

Business Continuity

Expect the unexpected

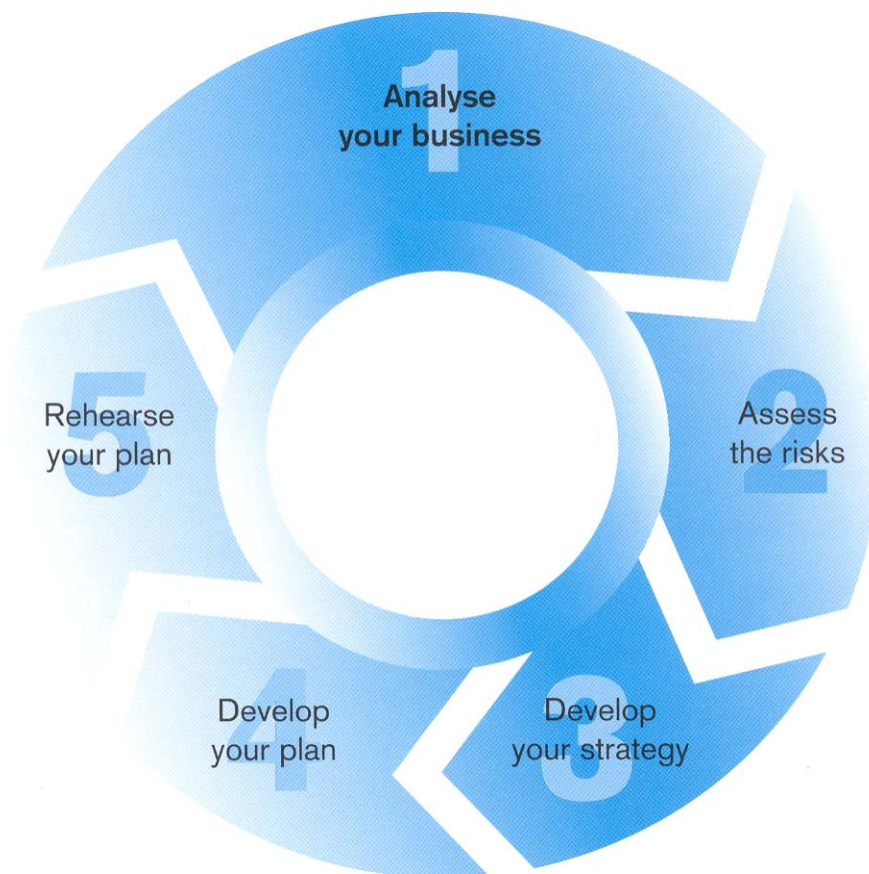
Nearly 1 in 5 businesses suffer a major disruption every year. Yours could be next. With no recovery plan, you have less chance of survival.

How quickly – painlessly – you manage to get back to ‘business as usual’ in the event of a terrorist attack, fire, flood or other natural disaster, or any other major interruption, depends on how effectively you can devise, and put into action, your own business continuity management.

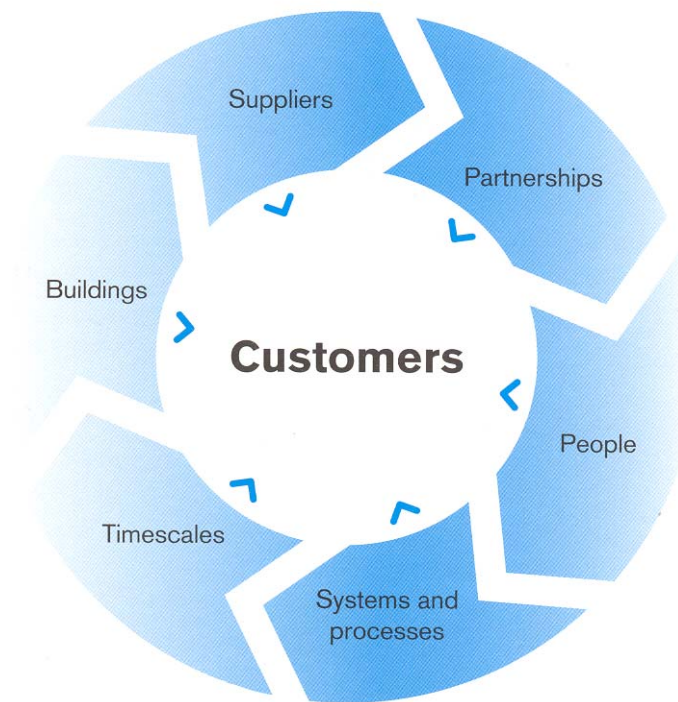
Business continuity management can best be defined as:

‘A holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threaten an organisation and provides a framework for building resilience with the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value-creating activities.’ (Business Continuity Institute, 2001)

Analyse Your Business



Where is your business vulnerable?



There are two aspects to every risk to your business

- How likely is it to happen?
- What effect will it have on your business?

