



BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS FOR
BUSINESSES WITH 10 OR FEWER
EMPLOYEES

INFORMATION ON BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS FOR BUSINESSES WITH 10 OR FEWER EMPLOYEES

You will find that it is quick, easy and inexpensive to create a business continuity plan.

This is a basic five-step guide to get you started on business continuity planning.

The steps are:

1. *Analyse your business*
2. *Assess the risks*
3. *Develop your strategy*
4. *Develop your plan*
5. *Rehearse your plan*

Each section has handy hints and advice on completing your plan.

Step 1. Analyse your business

The first step of a business continuity plan is to think about the parts of your business that are crucial to keeping it going.

Where to start?

You might find it helpful to approach this stage by asking:

- 1) Where is your business most vulnerable?
- 2) What would be worst for your business?

For both questions, think about your:

- *Staff*
- *Customers*
- *Suppliers*
- *IT systems and processes*
- *Partnerships*
- *Buildings*
- *Timescales*

For further ideas think about your businesses strongest and weakest links, and maybe what would happen in a particular event.

Step 2. Assess the Risks

What are the most likely and greatest risks to your business?

Analyse the risk by asking yourself the following two questions:

How likely is it to happen?

- What effect will it have on the business?
- What might happen?

The table below will help you think about whether you are prepared for particular incidents. You will need to write down your own examples of incidents and list ways of how to cope with them.

Incident	Yes/No	Preventative measure?
There is a fire and you are not able to use your site for weeks.		e.g. fire resistant equipment/Alternative site?
You are burgled and some damage to your property has taken place.		e.g. insurance?/good security?/separate off-site computer back-up files.
There is a power failure that last for days.		e.g. a backup generator
Your telephones stop working at the busiest time of the day.		

What is the worst that could happen?

What would be the worst thing for your business and how likely is it to happen? How would you cope with it? Is there anything you can do to minimise the risk of it happening?

If you are prepared for the worst, then you can deal with incidents of lesser scale.

Think about three worst things that could befall your business. How likely are they to happen? What can you do to prevent them happening?

Worst-case scenarios	Answer:
What is the worst-case scenario?	
What is the likelihood of this happening?	
How can you cope with it?	
What can you do to prevent it?	
How much can you afford to lose if you are unable to run your business for <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> days weeks months? </div>	
What are the greatest risks to your business? Identify the top three.	1. 2. 3.
What do you need to do to stay operational if any of them takes place?	
Are you insured against the worst eventualities?	

How long can your business last during an incident?

Some companies can function for a long time during a crisis; others are more at risk and can suffer from the smallest of incidents. You need to establish how long your business could function at a reduced level and what that level is: consider how much you can afford to lose if you are unable to run your business for days/ weeks/ months.

I.e. should your business be forced to run at only 50% its normal activities, 20%, 80% etc? Is it better to close the office/ plant down for a while? Make sure you know your break-even point!

What needs to be done to make sure your business can still function at a minimum level?

Remember that you can't prepare yourself against all types of incidents, however much time or money you spend, but planning can reduce the damage.

Step 3. Develop your strategy

What to put in the plan?

Having analysed your business and assessed the risks involved, you now know which areas to focus your plan on, be it on customer care during an emergency or on having remote access to your phone system. You will also know which type of potential incident would hit your business worst and how to minimise the damage that it could cause.

You should now know whether you need to be fully operational to survive, or whether it will be enough to operate at 50%. Do you know your break-even point? If not, it is very important to work it out.

It might be better for you and your colleagues to close the business down for a period of time and re-open fully when the incident has passed. Or would it be better to run the business through the incident so you don't lose your staff?

Are you committed to reducing risks or do you prefer to take risks and have a comeback plan later?

You have established what is important to the survival of your business and what the risks are. Now you can write the plan. Be sure to use non-technical language, making it accessible and easy to understand by everyone.

Include:

- A description of what the plan is trying to achieve and how to make it work
- Essential check lists
- A description of your premises
- The structure of the crisis team - who needs to do what
- Staff focus

YOU ALSO NEED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO TEST YOUR PLAN AND TRAIN YOUR STAFF.

