

Roles & Responsibilities of the Corporate Sector

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

A credible Business Continuity Plan must address a number of objectives. These are:

- To provide a clearly defined course of action in the event of a major interruption to the operation of the organisation.
- To provide an orderly and timely recovery of business as usual and critical business activities.
- To provide a maintainable, testable and executable plan with a step by step guideline of activation that allows for a calm and controlled approach to the disaster.
- To reduce the number of decisions to be made after the event.
- To identify the personnel, resources and functions necessary for business continuity.
- To identify the systems and functions that are critical to business continuity and to define alternate procedures for ongoing support.
- To identify additional short term resources required for the continuance of critical activities and to support a partial operation of the organisation until a near normal service can be established.
- To provide identification of alternative premises for the relocation of management functions if required.
- To provide up to date contact lists to enable key personnel to be contacted and kept informed / activated as required.
- To document the location of data (electronic and paper) in off –site storage.

And finally any plan must provide sufficient flexibility to cater for losses of varying scale or where only specific elements of the plan need to be invoked.

Organizations should adopt a process-oriented approach to business continuity planning that involves:

1. Business Impact Analysis (BIA);

Business impact analysis (BIA) is the first step in developing a BCP. It should include: -

- Identification of the potential impact of uncontrolled, non-specific events on the institution's business processes and its customers;
- Consideration of all departments and business functions, not just data processing

- Estimation of maximum allowable downtime and acceptable levels of data, operations and financial losses.

2. Risk Assessment;

Risk assessment is the second step in developing a BCP. It should include: -

- A prioritizing of potential business disruptions based upon severity and likelihood of occurrence
- A gap analysis comparing the institution's existing BCP, if any, to what is necessary to achieve recovery time and point objectives;
- An analysis of threats based upon the impact on the institution, its customers, and the financial markets, not just the nature of the threat

3. Risk Management;

Risk management is the development of a written, enterprise-wide BCP. The institution should ensure that the BCP is: -

- Written and disseminated so that various groups of personnel can implement it in a timely manner;
- Specific regarding what conditions should prompt implementation of the plan;
- Specific regarding what immediate steps should be taken during a disruption;
- Flexible to respond to unanticipated threat scenarios and changing internal conditions;
- Focused on how to get the business up and running in the event that a specific facility or function is disrupted, rather than on the precise nature of the disruption; and
- Effective in minimizing service disruptions and financial loss.

4. Risk Monitoring;

Risk monitoring is the final step in business continuity planning. It should ensure that the institution's BCP is viable through: -

- Testing the BCP atleast annually
- Subjecting the BCP to independent audit and review; and
- Updating the BCP based upon changes to personnel and the

THE PLAN PHASES

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) should be divided into a number of phases to ensure that the recovery effort can be tightly focussed and closely managed. These are as follows :

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Critical Processes**
- 3. Remaining Processes**
- 4. Return to Normal Working**

Communication :

Once the decision to invoke the Business Continuity Plan has been made by the Chief Executive or any Director the decision must be communicated to all who need to know, quickly and efficiently and the Command and Recovery Team structure must be activated.

Critical Processes :

This phase involves rapid damage assessment, salvage and debris clearance to minimise the number of lost hours and to maximise the number of critical activities in departments that can be enabled to return to normal or near normal working levels.

Remaining Processes :

This phase concentrates on accommodating further business as usual activities in all departments to achieve a near normal level of resumption of business activity.

Return to Normal Working :

Other than in exceptional circumstances it should be assumed that , within 6 weeks, the premises should, to a substantial extent, be available for use and the BCP should be designed with this figure in mind.

COMMAND AND RECOVERY TEAM STRUCTURES

Command Teams:

The BCP should include an identified membership of Command Teams at '**Gold**', '**Silver**' and '**Bronze**' levels each tasked with the following:

Gold: - The Gold Command Team / **Strategy Team** should be composed of representatives from the senior management team and should be chaired by the Chief Executive or a nominated deputy. The Gold team or the senior management is responsible for: -

- Allocating sufficient resources and knowledgeable personnel to
- Setting policy by determining how the organization will manage and
- Approving the BCP on an annual basis; and
- Ensuring the BCP is kept up-to-date and employees are trained and aware of their role in its implementation.

