

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING E-BOOK SERIES

GUIDE TO CONTINUITY

Ensuring your business carries on



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What is Business Continuity?

Business continuity is doing whatever is necessary to ensure that a business carries on operating, during as well as after disruption or disaster.

The key elements of a good business continuity plan are:

1. Resilience: withstanding interruptions and adverse conditions
2. Recovery: quickly getting back to business after a disruption or disaster
3. Contingency: having temporary measures in place to make the transition to full recovery
4. Ongoing improvement: continually analyzing, observing, suggesting and taking action



What are the Advantages of a Well-Produced Business Continuity Plan?

Survival

Some businesses have to close down after a data loss event or as a result of ongoing downtime. A solid business continuity plan will mean the difference between disarray and a smooth transition from crisis to full recovery, and business as usual.

Reduced inefficiencies

Part of the business continuity process involves analyzing operations, equipment, personnel and processes so that inefficiencies can be identified and rectified before any losses are incurred.

Marketing edge

Having a business continuity plan in place solidifies your company's reputation as being reliable. Wouldn't you rather rely on the services of a company with solid business continuity principles in place than one without?



Increased staff morale

Employees and staff are more likely to stay at a company if their ideas and input are appreciated and rewarded. In the same way, good leaders will rely on their employees to contribute to improvements and the culture of continuity.

Reduced insurance premiums

Insurance companies take factors such as a proper business continuity plan into consideration when calculating premiums. Things such as vehicle tracking and asset management may reduce one's insurance premiums.

Compliance with industry standards

Business continuity has become necessary for compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other data privacy regulations such as the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Companies need to report a data breach within 72 hours, but if you can't access your vital business data (due to a disaster) this won't be possible and you may face crippling fines.

An efficient communication system

Communication is key to business operations and survival. A key part of knowledge transfer is communication and if it doesn't happen efficiently, key processes, operations and systems are affected.

Cost saving

Losses incurred as a result of downtime, such as loss of revenue and productivity, reputational damage, customer loss, repair costs, compensation and overtime are all serious threats to a business. If you can keep your business running while you sort out the disruption, you'll avoid all these threats.



Is a Business Continuity Plan Really Necessary?

Well, the consequences of not having an adequate business continuity plan can be far-reaching and potentially financially crippling. It's not only about protecting your digital landscape, your hardware and vital information, but about protecting your ability to deliver orders, provide customers with the service they expect, and fulfill critical business ops. Without a business continuity plan, your risks may include:

- Business downtime
- Loss of money and income
- Higher operating costs
- Poor staff morale
- Loss of customers due to bad service
- Legal action taken by unhappy customers and/or employees
- Legal non-compliance
- Possible business closure





What Should a Business Continuity Plan Consist of?

An effective communication system

To track whether memos have been read, test if they've been understood and actioned, and send out new updates.

A decisive risk-analysis method

To allow you to identify, analyze and rate threats in an easy and informative way. It should also guide you in making informed decisions.

A way to measure and audit

So you can test and evaluate all your systems and your personnel, and maintain forward momentum in ongoing improvement.

Proper security procedures

As well as security policies and access control so that your assets and vehicles are safe. The loss of assets or intellectual property can cripple a business.

Cyber security and information systems management

To enable you to manage and control access to devices remotely. It should also include antivirus and Internet security, automated software installation and maintenance tasks, as well as a way to control access to productivity-killing websites and a contactable customer service team.



Data backup

So that your confidential and critical data will be securely backed up online and off-site, and retrievable without much downtime or loss. The advent of cloud backup has seen many businesses move away from the risky and cumbersome practice of backing up to an external hard-drive.

Backup provider check

Make sure your backup provider has a business continuity plan in place itself. You should also make sure your data is stored in an encrypted format on secure servers and that the hosting facility provides redundancy, i.e. the duplication of key components in a system so that in the event of a failure of one, another will take over.

Asset management

Is about knowing who uses your assets (from vehicles to computer monitors), where they are exactly and who the suppliers and service agents are. All vehicles should have satellite tracking to monitor their locations.

Mobility

Means accessing your business continuity management system remotely or via a mobile application. Smartphones have made it possible to perform functions that weren't possible before.

Automation

Involves your business continuity management system being able to SMS and email employees or key holders automatically in the event of a disaster or incident.





Questions About Implementing a Business Continuity Plan?

Will it cost a fortune?

Implementing a business continuity plan doesn't have to be a laborious task or excessively expensive. A well-designed system will have all the important aspects presented in a simple format.

How does one build a business continuity plan?

While there may be times when a consultant will be needed, in most cases, if a simple, logical approach is followed and the right tasks are assigned to the right people, a business continuity plan can be designed in-house.

Is it easy to do?

Absolutely. By using a structured, logical approach, setting deadlines and encouraging a collaborative effort, implementing a business continuity plan can be easy to do.





A Simple Approach to Creating Your Business Continuity Plan

The process listed below is based on ISO 22301, but without its unintelligible jargon. The steps are separated into phases that don't have to be followed in sequence, but can be completed by different people, concurrently. The four steps are:

1 Conception

Decide to implement a business continuity plan, allocate a budget, and invite staff to take on roles that interest them.

2 Analysis

Analyze your employees, services, assets, service providers and the possible threats to your business. The following analyses are relevant here:

Employee analysis

Create a schedule of roles carried out by each employee and the additional skills each one can offer in an emergency.

Service provider analysis

Create a schedule of contact details for service providers and backup service providers in the event of a disruption.



Asset analysis

Create a schedule for inspecting assets and checking if consumables are available before a situation arises.

Threat analysis

Rate the possibility of disruptive incidents happening and the effects they could have.

Quarterly simulations/emergency drills

Your business continuity plan must be simulated and audited quarterly to ensure the procedures set out therein allow personnel to effectively respond during a controlled disruption.

3 Formulation of business continuity plans

Compile a roadmap of how to recover from a disruption, with an explanation of who would do what.

4 Testing and maintenance

Give employees access to your business continuity plan and test it with a drill every quarter.





Conclusion

The initial costs of setting up a business continuity plan and getting it up and running will yield rewards in a short space of time. Not only does a business continuity plan prevent losses, it can bring about a healthy team of members who work together, are rewarded for their contributions, and who will strive to keep the business operational.

About 3rd Element Consulting

3rd Element Consulting is a woman-owned Managed IT Service Provider. For more than 15 years we've worked with local government, law enforcement and professional service organizations. Their IT has to work; lives can hang in the balance. Our clients are able to simply Consider IT Solved.

With 3rd Element's Plan4Continuity (SaaS), your business continuity plan is a live system that contains plans, simulation schedules and audit logs of all activations. It is also a full management system of your business continuity activities and communications.