Useful 'what if?' questions to ask

- What if the electricity supply failed?
- What if our IT networks went down?
- What if our telephones went down? For a day? For a week?
- What if our key documents were destroyed in a fire?
- What if our staff could not gain access to the building for days, weeks or months?
- What if we had casualties?
- What if our customers could not contact us?
- What if our suppliers could not supply us?
- What if our customers could not pay us?
- What if we could not pay our suppliers?

Do not forget people issues: for example, after an incident, who will be responsible for recording who has been injured, where they have been injured, where they have been taken and who is missing? How will you communicate after the incident? Who will deal with enquires from the relatives of missing or injured staff? Do the staff, including temporary staff and contractors, know these details?

Worst –case scenario

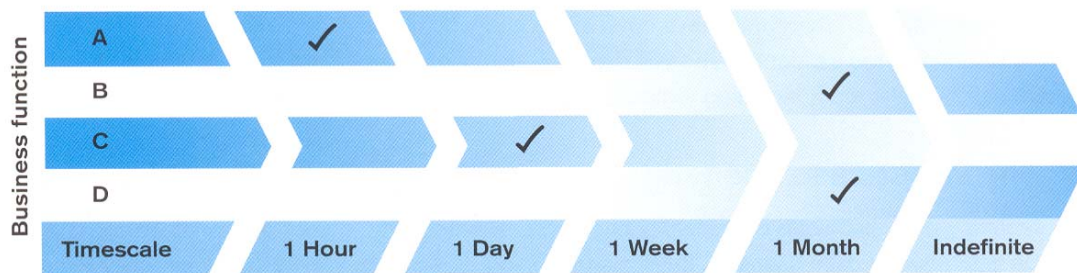
A useful technique is to identify the worst-case scenario. If you plan enable you to cope with a worst-case scenario, it will also help you deal more easily with lower-impact incidents.

What functions and people are essential, and when?

To make an effective business continuity plan you need details of who needs to do what, when and where in the immediate aftermath of an incident.

You'll probably find it useful to keep a function/time matrix showing how quickly functions need to be up and running after a major incident.

Example of a function/time matrix



Define your strategy

Whatever kind of business you are, you will probably choose one of the proven strategies.

- Accept the risks – change nothing
- Accept the risks, but make a mutual arrangement with another business or a business continuity supplier to ensure that you have help after an incident. This business could be a competitor.
- Attempt to reduce the risks.
- Attempt to reduce the risks and make arrangements for help after an incident.
- Reduce all risks to the point where you should not need outside help.

Working on another site

One essential decision is how you respond to risks that cannot be reduced, for example the risk of a terrorist attack destroying your building. How do you re-establish your business in another location?

Visualise your plan

Set – up

- Make it clear that you have consulted throughout the business
- Use non-technical language that everyone can understand

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- Make it clear who needs to do what, and who takes responsibility for what. You should always include deputies to cover key roles.
- Use checklists that readers can follow easily.
- Include clear, direct instructions for the crucial first hour after an incident.
- Include a list of things that do not need to be thought about until after the first hour.
- Agree how often, when and how you will check your plan to make sure it is always a 'living document'. Update your plan to reflect changes in your organisation's personnel and in the risks you might face.

- A good plan will be simple without being simplistic. You will never be able to plan in detail for every possible event. Remember that people need to be able to react quickly in an emergency: stopping to read lots of detail may make that more difficult.
- Plan for worst-case scenarios. If your plan covers how to back in business if a flood destroys your building, it will also work if one floor is flooded.

Rehearse your plan

Sometimes, you only discover any weaknesses in a plan when you put it into action. Rehearsal helps you confirm that your plan will be connected and robust if you ever need it.

Remember your business continuity plans are 'living documents' and you will all need to rehearse whenever you update them. Rehearsals are also good ways to train staff who have business continuity responsibilities. You can also rehearse without disrupting people's work.

Possible ways to rehearse your plan

- **Paper-based exercises:** read through the plan as a group, questioning each action. Is it the right thing to do? Does the plan ask you to do things in the right order? Then, test your plan using a 'what if?' written scenario. New pieces of information can be added as the scenario unfolds, in the same way that more details would become clear in a real incident.
- **Telephone cascading:** without warning, a test message is sent out to everyone at the top of the call cascade lists in the plan(s). The message is cascaded, with the last person in each cascade contacting a nominated person, who records when the calls come in. This allows you to check your communications structure. Are you having difficulty contacting people? Are the telephone numbers right? Are they still with the company?
- **Full rehearsal:** a full rehearsal will show you how well different elements in your plan work together, which may not be clear when you test the individual parts. This can be an expensive way to test your plan routinely, but planning should help you check the full plan with the minimum of cost and disruption.

Remember – in an uncertain world, you owe it to yourself to be an organisation that is confident of being 'back in business' in the quickest possible time.