A description of what the plan is trying to achieve and how to make it work.

The plan should focus on the most vital aspects of your business and address the weakest links in your organisation. It should include worst-case scenarios and their likelihood, and suggest ways of minimising the risks.

Things to consider when developing your strategy:	Answer
What are the three most vital things to your business?	
What is the weakest link in your business?	
What are the three worst-case scenarios for your business?	
How likely are they to happen?	
What effect will they have on your business?	
What preventative measures can you take to prevent them from happening	
What measures can you take to minimise the effect they will have on your business?	e.g. prepare an off-site location to work from etc.

Include a definition of what a disaster is in your plan, for example: 'any significant, threatening incident towards personnel, buildings, or the business that will require special measures to be taken to restore things to normal'.

The business owner/ owners or directors should agree to the plan, and encourage its development. Their support ensures that if an incident occurs, they and everyone involved should follow the plan.

Essential checklists

Any good plan should contain checklists. They ensure a quick-look reference guide to what needs to be done during an emergency. Make sure they are kept up to date, distributed to the correct people and are readily available.

We have listed some examples for you to use as a starting point. Compile your own checklists to suit your business.

- What to do immediately following an incident (if evacuation is needed):
- What to do after the first hour after the incident (if a move to an alternative site is taking place)
- Essential and useful contact details
- Essential and useful items
- Examples of software and hardware inventory lists that you should have on and off-site

A description of your premises

This should contain information on:

- Location of the emergency exits.
- A primary meeting point in case of evacuation
- A fall-back option if you have to evacuate in a different direction
- Details of what the premises contain.
- Information that is important and specific to your premises i.e. storage facilities

The structure of the crisis team

Even though your company does consist of fewer than 10 employees, you will still find it useful to include information such as when to implement the plan and who has the authority to implement it. Include both senior and junior members of staff in the plan and their respective responsibilities; make sure that there are reserves for each role to cover holidays and sickness.

Staff focus

Think about how your staff will react if quickly evacuated from your building. For example: have some spare petty cash set aside for emergencies. Staff may not have wallets or keys with them if their personal belongings have been left behind and they might need cash to be able to get home.

Step 4 Develop and keep developing your plan

It is important to update your plan regularly: you do not want to be in a crisis with an out of date plan. Remember, it will need to be updated when key personnel change, when you move to a different location or when your key clients or suppliers change. You might wish to expand it and add local information, or fresh ideas to make it even more useful.

Consider the following:

- Find out what the emergency services need to know in case of an incident. They also offer security and evacuation advice.
- Find out from your local authority emergency planning officer what they would do in response to a major incident or terrorist attack.
- Keep in touch with neighbouring businesses. How can you help each other?
- Find out what information utility companies will need in case of an incident.
- What information your insurer will need from you?
- Who else will be affected by your decisions: your customers and suppliers involve them if you can in the planning process. How will they want the information communicated if an incident occurs?

And remember to plan for worst-case scenarios:

- If you plan for a fire destroying a whole building, it will also work if only one or two rooms have been seriously damaged.
- If you plan to work at an associate's office for 2 months, can you also work there for 5 days etc.
- Planning for a worse case scenario will make you realise what incidents are most dangerous to your business and whether you can reduce the risk so that your company can survive.

Step 5. Rehearsal and Staff Training

Once the plan is developed, it needs to be tested. How will you know whether you have omitted something if you don't test your plan?

Testing should be carried out in an environment to reproduce authentic conditions. Although it might not be practicable to change premises for a few days, it might be a good idea to test your plan at another premises with key staff for a few hours.

It is vital to test the plan with all the staff so that each employee is fully aware of their responsibilities.

It is very important to train your staff:

- Make sure all your staff have a copy of the plan.
- Ensure that they have the chance to read through the plan and that they understand their own role and particular responsibilities.
- Give them an opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues as they might highlight some aspects that need to be changed.

REMEMBER, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO REVISE YOUR PLAN REGULARLY.