This team will be responsible for high-level strategic decisions whenever the BCP is invoked and for the establishment and supervision of the Silver and Bronze teams.

Silver: - The Silver Command Team / **Tactical Team** should be composed of representatives from the senior management team and chaired by a director who is a member of the Gold team. The silver team's responsibilities should be to devise the recovery strategy in response to the Gold team's directions, make recovery and policy decisions and generally oversees recovery activities. The Media Handling team should report directly to the Silver team.

Bronze: - The Bronze Command Team / **Operational Team** should be headed by a Director or Senior Manager and should be composed of the nominated Recovery Team Leaders. Each recovery Team Leader should be responsible for a particular area of the recovery process and should report to the Bronze Command Team Leader.

Bronze Command should be responsible for directing all recovery operations in response to Silver Commands directions. These should include:

- determining the extent of damage
- activating the recovery procedures
- maintaining business operations
- notifying and activating the nominated Recovery Team Leaders.

THE RECOVERY TEAMS

In most organisations the Business Continuity Plan should include a minimum of five Recovery Teams. These should be:

Finance and General Administration Team:

Team Leader – General Services Manager or Chief Accountant

The primary responsibility of this team is to maintain the administration function. The team also supports the recovery process and expedites the supply of resources to the other Recovery Teams. Activities will include status reporting, transportation, accommodation and financial matters including payment of salaries, insurance and legal assistance.

Property Reinstatement Team :

Team Leader – Estates Manager or equivalent

This team is responsible for :

- All aspects of work associated with the repair and reinstatement of the fabric of the premises.
- Coordinating the reinstatement of the office environment for occupation by the management team.
- Assisting in the identification of alternative premises for affected departments in liaison with their recovery team leaders.

IT and Telecommunications Team :

Team Leader – IT Manager or equivalent

This team is responsible for the re-establishment of the IT environment including all hardware/software and the restoration of voice and data communications.

Information and Media Handling Team:

Team Lead – Head Public Relations or equivalent

Responsible for the provision of information to all internal and external parties, e.g. Gold and Silver Commands, Press and Media. Responsible to ensure that information is current, consistent and accurate. This team should also be responsible for the setting up and operation of a general enquiry desk and dealing with enquiries from staff and the public.

Business Recovery Team:

Team Leader - Head of Operations or equivalent

This team is responsible for minimising the impact arising from the loss of all of the above. It coordinates the activities of the other teams and provides additional general and specific support where and when required.

In conclusion:

In summation the following six factors are the critical aspects of effective business continuity planning:

- ***Business continuity planning should be conducted on an enterprise-wide basis.***
- ***Thorough business impact analysis and risk assessments are the foundation of an effective BCP.***
- ***Business continuity planning is more than the recovery of the technology; it is the recovery of the business.***
- ***The effectiveness of a BCP can only be validated through thorough training & testing.***
- ***The BCP and test results should be subjected to independent audit.***
- ***A BCP should be periodically updated to reflect and respond to changes in the institution.***

Therefore, any Business Continuity Plan is only as good as the personnel it consists of. In essence it is only as strong as its weakest link. It is therefore essential that personnel are chosen carefully and receive regular training and exercising. In too many organisations training and exercising is seen as low priority and often subject to cancellation in favour of seemingly more important issues. This is a mistake. Training and exercising is an investment. It identifies weaknesses before they cause catastrophic failures. We must all plan, prepare and practice in order to be ready to face the unforeseen.

A quote that multiplies the importance of BCP to ensure smooth running of any/every organisation:-

“THE FUTURE AIN’T THE SAME AS IT USED TO BE, SO LET’S BE PREPARED”

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