

HISCG Business Continuity Advice

How would you cope if your offices were flooded? Would important work be lost if you experienced a lengthy power cut? What will happen if half of your workforce went down with 'flu over several weeks?

Following any serious accident or disruption could your business be up and running quickly? Could you do your job and meet the needs of your clients and customers or would your business be seriously damaged?

If you don't know the answers you should be thinking about Business Continuity Management because experience has shown that organisations with business continuity arrangements in place are more likely to stay in business and recover quickly in the event of an emergency than those who do not.

What is Business Continuity Management?

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a process that helps people manage the risks to the smooth running of their business and aims to ensure it can continue in the event of serious disruption.

BCM is about thinking ahead and planning for any crisis and making sure that your business can recover quickly and survive. However, the crises that affect your business are not necessarily large scale catastrophes. Smaller events involving one or more key staff could affect critical parts of your operation. BCM is designed to ensure that a crisis does not become a disaster.

A Business Continuity Plan is a set of arrangements that enable people to manage at a time of a crisis. It helps if the plan is created by the people who know how the whole business is run.

How can you start?

A wide range of advice on business continuity is available, much of it free. The Government's Preparing for Emergencies website www.pfe.gov.uk provides extensive information for business (including Expecting the Unexpected) and links to key organisations. More detailed

advice for business continuity professionals can be found at www.ukresilience.info. The site also provides links to other bodies such as the Business Continuity Institute <http://www.thebci.org/gpg.htm>

If you do not have a Business Continuity Plan in place then consider how to make your organisation more resilient while the plan is being developed. Identify someone to lead and consider succession planning for the loss of key personnel, organise a robust cascade system for contacting staff during the day and outside working hours. Set up an outside telephone number that staff and their relatives can use for information if your main site is out of action.

Make sure that copies of essential plans and information on business processes, data or records are stored off-site and that IT systems can be accessed from other sites. Staff may continue to work from home if they have remote access to your IT systems. Ensure that you have robust banking and financial arrangements so that you can continue to make payments and sustain your business.

Who can help?

At the local level, the Council will provide advice and assistance to businesses in

relation to business continuity management. Consult the Council's website for further details.

What are the benefits?

Experience shows that businesses are far more likely to survive a disaster if they have thought about it in advance and planned accordingly.

Good BCM requires a detailed understanding of the business and how it works. Engaging in BCM can drive operational efficiencies for normal business.

Banks, investors, insurers, customers and suppliers are more likely to take a company that has a business continuity plan more seriously. Reduced premiums and better access to finance may give you a commercial advantage even before an event occurs.

Business continuity plans build employee confidence and staff will appreciate the fact that the business is doing all it can to protect their well-being and place of work.

Rapid response to an emergency can enhance your reputation and build customer confidence.

In the end, business continuity is about responsible management at all levels of a business. BCM can assist with ensuring compliance with regulations such as health and safety and supports good corporate governance.

Does a small company need a Business Continuity Plan?

Yes, even a sole trader is advised to have systems in place to be able to continue his/ her work in case of matters such as fraud, theft, sabotage, flooding, fire, technological and utility failures and terrorist attacks.

For further information contact:

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