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PROMOTING BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Greater Manchester
Local Authority
Business Continuity Group

What is Business Continuity?

Business Continuity is a planning process, which provides a framework for ensuring resilience of your business to threats and challenges. This approach will help you to ensure that key customers, your brand, reputation and key suppliers are maintained, as well as your long-term survival.

Business Continuity needs to be considered by small companies and organisations as well as larger corporations. Plans need to be clear, simple (but not simplistic) and tailored to the needs of the business. Incidents and disasters can have catastrophic effects on businesses and the threats can come from incidents originating through accidents, criminal activity or incidents created by the natural elements.

Business Continuity should become part of the way you perform business. It is better to plan for incidents occurring to your business rather than having to “fire-fight” when it actually happens.

“Nearly 1 in 5 businesses suffer a major disruption every year”

Four Steps to Continuity Planning

- 1 Analyse and assess the Risks to your Business
- 2 Define your Business Continuity Strategy
- 3 Develop your plan
- 4 Rehearse your plan

1 *Analyse and assess the risks to your business*

Before you can analyse the risks to your business you need to map out how people in your organisation work together and how external suppliers and customers link in to your organisation.

There may well already be some contingency and emergency plans in existence so it would be worth discovering these and including them in your plan.

It is possible that during this mapping stage you will have the opportunity to win over staff to the importance of Continuity Management and promote the concept internally and externally.

Consider for each site

If your organisation operates over multiple sites, then they will all need separate continuity plans all based on the same principles. Find out how each site operates.

Where is your business vulnerable?

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



Consider for each department

How essential is the department's work to the running of the business on a day-to-day basis.

- 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 or emergency plans for their department
- How long can the department not operate for until catastrophic failure: hours / days / weeks

Are there any busy or quiet periods of operation e.g. Month-end for payroll dept., or end of year for Accounts dept.

Risks

Identifying risks is looking at the vulnerable areas of your business as well as thinking about 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 you technology or processes.

The essentials of Risk Assessment are 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 risk assessment, thus a lesser incident will also be able to be managed.

2 Define your Business Continuity strategy

It is essential to get backing from the senior team in your organisation. Most likely the board 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 after an incident
- 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 these approaches will still need a detailed plan to outline the arrangements for responding to the incident.

You will also need to consider how quickly recovery will need to occur for strategic areas of your business or various departments. It may be useful to draw a chart of the timescales involved in establishing certain functions.

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

An example would be the risk of an incident causing you not to be able to use a building and how to establish your operation at another location.

Options could be:

1. Have an agreement with other local organisations for assistance
2. Attempt to get temporary accommodation (or a "cold site")
3. Agreement for immediate accommodation at a specialist facility ("a hot site").

3 Develop your Plan

Your business continuity plan should contain certain key areas as 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 business.

Items to include

Roles and responsibilities

Make it clear who needs to do what, and who takes responsibility for what. You should always include deputies to cover key roles.

Incident checklists for key staff – Ensure that they are easy for readers to follow.

First Stage - Include clear, direct instructions or checklist for the crucial first hour or so after an incident.

Following Stages - Include a checklist list of things that may be required 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 a response 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 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:

Land Lord

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

Utility companies

Telephone, electricity, water, gas. Find out what they will need to know & their emergency supply procedures and

Neighbouring businesses

Near by businesses may be affected, but you may also be able to help each other

Your Insurance Company

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

Check what is covered by your insurance policy

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 will reassure them and this may assist in attracting new customers.

Local Authority

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. Can you help them by ensuring access routes, and providing plans?

Points to remember

Make your plan usable. 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 the 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?

4 *Rehearse your plan*

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

There are various levels of rehearsal or evaluation that can be employed. 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 the organisation.

Full rehearsal

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

What should you do next?

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

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

Be realistic about timescales, and involve colleagues. Get the backing of Senior Managers, Directors, Shareholders and Staff, as it will require a team effort to succeed.



What have you got to lose?

If you don't plan your for business continuity, should a disaster occur involving your business, you may be at risk of losing work to competitors, failures in your supply chain, loss of reputation, health and safety issues and higher insurance premiums.

Business Continuity affects everyone: customers, staff, the community and the economy. Be prepared, and consider Business Continuity.





Further information.

Information on Business Continuity and Emergency Planning can be found from a variety of sources:-

Business Continuity Institute www.thebci.org
0870 603 8783

UK Resilience www.ukresilience.info


Emergency Planning Society www.the-eps.org
0845 600 9587

MI5 Advice www.MI5.gov.uk
There is a specific section on business continuity

Survive www.survive.com
020 7265 2030

Continuity Central www.continuitycentral.com

There are also a number of specialist contractors who can assist with the development of Business Continuity Plans.





Contact Details.

Bolton Council:

Civil Contingencies Team.

Telephone 01204 336993

Email: emc.tactical@bolton.gov.uk

Bury Metro:

Roger Carter. Emergency Planning Manager

Telephone: 0161 253 7732

Email: businesscontinuity@bury.gov.uk

Manchester City Council:

Anthony Hughes. Civil Contingencies Unit

Telephone 0161 957 8327

Email: a.hughes@manchester.gov.uk

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council:

'Contact Oldham' Telephone 0161 911 3000

Email: emergency.planning@oldham.gov.uk

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council:

Risk and Resilience


Telephone 01706 647474

Email: emergency.planning@rochdale.gov.uk

Salford City Council:

Emergency Planning Unit

Telephone 0161 793 3439 / 3425





Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council:

Civil Resilience Unit

Telephone 0161 474 5599 Fax 0161 474 5523

Email: emergency.planning@stockport.gov.uk

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council:

Risk Management and Insurance

Telephone 0161 342 2891

Email: ken.crimes@tameside.gov.uk

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council:

Emergency Planning Team

Telephone: 0161 912 3422 Fax: 0161 912 3444

Email: emergency.planning@trafford.gov.uk

Wigan Council:

Civil Contingencies Unit

Telephone & Fax 01942 827188

Email: emergencyplanning@wiganmbc.gov.uk

