

Emergency Planning



An Introduction to Business Continuity

What is Business Continuity?

Business Continuity is a process, which provides a framework to ensure the resilience of your business to most eventualities.

This approach will help you to ensure that key customers, your brand, reputation and key suppliers are maintained, as well as your long-term survivability.

Business Continuity needs to be considered by small companies as well as larger corporations. Plans should be clear, concise (but not simplistic) and tailored to the needs of the business.

Incidents can have catastrophic effects on your business and the threats can come from accidents, criminal activity or natural disasters.

Business Continuity should become part of the way you perform business. It is better to plan for incidents, which may affect your business, rather than having to "catch up" when a problem occurs.

Simple Steps to Continuity Planning (BCM Programme Management)

- Understanding the Organisation
- Embedding BCM in the Organisation's Culture
- Determining BCM Options
- Developing and Implementing a BCM Response
- Exercising, Maintaining and Auditing

The diagram shows how these elements all fit together



Understanding the Organisation

Consider for each site

If your organisation operates over multiple sites, then each site will need a separate continuity plan of its own, based on the same principles.

Where is your business vulnerable?

Following the analysis of your business processes formulate a list of where your business is vulnerable.

- Property Suppliers
- Human Resources
- Systems
- Processes
- Timescales
- Technology

Consider for each of your work areas

How critical is the work to the overall performance of the business on a day-to-day basis.

For each work area:

- What equipment, IT and other systems does the department need to be able to function appropriately?
- Who does this department depend on to carry out their work?
- Which other departments depend on this department?
- Who in the department is essential?
- Are there any service level agreements, legal or regulatory

obligations on the department?

- Do they already have business continuity plans in existence?
- How long can the work area cease to operate before catastrophic failure of your business: hours / days / weeks?

Are there any natural fluctuations of work activity e.g. Month-end for payroll, or end of year for Accounts?

Risks

To identify risk you must look at the vulnerable areas of your business, as well as considering some of the more generic "what if" scenarios e.g. What if the power failed; what if a virus wiped out our IT system. Look for **single points of failure** in your technology or processes.

The essential part of Risk Assessment is that you ask three simple questions for each risk that you identify:

1. How likely is it to happen?
2. What effect will it have on your business?
3. What factors can reduce the likelihood or effect or mitigate the risk entirely.

Always try to consider the worst-case scenario when carrying out your risk assessment. This will mean that less serious incidents will be easier to manage.

Embedding BCM in the Organisation's Culture

It is essential to have the active support of Management within your organisation. It is possible that during your planning you will have the opportunity to convince your staff of the importance of Business Continuity Management and promote the concept internally.

Business Continuity: "it's the way we do things around here"

With this approach Business Continuity becomes the normal process of day-to-day activity. Business Continuity should be included in the preparation of new contracts, partnerships and business processes.

It is every manager's responsibility to ensure Business Continuity is an integral part of his or her normal business activity.

Determining BCM Options

Most likely Management will consider the options for continuity, which will often be one of the following strategies:

1. **Accept the risks and change nothing**
2. **Accept the risks, but make a mutual arrangement with another business (competitor / Business Continuity Specialist) for help**
3. **Attempt to reduce the risks**
4. **Attempt to reduce the risks and make arrangements for help after an incident as in 2**
5. **Reduce all risks to the point where you should not need outside help**

All of the above will still need a detailed plan to outline the arrangements in the event of an incident. You also need to consider how quickly recovery will need to occur for the various work areas of your business. It may be useful to draw a chart of the timescales involved in re-establishing certain functions.

One essential decision is how you respond to risks that cannot be reduced.

Example

The risk of an incident causing the loss of a building and how to establish your operations at another location.

Responses could be:

1. Have an agreement with another local organisation in the area for mutual assistance
2. Arrange temporary accommodation (a "cold site")
3. Agreement for immediate accommodation at a specialist facility ("a hot site").

Developing and Implementing a BCM Response

Your business continuity plan should contain the key areas listed below. This is not an exhaustive list and you may find other key pieces of information that may be required as part of your plan.

Items to include Roles and responsibilities

Make it clear who needs to do what, and who takes responsibility for each action. Always include deputies to cover key roles. Identify an organisational Recovery Team and a work area recovery co-ordinator for each section within your organisation.

Incident Checklists for key staff

Use easy to read checklists. These should drive action and support rather than replace decision making

First Stage

Direct Action cards or checklists should be clear and concise for the crucial first hour or so after an incident.

Following Stages

Include a checklist list of things that can wait until after the first hour.

Document Review

Agree how often, when and how you will check your plan to make sure it is still current. Update your plan to reflect changes in your organisation's personnel and in the risks you might face.

Plan for worst-case scenarios. If your plan covers how to get back in business if a flood destroys your building, it will also work if only one floor is flooded.

Information from outside your business

Consider getting specialist information on the roles of other organisations that may be involved in the emergency such as:

Landlord

If you rent your business space - find out what plans and assistance your landlord or management company may be able to provide

Neighbouring businesses

Nearby businesses may be affected, but you may still be able to help each other.

Utility Companies

Find out what they will need to know and their emergency supply procedures and targets.

Your Insurance Company

What information do they need from you? Do you need their permission to replace damaged critical equipment immediately?

Will the existence of a Plan reduce your premiums? They may also be able to give you advice.

Suppliers and customers

How will you contact them to tell them you have been affected by an incident, and what their critical timescales are? They will be affected by your decisions, so involve them if you can & your planning process may reassure them

Emergency Planning Officer

Find out what your local authority would do in response to a major incident

Emergency Services

What information will the emergency services require from you?

How can you help them by ensuring access routes, and providing information (key holders etc?)

Points to remember

- Don't include information that will be irrelevant or can be accessed in other places.
- Use existing organisational roles and responsibilities and build on them in your plan.
- Specify the escalation of the plan.
- Who decides when to invoke the special arrangements and who manages the process?
- How will the stand-down process be managed?

Exercising, Maintaining and Auditing

Testing and rehearsing your plan is one of the key elements of contingency planning. It gives you an opportunity to test the arrangements and principles of the plan in a "safe" environment, without risk to your business.

There are various levels of rehearsal or evaluation, which can be used. They will obviously vary with cost and value, however a planning lifecycle should allow for periodic tests of different types.

Table Top exercise

Test your plan using a 'what if?' written scenario. New pieces of information can be added as the scenario unfolds, in the same way that more details would become clear in a real incident.

Communications Test

With or without warning, a test message is sent out to everyone at the top of the call cascade lists in the plan(s). An audit can

then take place on how well the information was communicated through your organisation.

Full rehearsal

A full rehearsal will show you how well different elements in your plan work together, which may not have become clear when you tested the individual parts. However, this can be an expensive way to test your plan.

What should you do next?

If you have been inspired to develop a Business Continuity Plan for your business, start immediately.

Write yourself a realistic action plan based on the five steps outlined earlier.

Be realistic about timescales, and consider which colleagues you should involve. Get the support of Senior Managers, Directors, Shareholders and Staff, only a team effort will make this a success.

What have you got to lose?

If you don't have a Business Continuity Plan, you may be at risk of losing work to competitors, being exposed to failures in your supply chain or suffer loss of reputation.

Business Continuity affects everyone: customers, staff, the community and ultimately the economy.

Be prepared, and have a Business Continuity plan.

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