



The Value of a Business Continuity Plan



For those paying attention, you probably noticed that over the past several years we have been inundated by news and weather reports of a growing number of natural disasters. You name the type - hurricanes, earthquakes, wild fires, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, mud slides, blizzards or drought. Regardless of your personal beliefs regarding global warming, climate change or natural cycles here on Earth, news coverage indicates that natural disasters have increased 400% over the past three decades.

Thousands of people have been injured, died or just disappeared. Roads were blocked or completely washed out. Millions found themselves homeless as cities and villages were destroyed as a result of these catastrophic events. Businesses were certainly not exempted from these disasters. Buildings were flooded or washed away, roofs collapsed and wind damages were extreme. Only those businesses who prepared were able to get back on their feet and resume operations quickly.

VISUALIZE



Would your organization be ready should a natural disaster occur in your area tomorrow? How quickly could you get back up and running? Do you have a business continuity plan, sometimes called a crisis management plan, in place? How likely is it that you could pick yourselves up, brush yourselves off and start moving forward again in a short period of time? Could you quickly contact your key personnel? Would each know what they need to do? Is there an alternative location and facility lined up that you could use, or could your business function with staff telecommuting for a while? What about your records; are they backed up in a secure, yet easily accessible, location? What about your computers, software and other equipment? How about materials and inventory? Can they be stored safely ahead of time, or will you be able to access vendors for quick replacement? How will you communicate if phones and Internet are unavailable? What if power is knocked out for an extended period of time?

There is something quite unsettling about being the victim of such a situation. Too many businesses have faced these same questions. No matter how quickly local, state and federal government steps in with aid, it can take months and often years to put areas stricken by natural disasters back together again. There are myriad things to think about and remember if your firm is to survive. The good news is, it need not be an impossible situation if you take the time when life is good to plan for disasters. Pre-planning allows you to think through what you might need to carry on. In the midst of chaos, it is more difficult to think clearly and strategically. Taking time to develop a continuity plan before you need it can make what seems impossible become possible.

ANALYZE



Get started now, before crisis enters your area. Create the documentation you will need to carry on your business. Make copies of your continuity plan - electronic and printed copies. Make sure all of your key staff have copies - in a dry, secure location, and understand their areas of responsibility. Include contact information for each of them as well as your suppliers and professional advisers like your insurance agent, attorney and accountant. Each key staffer needs to have contact information for his/her staff, and instructions for his/her area of responsibility. Be aware of what equipment you depend on to run your business. Computers, software, printers, plotters, fax machines, phones and manufacturing equipment all fall into this category. What do you depend on and how will you save or replace it quickly?

Business continuity planning is simply scenario planning. It involves taking time to ask a lot of "What if...?" questions, then addressing all the possibilities of what might happen and how it would affect the various aspects of your business. Being prepared can take a great deal of the trauma out of a catastrophic situation. Create your strategic continuity plan, copy it, print it, pass it around. Be sure that everyone knows what will be expected of them to get their part of the business back up and running. As the saying goes, 'practice makes perfect'. Take a day to practice the strategies you have developed to see how everything works, or what you may have forgotten. While it might seem like a lot of work, this planning can make the difference between your business surviving and its demise. With any luck, you will never have to use it. **STRATEGIZE**

VISUALIZE - ANALYZE - STRATEGIZE ***Your Way to Success***

Maurer on the Move...

Terri Maurer will be in Tucson, Arizona on Thursday, April 17th presenting 'Designing for the Generations' a .2 credit IDCEC-accredited continuing education program at the ASID Arizona South 'Arizona Designs '13' education and trade exposition. The event will be held at the DoubleTree at Reid Park from 8am to 4pm.

For more information and registration, connect to: <http://www.asidtucson.org>

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