

Business Continuity: Management Briefing

Why is business continuity important?

Business continuity is considered to be a holistic management process that identifies potential impacts on a business and builds a framework for resilience into processes and procedures to ensure there are effective safeguards and responses to protect the business in the short, medium and long term.

Understanding the issues that might affect the ability to deliver goods and services to customers and clients on an ongoing basis is vital to effectively plan for and mitigate against potential interruption or worse.

Business continuity came into sharp focus for many businesses in the run up to the 2012 Olympics and the need for changes to working times, delivery methods, supplier arrangements and general staff working arrangements. In these challenging economic times, having robust plans in place will help businesses remain flexible enough to respond to changing the market conditions.

If customers cannot be supplied with the goods and services they need, even for a short time, they may find alternative suppliers: competitors!

What areas should be considered?

- **People**
How would the business continue without key members of staff?
- **Property**
Where would the business operate from if a key property/location was unavailable?
- **Processes**
How long could the business operate without its main IT platform?
- **Providers**
Which suppliers/providers are critical to service delivery and customers?

Legislation

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 place various duties on employers including the duty to have procedures in place for situations giving rise to serious and imminent danger. In particular:

—(1) Every employer shall—

(a) establish and where necessary give effect to appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger to persons at work in his undertaking;

(b) nominate a sufficient number of competent persons to implement those procedures in so far as they relate to the evacuation from premises of persons at work in his undertaking; and

(c) ensure that none of his employees has access to any area occupied by him to which it is necessary to restrict access on grounds of health and safety unless the employee concerned has received adequate health and safety instruction.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on certain organisations to have continuity plans as category 1 and category 2 responders. This includes; the emergency services, county councils, local authorities, hospitals, fire authorities, transport companies and utilities providers.

Trade bodies, associations and other enforcing authorities such as the Financial Services Authority also require business continuity arrangements.

Business continuity plan

Having undertaken this assessment a business continuity plan can be developed. The plan can then be periodically tested to ensure it is suitable for the business.

The assessment and plan should be commensurate with the perceived risks to the business, the costs associated with developing the plan and response to the foreseeable risks identified.

Business impact assessment

The first part in the process will be to identify all of the foreseeable risks which might affect the business. A methodical approach to conducting a business impact assessment.

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