



A Quick Guide The importance of Business Continuity Planning

Business Continuity is not about being forced into creating expensive plans to satisfy external pressures. It is about recognising the positive contribution Business Continuity best practice can make to your organisation.

What is Business Continuity Planning?

In simple terms Business Continuity is the process of planning and validating how to survive a disaster or incident that disrupts normal business. It describes how to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover and restore critical functions and defines how a company will stay in business regardless of the source or scale of disruption – computer virus or crash, employee death or resignation, strike action, fire, flood, severe weather, terrorism, vandalism, robbery, pandemic illness, new legislation, random acts of God...

Why every company needs a Business Continuity Plan

There is evidence that companies without a business continuity plan are far more likely to collapse following an incident than those with a plan in place. This ability to demonstrate forward-thinking can also be very good for your company's reputation, helping you secure funding or new business. Increasingly business continuity planning is a factor when customers are procuring or commissioning work from new suppliers. Insurance providers are also beginning to ask businesses about plans before agreeing to insure.

Investing in an effective approach to Business Continuity can be very attractive to senior or executive management as it brings numerous benefits to the business:

- Reduced exposure of the business
- Risk management process in place
- More operational resilience as a result of identifying and reducing risks
- Reduce downtime due to the identification of alternative processes and workarounds
- Compliance issues can be identified and better managed
- Compliance with Health & Safety legislation

- Reduced exposure to liability actions
- Improved security
- Better protection of assets
- Improved operational effectiveness as a result of process re-engineering
- Ownership of key processes identified
- Defined and documented recovery processes
- Better record keeping
- Share value protected
- Supply chain resilience
- Reduce insurance premiums
- Competitive edge

The Business Continuity Planning Process

For Business Continuity Planning to be a success the Senior Management Team must buy-in to the process, this means supporting it with funding, resources, effective communication and if needed, training. A small team with wide experience from across the company should be appointed to take responsibility and the team's coordinator should ideally have project management skills.

Phase 1 - Analysis & Development

The first step is to carry out a Business Impact Analysis and identify the most important aspects of the company's operations and the likely weak points. It's well worth doing some research on previous incidents that have happened in similar industries as well as the local area.

Resilience audits should be carried out to check systems and processes for dealing with disruption. These audits will highlight areas for improvement and the action needed.

All key personnel should be identified at this stage and succession plans created for them, key personnel are not necessarily senior managers it can be anyone with unique skills or knowledge.

Be proportionate with your time. Don't waste effort planning for a flood if your company is not in a flood risk area. The Government publishes a National Risk Register which provides advice on how businesses can better prepare for civil emergencies and it can be downloaded from www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Phase 2 - Implementation

Once a company's overall strategy is agreed, specific plans in conjunction with the relevant departments should be created. Business continuity is most successful when its value is realised throughout the organisation, so introduce effective communication and make sure the Business Continuity Process is part of standard management practices.

Phase 3 - Testing & Review

All plans should be tested. Design 'disaster' scenarios to determine if plans are robust. Use these exercises to create action plans which will address any gaps. Testing has to be carried out regularly – a plan that works well one year may not be appropriate the next.

Some of the best planning comes out of real life. When incidents occur like the computer network crashes or an employee resigns without notice, use that experience to review the approach the business took to deal with it, what worked well, what could have been done better and then update continuity plans.



Altremis Ltd is an innovative business improvement consultancy based in the North West. They successfully work with clients to make their businesses more reliable, efficient, consistent, safer and achieve exceptional levels of customer satisfaction.

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