

Your business,
safe in our hands

Computer Systems
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*"Luck is what happens when
preparation meets opportunity."*

Seneca, Roman philosopher, mid-1st century AD

Business Continuity

An Overview

Focus on Your Business - Not Your Technology

Business Continuity Management

Business Continuity (BC) is a holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threaten a business and provides a framework for building resilience and the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value creating activities.

Programme Management and Policy

The BC Policy of a business provides the framework around which the BC capability is designed and built. It is a documented statement by the business stakeholders of the level of importance that it places on BC. It describes the scope of the programme and assigns responsibilities.

An effective BC programme will involve the participation of various managerial, operational, administrative and technical disciplines that need to be co-ordinated throughout its life cycle using procedures and guidelines from the business' BC Policy document.

Whilst BC is not primarily about emergency response (this is the sister discipline, Disaster Recovery (DR)), it is inevitable that the BC team will be expected to be ready to respond and ready to provide a lead during an incident response.

Understanding the Business

To be able to develop an appropriate BC programme you must first understand your business and the urgency with which activities and processes need to be resumed if they are disrupted.

These questions need to be asked;

1. What are the objectives of the business?
2. How are the business objectives achieved?
3. What are the products/services of the business?
4. Who is involved (both internally and externally) in the delivery of products/services?
5. What are the time imperatives on their delivery?

Business Impact Analysis (BIA)

The BIA is the foundation on which the BC response is developed. It identifies, quantifies and qualifies the business impacts of a loss, interruption or disruption of business processes so that management can determine at what point in time these become intolerable (after an interruption). This is called the 'Maximum Tolerable Period of Disruption'. It therefore provides the data from which appropriate continuity strategies can be determined.

Risk Assessment (RA)

In the context of BC, a RA looks at the probability and impact of a variety of specific threats that could cause a business interruption. This activity should be focused on the most urgent business functions identified during the BIA process.

Determining BC Strategies

This is about determining and selecting BC



strategies to be used to maintain the business activities and processes through an interruption.

BC strategies concern;

1. The selection of alternative operating methods to be used after an interruption to maintain or resume business activities and their dependencies (internal and external) to a priority, and time table determined in the BIA.
2. The protection of vulnerabilities and single points of failure in business critical processes identified in the RA.

Corporate Strategies

Key decisions at a corporate level are;

1. Recovery Time Objective (RTO) for each activity (based on the Maximum Tolerable Period of Disruption).
2. Separation distance of alternative facilities and data storage.

Activity Level Strategy

At the Activity Level the complexity of interdependencies on services, business processes, data and technologies needs to be analysed and appropriate tactics chosen to address the needs of;

1. People, workforce, skills and knowledge.
2. Premises.
3. Supporting technologies.
4. Information.
5. Equipment and supplies.
6. Stakeholders, partners and contractors.

The organisation should also;

1. Understand the role of local emergency responders.
2. Reduce the likelihood of specific perceived threats.
3. Take impact mitigation measures.

Resource Level Consolidation

This consolidates the resource requirements of the various activities across the business and ensures they can be met both in scale and within the required timeframe.

Developing and Implementing a BC Response

The aim of the various plans covered in this stage is to identify in advance, as far as possible, the actions that are necessary and the resources which are needed to enable the organisation to manage an interruption whatever its cause. If the event falls outside the scope of the assumptions on which the BC plan was based then the situation should be escalated to those responsible for implementing the Incident Management Plan.

Incident Management Plan

Case studies of major incidents suggest that effective and timely management of a major incident is the significant factor in protecting a business' brand from financial and reputation damage. This is achieved through the management of external stakeholder requirements.

Business Continuity Plan

The BC plan pulls together the response of the whole business to a disruptive incident. Those using the plan should be able to analyse information from the response team concerning the impact of the incident, select and deploy appropriate strategies from those available in the plan, and direct the resumption of business units according to agreed priorities. The components and content of a BC plan will vary from business to business and will have a different level of detail based on the culture of the business and the technical complexity of the solutions.

Business Unit Plans

Business Unit Plans provide the operational response to the incident of each department of the business. Examples of

Business Continuity is not about "luck" it's about the "planning"

"Plans are nothing; planning is everything"

Dwight D. Eisenhower



Business Unit Plans are:

1. An incident response team.
2. A Human Resources response to welfare issues in an incident.
3. A business department's resumption plan.
4. IT Logistical plans.

Exercising, Maintenance and Review

A BC capability cannot be considered reliable until it has been exercised, maintained and audited.

Exercising

The development a BC capability is achieved through a structured exercising programme. To be successful an exercising programme must begin simply and escalate gradually.

Maintenance

The BC maintenance programme ensures that the business remains ready to handle incidents despite the constant changes that all business' experience.

Review

An audit function is one of self-assessment or impartial review against defined standards and policies and to provide remedial recommendations.

Two standards that is suitable for use in audit are BS25000-2 and ISO 27001.

Embedding BC in the Business' Culture

Developing a BC culture is vital to maintaining enthusiasm, readiness and effective response at all levels.

Assessing BC Awareness and Training

Before planning, and designing the components of, an awareness campaign, it is critical to understand what level of awareness currently exists.

Developing BC within the Business' Culture

Designing and delivering education, training and awareness is an ongoing process within the business.

Monitoring Cultural Change

The awareness campaign should be reviewed as an ongoing task to identify any effort required to maintain it at an acceptable level.

Summary

You may begin to think that what it takes to implement a BC plan is too much and you may feel overwhelmed ... this is normal and something that most business' initially experience.

But remember your not alone—Not-a-Geek have been through this process many times and are ready to assist your business.

Remember—
 "How do you eat an elephant?"
 "One bite at a time!"

Contact Not-a-Geek today and we'll guide you through the next steps are;

1. Learn your core business processes
2. Identify what critical assets exist for the processes.
3. Identify what could threaten those assets (and therefore the core processes) (RA)
4. Identify what the impact to your business will be if the core processes are interrupted (BIA)
5. Protect those processes by protecting the supporting assets (prevention, mitigation, etc.)
6. Develop contingency action lists (Plan)
7. Test, practice, revise to keep the BC strategy relevant to your business



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"We'll either find a way, or make one" - General Hannibal