

Business Continuity Management

Business Continuity Management is an holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threaten an organisation and provides a framework for building resilience and the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value creating activities.

"I am often asked what single piece of advice I can recommend that would be most helpful to the business community. My answer is a simple, but effective, business continuity plan that is regularly reviewed and tested" Eliza Manningham-Buller, Director-General MI5. (UK)

Layout of the Guidelines

The Good Practice Guidelines (2007) and this pocket guide follow the Business Continuity Management Life cycle described in BS 25999 (parts 1 and 2).

Though this model demonstrates how the stages conceptually together, in practice the experienced practitioner will not necessarily follow this progression strictly. However progress should always be measured against the whole life cycle and across the whole organisation.

1. BCM Policy and Programme Management

The BCM Policy of an organisation provides the framework around which the BCM capability is designed and built. It is a documented statement by the organisation's executive of the level of importance that it places on BCM. It describes the scope of the programme and assigns responsibilities.

An effective BCM programme will involve the participation of various managerial, operational, administrative and technical disciplines that need to be co-ordinated throughout its life cycle using procedures such as those outlined in these Guidelines and within the framework contained in the organisation's BCM Policy document.

Though Business Continuity Management is not primarily about emergency response, it is inevitable that the BC team will be expected to be ready to respond and ready to provide a lead during incident response.

2. Understanding the organisation

To be able to develop an appropriate Business Continuity Management programme you must first understand your organisation and the urgency with which activities and processes need to be resumed if they are disrupted.

These questions need to be asked:

- What are the objectives of the organisation?
- How are the business objectives achieved?
- What are the products/services of the organisation?
- Who is involved (both internally and externally) in the delivery of products/services?
- What are the time imperatives on their delivery?

2.1 Business Impact Analysis

The Business Impact Analysis is the foundation on which the BCM response is developed. It identifies, quantifies and qualifies the business impacts of a loss, interruption or disruption of business processes so that management can determine at what point in time these become intolerable (after an interruption). This is called the 'Maximum Tolerable Period of Disruption' (MTPD). It therefore provides the data from which appropriate continuity strategies can be determined.

2.2 Risk Assessment

In the context of BCM, a Risk Assessment looks at the probability and impact of a variety of specific threats that could cause a business interruption. Risk Assessment activity should be focussed on the most urgent business functions identified during the BIA process.

3. Determining BC Strategies

This section is about determining and selecting Business Continuity Management Strategies to be used to maintain the organisation's business activities and processes through an interruption.

Business Continuity Management Strategies concern:

- the selection of alternative operating methods to be used after an interruption to maintain or resume the organisation's business activities and their dependencies (internal and external) to a priority, and time table determined in the Business Impact Analysis
- the protection of vulnerabilities and single points of failure in business critical processes identified in the Risk Analysis

3.1 Corporate strategies

Key decisions at a corporate level are:

- Recovery Time Objective for each activity (based on the MTPD)
- Separation distance of alternative facilities and data storage

3.2 Activity Level Strategy

At the Activity Level the complexity of interdependencies on services, business processes, data and technologies needs to be analysed and appropriate tactics chosen to address the needs of:

- People, workforce, skills and knowledge
- Premises
- Supporting technologies
- Information
- Equipment and supplies
- Stakeholders partners and contractors.

The organisation should also:

- Understand the role of local emergency responders
- Reduce the likelihood of specific perceived threats
- Take appropriate impact mitigation measures

3.3 Resource level consolidation

This step consolidates the resource requirements of the various business activities across the organisation and ensures they can be met both in scale and within the required timeframe.

4. Developing and Implementing a BCM

Response

The aim of the various plan(s) covered in this stage is to identify in advance, as far as possible, the actions that are necessary and the resources which are needed to enable the organisation to manage an interruption whatever its cause. If the event falls outside the scope of the assumptions on which the Business Continuity Plan was based then the situation should be escalated to those responsible for implementing the Incident Management Plan.

4.1 Incident Management Plan

Case studies of major incidents (Knight and Pretty) suggest that effective and timely management of a major incident is the significant factor in protecting an organisation's brand from financial and reputation damage. This is achieved through management of external stakeholder requirements.

4.2 Business Continuity Plan

The Business Continuity Plan pulls together the response of the whole organisation to a disruptive incident. Those using the plan should be able to analyse information from the response team concerning the impact of the incident, select and deploy appropriate strategies from those available in the plan and direct the resumption of business units according to agreed priorities. The components and content of a Business Continuity Plan will vary from organisation to organisation and will have a different level of detail based on the culture of the organisation and the technical complexity of the solutions.

4.3 Business Unit Plans

Business Unit Plans provide the Operational Response to the incident of each department of the organisation. Examples of Business Unit plans are:

- An incident response team
- A Human Resources response to welfare issues in an incident
- A business department's resumption plan
- IT Logistical plans

5. Exercising, Maintenance and Review

A Business Continuity Management (BCM) capability cannot be considered reliable until it has been exercised, maintained and audited.

5.1 Exercising

The development a BCM capability is achieved through a structured exercising programme, to be successful an exercising programme must begin simply and escalate gradually.

5.2 Maintenance

The BCM Maintenance Programme ensures that the organisation remains ready to handle incidents despite the constant changes that all organisations experience.

5.3 Review

An audit function is one of self-assessment or impartial review against defined standards and policies and to provide remedial recommendations. One standard that is suitable for use in audit is BS25000-2.

6. Embedding BCM in the organisation's Culture

Developing a BC culture is vital to maintaining enthusiasm, readiness and effective response at all levels.

6.1 Assessing BCM Awareness and training

Before planning, and designing the components of, an awareness campaign, it is critical to understand what level of awareness currently exists.

6.2 Developing BCM within the organisation's culture

Designing and delivering education, training and awareness.

6.3 Monitoring cultural change

The awareness campaign should be reviewed as an ongoing task to identify any effort required to maintain it at an acceptable level.



Good Practice Guidelines (2008)

A quick overview of Business Continuity Management and why it is essential for your company.



The full Good Practice Guidelines are available to download free of charge from www.thebci.org

Source: The lifecycle diagram, BSI British Standards BS 25999-1