

5 Steps to Building a Business Continuity Plan

A Guide for Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Teams

AkitaBox

WHAT'S INSIDE

Businesses rarely get advance notice when disaster strikes. Without a plan of action, businesses can struggle to recover, or worse, go out of business for good. The good news is that organizations can help protect themselves from the consequences of disaster by developing a business continuity plan (BCP). This type of plan will give you the best shot at success after an unanticipated event.

The instructions within this step-by-step guide will help your organization create a reliable plan that works. With a little creativity, dedication and planning, your organization will be on its way to a safer future in no time.

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HOW TO CREATE A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN THAT WORKS

Step 1: Form the business continuity management team

Your organization's business continuity team implements and executes the business continuity plan. The makeup of your team is dependent upon the size of your company and how you plan to roll out the program.

At a minimum, your business continuity team should include a manager, assistant manager and administrative assistant. These individuals will prepare standards for the project, train additional team members and identify processes to make the project flow smoother.

If your organization is medium or large in size, you'll want to include additional personnel on the team and disperse responsibilities accordingly. The following list contains individuals in your organization who may provide crucial insight to your business continuity plan.

CRUCIAL MEMBERS TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

Every organization is different, but in general, your business continuity team should have at least one representative from each department.

This way, you'll gain the greatest insight into your company's risk management needs. Ensure your team consists of enough people to lay the groundwork for the project, coordinate training, build disaster plans and identify the focus of each segment of the plan.



Building Maintenance and Management
Provides insight on facilities, floor plans, fire suppression, electrical services and similar services



Safety and Security Teams
Provides insight on fire/life safety, access control and theft prevention during an emergency



Risk Management
Provides insight on minimizing costs and damage associated with loss



Human Resources and Operations
Provides up-to-date information on critical stakeholders in the plan



Information Technology (IT)
Provides insight on protecting/recovering data and IT systems



Line Management
Provides insight on production continuation



Sales, Marketing and Public Relations
Provides insight into the organization's customers and their needs



Finance and Purchasing
Provides insight and support the organization will need from vendors



Legal Team
Provides insight on legal ramifications of activities performed in emergency response situations



Public Information Officer
Provides insight on communication best practices with customers, stakeholders and vendors



Step 2: Conduct a business impact analysis

Once your team is assembled, the second step of business continuity planning is understanding the operational, financial and physical risks to your company should a disruption occur. You can determine these types of risks through a “business impact analysis” (BIA).

At its core, an impact analysis helps organizations identify specific risks and threats to operations, financial performance, reputation, employees and supply chains.

Have your team brainstorm a list of risks and threats to your business. Use the following list of risk examples to aid your team in discussion:

- Physical damage to buildings
- Damaged machinery, systems or equipment
- Restricted access to buildings
- Interruption of the supply chain
- Absenteeism of essential employees
- Lost or delayed sales and income
- Negative cash flow from delayed income
- Increased expenses (e.g., overtime, outsourcing)
- Utility outage (e.g. electrical power outage)
- Courruption of, damage to or loss of information technology
- Cyber attack or system breach
- Regulatory fines
- Contractual penalties or loss of contractual bonuses
- Customer dissatisfaction
- Delay of new business plans

Once you’ve created a list of potential risks to your organization, discuss how these risks could affect operations:

What safeguards and procedures will your organization need to mitigate these risks?

How will your organization test these procedures to ensure they work?

Step 3: Identify resources needed with a gap analysis

By now, your business continuity team has conducted an impact analysis, which identified and documented potential risks to your company in the wake of disaster. Your analysis may have revealed discrepancies between the resources you have and the resources you still need.

This is where your team will want to conduct a "gap analysis." **A gap analysis identifies a company's recovery requirements versus its current resources**. It also reveals recovery options and agreed-upon strategies.

You'll also want to identify critical resources you'll need to recover from a disruption to business. Resources are required to carry out recovery strategies and to restore normal business operations. They can come from within the business or be provided by third parties.

