

## Could your Business Cope in a Crisis?



### What would you do if.....

- Your premises were flooded.
- Your staff could not get to work.
- You lost your utility supply.
- Your suppliers went out of business.

## What is Business Continuity Management?

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a process that provides a framework to ensure the resilience of your business to any eventuality, to help ensure continuity of service to your key customers and to protect your brand and reputation. It can provide a basis to ensure your long-term survivability following a disruptive event.

Business Continuity Plans need to be clear, concise and tailored to the needs of the business. Unplanned events, e.g. accidents, criminal activity or natural disasters, can have catastrophic effects on your business.

Business Continuity Management should become part of the way you perform business and it is better to plan ahead rather than having to 'catch up' when a problem occurs.

### Understand your Organisation.

#### What are the key activities of your business?

What are the activities in your organisation that, if they were stopped for any reason, would cause the greatest impact upon your business?

#### Some key questions are:

- Who in the organisation is essential? Who does the organisation depend on to carry out key activities?
- What equipment, IT, telecoms and other systems, does the organisation need to be able to function appropriately?
- Who depends on the organisation?
- Are there any service level agreements, legal or regulatory obligations on the organisation?
- Do disaster recovery, business continuity and emergency plans already exist and do they cover the key activities?
- Are there any natural fluctuations of operational activity e.g. Month-end for payroll, or end of year for accounts?

#### How long can your business manage without key activities?

The impact of an incident could be felt immediately, after several days or it could escalate over time. Understanding the time it would take for the organisation to feel the pain from the impact is important as this will dictate what you need to concentrate on first.

## Consider the Risks to your Organisation

- Loss of staff.
- Loss of systems (IT and telecommunications).
- Loss of utilities e.g. water, gas, electricity.
- Loss of, or access to, premises.
- Loss of key suppliers.
- Loss of reputation.
- Loss of customers.
- Disruption to transport.

### Determine your BCM Strategy.

Having identified your key activities and resources together with the associated risks it is important to determine how you will manage these risks. The following lists of strategies are those that are more commonly applied:

1. Accept the risks and change nothing.
2. Attempt to reduce the risks.
3. Attempt to reduce the risks and make plans to restore key activities as soon as possible.
4. Cease the activity altogether.

Whichever strategy is chosen it will need a detailed plan outlining the arrangements for the incident. You should also consider how quickly recovery would need to take place

for the strategic areas of your business or various departments. One essential decision is how you respond to risks that cannot be reduced.

### **Develop your BC Plan.**

Plan for worst case scenarios. If your plan covers what to do if you lose access to your whole building, it will also work if you only lose access to one floor.

#### **Information from outside your business**

Consider getting specialist information on the roles of other organisations that may be involved in the emergency such as: landlords, neighbouring businesses, utility companies, insurance companies, suppliers and customers, Local Authorities and the emergency services.

#### **Points to remember**

Make your plan usable. Do not 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?

### **Exercise, Maintain & Review your Plan.**

Testing and rehearsing your plan is one of the fundamental parts of contingency planning. It gives an opportunity to test the arrangements and principles of the plan in a 'safe' environment, without risk to the business. It is vital that Plans are reviewed after every exercise, real incident or 'near miss' to ensure they are up to date and appropriate.

### **What's the Benefit of Effective Business Continuity Management?**

1. **Reduce the chance of disruption to service or production.**
2. **Minimise impact if disruption happens.**
3. **Reduce the financial losses you incur.**
4. **Prevent loss of business to competitors.**
5. **Enhance your reputation and build customer confidence.**
6. **Build staff confidence.**
7. **Ensure that you comply with legal requirements.**

Good BCM can give your business a competitive advantage. Many companies will not use suppliers unless they have effective BCM arrangements in place.

### **Business Continuity Management**

#### **Top 10 Tips**

1. **Identify your key services/ activities.**
2. **Identify what key staff or systems are necessary to deliver those services.**
3. **Decide what risks your business could encounter and how your business would be affected.**
4. **Determine how you can reduce these risks.**
5. **Devise a business continuity plan.**
6. **Ensure it details the actions you need to take to enable you to continue your services should there be a problem.**
7. **Raise awareness of the plan throughout your business.**
8. **Test the plan to check it works well.**
9. **Regularly maintain and update the plan.**
10. **Ensure your employees are involved in the planning.**



For more information please visit Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit at  
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