



Business Continuity Planning (BCP) - Plainly Speaking

As a risk management practitioner, I have been involved with a whole range of risks, to organisations big and small, which had the potential to cause serious impact. Our cousins in Australia/New Zealand, known for their plain speaking call it disruption related risk in their standard AS/NZS 5050:2010. In this article I wish to present a simple introduction to the subject.

Why BCP?

At a domestic level are you the kind of person who keeps a spare key for the car or the house and knows how to get it? Have you backed up all the contacts on your mobile phone? (Contingency planning or Business Recovery). Do you keep a torch or candles in a place you can access when there is a power cut? Is your smoke alarm working? Are the batteries in good order? Have you thought about a basic fire drill in your home? (Emergency planning). Do you keep a list of important contacts should a crisis arise? (Crisis communication and management).

There are similar and obvious analogies in all businesses regardless of size. Now let's talk about how you might approach the development of a plan. I have broken this into 5 stages.

Stages one and two identification, evaluation and assessment

1. Business Impact Analysis BIA

Here we identify the critical business functions and their dependencies. For each function we determine how long before the business is seriously impacted. The timeline can be from hours to months. Think people, equipment/software and data.

2. Scenario or Threat Assessment

Look at events that might occur e.g. flood, fire, no access to premises, loss of personnel and cybercrime or corruption. This will give an opportunity to address weaknesses ahead of disruption and also highlight the necessity for the plan to follow which must cater for any disruption whether identified in advance or not.

Stages three to five the Plan itself.

3. Emergency Planning

Addresses the blue light issues (rescue and evacuation) with Drills and straightforward procedures

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4. Crisis Management

How will you communicate with all of the stakeholders, staff, next of kin, customers, authorities etc. You will need to identify an alternative location and for a small business this could be a hotel or partner.

5. Business Recovery

This section relies heavily on the information gleaned in stage 1 BIA and sets out the recovery action for maintenance of the critical functions. E.g moving to an alternative location with back up equipment, which could be as simple as using a laptop(s) with access to back up data.

Note up to date contact lists together with roles and responsibilities are vital and common through all threads of the plan. The plan should be reviewed and tested regularly or when significant changes occur and make sure you have access to it in the event of disruption.

References

1. Most recent International standard on subject ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management Systems.
2. Business Continuity Institute <http://www.thebci.org/>
3. <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Services/Winter-Ready-Campaign/Business-Continuity-Planning-in-Severe-Weather.pdf>

Contact Details

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"We knew very little in terms of how to go about implementing a BCP. Sean helped to simplify the process and gave us some very straightforward but necessary recommendations for making our business more resilient. We are now more comfortable that we have analysed our exposures in this area and know why and how we should continue to improve"

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