



PageOne Illuminating Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management – a White Paper

Many businesses believe that a disaster or a crisis will never happen to them. However, what would you do if, for example, your place of business caught fire, suffered from a complete power failure, or a large number of staff were struck down by a flu epidemic?

Maintaining business as usual suddenly becomes extremely difficult. Your customers begin to lose confidence in your ability to deliver products and services. Your reputation suffers.

In fact, without an effective Business Continuity Plan, you could face the complete failure of your business or loss of income.

If you think your business is not at risk, that's exactly what businesses near the Buncefield oil depot thought – before the explosion in December 2005.

Planning for Business Continuity is an essential and necessary part of running any modern organisation, helping it to continue to operate when things go wrong.

It ensures that an organisation is prepared to respond to disruption by identifying the greatest potential risks to the business and its products and services. It means putting processes in place to ensure business continues as 'normal' in the event of an incident. This whole process is referred to as Business Continuity Management (BCM).

BCM Methodology – essential elements

The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) has developed a widely accepted six stage process (the Business Continuity Management Process), to help organisations develop business continuity. The BCM process provides a generic framework which is applicable across all industries and all service sectors.

Stage 1 - Understanding the organisation

To develop an effective and appropriate Business Continuity Management programme, an understanding of the organisation is required to prioritise the organisation's products and services, and the resources and critical supporting activities required to delivering them.

Stage 2 - Determining business continuity strategies

When a disruption or failure to the business occurs, the business continuity strategy defined for each product or service provides a response that enables the organisation to maintain its activities and processes in order to continue to deliver products and services.

Stage 3 - Developing a BCM response

The BCM response involves developing incident management, business continuity and business recovery plans detailing the steps required to restore operations and/or keep them running.

Incident Management Plan

Sometimes known as a Crisis Management Plan, this defines how the organisation will address issues at a strategic level of a crisis when the issue falls outside of the scope of a Business Continuity Plan and the BCM strategy e.g. a national emergency. Incident Management Plans are commonly used to guide an organisation's media response to an incident.

Business Continuity Plan

The Business Continuity Plan is a tactical level plan that allows an organisation to recover or at least maintain a situation whereby the organisation's business processes can continue to deliver its products and services.

Stage 4 – Embedding BCM in the organisation's culture

Plans and strategies are of little value if the practise and philosophy behind BCM are not embraced by the organisation at all levels. To achieve this, buy-in must start at the top, allowing senior management to cascade BCM practice throughout the business.

Stage 5. Exercising, maintaining and reviewing

A good plan needs to work on both paper and in practice. Plans need to be current, workable and reliable in real situations. The only way to achieve this is to exercise a plan to see how it works. This permits analysis and allows an organisation to keep its plans up-to-date and relevant.

Stage 6. BCM Policy and Programme Management

BCM programme management enables business continuity to be maintained at a level that is appropriate to organisational size and complexity. It provides the framework around which the BCM is designed and built.

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