
BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

Keeping your business running . . .

If you are a business owner, and your business continuity management is not up-to-scratch, you are taking a big risk, however large or small your organisation . . .

Introduction

The following is adapted from an article by John Turner¹ published in the magazine of "Women in Banking and Finance"². It is intended as a general introduction to Business Continuity Management, of interest to business owners, managers and staff. (Business Continuity Management is also known as 'BCP' - Business Continuity Planning.)

That Monday Morning Feeling

Imagine one Monday morning turning up for work and finding that it isn't there. You find, instead, a gaping hole in the ground and a few fire-fighters damping down the smouldering remains. Nobody has been hurt, but the building and everything in it are gone.

Whether your first thought is "*where's the nearest travel agent*" or "*but I left my paycheque here on Friday*", you will soon start to wonder whether your organisation will now continue or whether you should start looking for a new job. If it is (was?) your own business, the shock may be somewhat greater and the implications more far-reaching.

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is about answering this question before it needs to be asked. If your organisation had a proper business continuity plan you would have known immediately what to do and would have been confident that your organisation was facing a difficulty, but not a disaster.

Indeed, in a larger organisation, it's very unlikely you would have arrived at the former offices at all that morning. You would have been told during the weekend to go to a completely different building. The crisis management team would have made sure that everything was working at the temporary site by the time you got there, so you would have sat down at your temporary desk, and started work roughly as if nothing had happened.

What does BCM cover?

Such a smooth recovery does not happen by good luck. Somewhere inside every organisation there should be a team constantly planning for this sort of emergency scenario. As the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) (www.thebci.org) defines it, BCM "*provides the strategic and operational framework to review the way an organisation provides its products and services whilst increasing its resilience to disruption, interruption or loss*".

Those who work in IT are familiar with Disaster Recovery sites. These are backup datacentres where, in the event of a major problem at the main datacentre, processing can continue to support the business. DR is an essential component of BCM, but you will also need places for essential personnel to work, communications and desktop equipment, and all the other day-to-day needs of an office,

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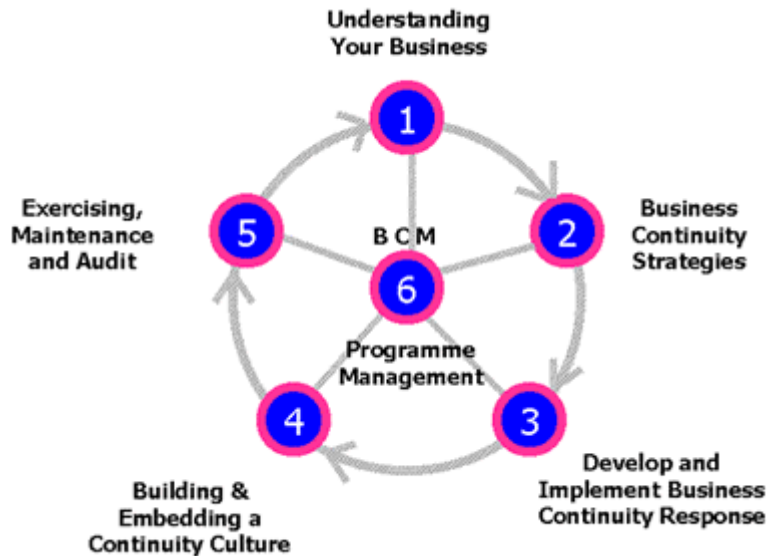
² www.wibf.org.uk



including catering services. Arranging for all of this to be smoothly in place takes more than a little advanced planning.

Total BCM

The Business Continuity Institute illustrates the totality of BCM using the following diagram:



There are a few points here worthy of particular note:

1. This is an ongoing process. An organisation is constantly changing and its continuity plans must change with it.
2. The plans must be exercised. In most buildings the fire alarms are tested weekly. That may save lives but it will not protect the businesses.
3. Step 4 ("Building and Embedding a Continuity Culture") as a big challenge. In organisations that exhibit best practice, everybody is constantly aware of the need to protect the business from events. How does your organisation score on this one? Try the checklist below.

The personal touch

Let's look at "Continuity Culture" a little closer. Business Continuity can - and should - affect even your smallest actions. Last time you created a spreadsheet containing vital business information did you place it on your 'C:' drive? What vital papers are there in your desk? Work through the checklist in the box and you will see that you play a vital part in ensuring that your business survives.

If you are already well informed about your organisation's Business Continuity activities, the chances are you are part of a best practice organisation. If not, it's time you found out more because, if the worst thing really does happen, it's your job that's in danger.

Checklist:

Do I know where I would need to go if we were to invoke our business continuity plan, and how I would get there?

Are my out-of-office contact details on file (and up-to-date), so that I could be reached?

Have I saved anything important on my 'C:' drive that should really be on the main network?

Are there any papers in my desk that could not be recreated in the event of a fire?

Special issues for smaller businesses

Most smaller businesses have no continuity plans and have given little or no thought to how they would cope following even a minor event. In many ways these are the most vulnerable businesses of

all, so when things do go wrong the problems and costs that result can be fatal to the business. The business continuity issues for small businesses vary widely and need to be addressed with considerable care. In particular the funds and skills that are likely to be available are much more constrained than in a bigger concern. As a smaller business ourselves we understand these issues and can help.

Getting Started

If you are a business owner, and your continuity management is not up-to-scratch, you are taking a big risk, however large or small your organisation. Please contact us today for a discussion on how we help.

Feedback

Feedback on this article is welcome. Any comments or suggestions can be emailed to the author: john@burghhouse.com

About Burgh House Limited

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