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Cooperation Within An Industry and Beyond

By Carol Moffitt

The importance of establishing relationships is often the key factor that a business will attribute their success to. The same can be said for Business Continuity Management, especially in the midst of a crisis. When disaster strikes you want to know exactly who you can call, for what and be confident they will be ready to respond and team up with you to tackle the challenges created by the adverse situation. Establishing a relationship at time of disaster with your business partners, is not only ineffective, it may not even be possible.

Prior to the Year 2000 rollover, the Canadian Banks always enjoyed a cordial relationship and as competitors had a good understanding of their interdependencies with each other and their significant business partners. As part of the Year 2000 preparations, they went one step further and formally acknowledged their relationship in recognition of their responsibility to all their clients and the importance of supporting the Canadian economy.

Utilizing the Canadian Bankers Association, the Canadian Banks established an industry group and developed a plan to be able to collectively respond to situations that impacted the industry as a whole. The intent of the collaboration was to maximize the protection of their clients' individual assets as well as that of the Canadian economy. In addition they were positioned to provide:

- Single messaging to reassure customers
- Regulators with an industry status
- Single point of contact for information exchange within / beyond the Canadian Banks

Incorporating good BCM practices, as an industry, the Canadian Banks exercised their plan leading up to the Year 2000 rollover. Testing was conducted in person and "virtually" as not everyone would be in the same physical location. Staffs from multiple banks were able to practice and become comfortable with the industry process that were developed.

Following Year 2000 preparations and subsequent events, including but not limited to the terrorist activities of 9-11-01, SARS pandemic, North Eastern America power outage, etc, lessons learned each time are reviewed and the process is revised accordingly.



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However, cooperation within the Banking industry is only the tip of the iceberg as interdependencies go beyond ones own industry. The need for critical infrastructure to run our businesses opens the floodgate to the need for establishing and maintaining relationships with multiple groups from local government to provincial electricity providers, national telecommunications and international service providers, to name a few.

Going one step further and recognizing the interdependencies of various industry sectors lead to the Canadian Banks, Telecommunications and Electricity groups to develop a protocol for communicating and sharing information before, during and after adverse events. While the initiative was initially lead by the federal government, the group leveraged the process put in place by the Canadian Banks to develop a Cross Sector Information Exchange protocol. This has positioned these industries to work together during such events as the power outage in North Eastern part of North America in August 2003.

Additional partnering has been and continues to be established with all three levels of government and various business partners such as building management groups. For example, during the power outage, fuel distribution was managed through the provincial government and should there have been a need, the Banks were positioned to quickly and efficiently leverage that support.

The relationships built prior to an adverse event, allows individual organizations and their business partners to be better positioned to obtain the necessary support when needed. And equally important to establishing relationships is their maintenance. The need to be in constant communications is key in the event your organization and / or your business partner's processes change including ensuring call trees are current.

With the number and diversity of adverse events on the rise combined with increasing interdependencies, the need to establish and maintain relationships has never been greater. Learning to leverage those relationships as a foundation will increase your response and success.

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