day or more.
- **Identify the problem.** What is the nature of the threat posed to the organization? Where is it coming from? What stakeholders will be affected? Do we know everything about the problem?
- **Think critically about the response.** What does instinct tell you to do? What are other options for responding? Which will be most effective – in the long term – of preserving the organization's integrity.
- **Respond and re-evaluate.** Execute on the response selected, but monitor its implementation and determine whether a change in course may be appropriate based on new facts, changing circumstances, or evolving issues.



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For more information regarding Sheppard Mullin's Organizational Integrity Group or to learn more about how we work with our clients to craft multi-disciplinary solutions to complicated problems, please visit us at www.sheppardmullin.com/OIG.

Visit our blog at www.organizationalintegrity.com

About Sheppard Mullin's Organizational Integrity Group

Sheppard Mullin formed the Organizational Integrity Group because most problems facing sophisticated organizations cannot be solved by legal analysis alone. Complicated problems are solved through a thoughtful, deliberate, and holistic approach; an approach that seeks to identify the root causes of problems and to craft solutions that are practical, effective, and sustainable. We look at the bigger picture. We ask questions that transcend a traditional, stove-piped legal analysis. Is the problem one of compliance, or is there an underlying institutional or cultural issue at its core? Are there business imperatives or reputational risks that must be considered before moving forward with a solution? If we attack the manifestation of the problem, will we actually cure the root cause of the problem? What does the organization's mission, vision, and values tell us about how we should respond?