Resources may include:



- Your employees
- Your office space and furniture
- Technology (including computers, communication equipment, software and data)
- Electronic and hard copy records
- Production facilities, machinery, equipment and physical assets
- Inventory (including raw materials, finished goods and goods in production)
- Utilities (including power, natural gas, water, sewer, telephone and internet)
- List of current vendors and suppliers
- Third-party service providers

It's important to note that not all resources can be replaced immediately following a loss. Therefore, your business continuity team will want to identify any resources you'll rely on within minutes, hours, days and weeks following an incident. After your gap analysis is concluded, you'll be ready to explore and implement recovery strategies.



Step 4: Explore and implement recovery strategies

Knowing risks to your organization is important, but knowing how to react and recover is essential to bouncing back after an unanticipated event. Perform the following tasks to bolster your BCP's recovery strategies.



- **Discuss any questions and concerns** you may have regarding each disaster scenario compiled in your business impact analysis **(see step #2 of this guide)**. Document decisions in a flexible, circulating document.

- **Identify crucial partnerships, third parties and vendors** involved in a disaster situation. Businesses rely on preferred contractors, inspectors, architects, plumbers, electricians, painters, mechanics, cleaning services and cleaning supply companies, all of whom may come in handy should damage occur to property.

  Your BCP should list applicable contact names, numbers and sets of information so they are easily accessible in an emergency.

- **Discuss emergency response planning.**

Does your organization have an emergency response team?

Who will serve on this team?

How will responsibilities be allocated amongst the team?

How often will the team meet to discuss protocols?

Step 5: Test results, present recommendations and make improvements

A business continuity plan is never truly finished since an organization's risks and requirements are never set in stone. Rather, they change and adapt as the business grows. It's always a good idea to test your business continuity plan to make sure it is effective, observe results and make recommendations for improvement.

Here are a few ways to audit your business continuity plan:

1. **Assess your organization's current policies, processes and procedures.**
   Has anything changed since the plan was written? Does the plan reflect these changes? If not, make appropriate updates to the plan.

2. **Document any new gaps discovered.**
   Are there any additional resources your team needs to effectively mitigate risk? Discuss these needs with leadership.

3. **Formulate recommendations to improve.**
   Bring these recommendations to the team, then brainstorm the pros and cons associated with each recommendation.

4. **Conduct training and awareness programs for stakeholders.**
   Your business continuity team will require continuous training to stay up-to-date on the latest protocols. You may also want to host corporate awareness programs, orientation exercises, emergency responder training or emergency communication exercises.

5. **Conduct testing and document results.**
   Do so through functional and technical practice training, program testing and business continuity audit processes. Note strengths and deficiencies of the plan.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING RESOURCES

Don't wait until disaster strikes to create a response plan. If your organization does not yet have an effective business continuity plan, now is the time to create one. The effort involved is well worth your time and will give your company the best chance at survival after an unexpected event.

Use the following resources to jumpstart and strengthen your organization's business continuity efforts:



Business Continuity Plan Outline

Learn how to create policies that enable your organization to respond to potential disasters and return to business as usual following a crisis.



Business Impact Analysis Questionnaire

Identify critical business processes, interdependencies among stakeholders, supply chain dependencies, minimum time needed to recover operations and minimum staffing required.



Emergency Response Planning Checklist

Learn how to effectively respond to emergencies, protect your staff and occupants, minimize downtime and fully recover operations.



Fire Inspection Checklist for Commercial Buildings

Boost your organization's fire safety inspection efforts while reducing the risk of fire-related risks and hazards in your buildings.

AkitaBox

The Ultimate Software for Safety, Security and Risk Management in Your Organization's Buildings

AkitaBox is the leading building infrastructure management software provider dedicated to improving the way people manage and interact with the buildings they occupy. Founded in 2015, AkitaBox supplies facility management software and implementation services to over 250 million square feet of educational, commercial, healthcare and governmental organizations in the United States.

Our mission is to empower building teams to make data-driven decisions that impact the places we live, work and play. Our suite of software products helps solve organizations' biggest facility challenges, helping them achieve operational excellence, maintain occupant health and safety, and make smarter capital investments.

With an à la carte service offering, AkitaBox works with you to identify the best solutions to meet your individual facility's needs. With custom-tailored training and support, our team of success managers will guide you through the entire process from start to finish in as little as 90 days. To learn more, visit AkitaBox.com.

