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HOW TO PREPARE FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY AFTER A DISASTER

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Technology has allowed for your business information to run and be stored electronically. While this creates ease and less of a need for paper storage that can be lost or damaged, there can be serious consequences if the electrical system is disrupted. Disasters that come in many forms can be responsible for power being lost, including overwhelming hurricanes that this country has seen too many of in the last decade. Depending on your region, catastrophes can take the form of earthquakes, tornadoes, wildfires, winter storms or floods. These only account for some of the potential natural disasters.

No one is immune to a possible terrorist attack or computer virus. When your business gets disrupted from an IT standpoint, it can cause chaos and loss. It is imperative that you have a business continuity plan that allows your business to continue even when faced with a disaster. This accounts for more than resuming business, but allows you continue to make money in the event of a disruption from a calamity. Much more is involved in resuming the company than just the IT department, though it may seem the most



critical. The company must have plan in place and work together. Too often companies assume the likelihood of a disaster to be low, so they do not plan for it, resulting in a loss of revenue. Take proper steps to ensure your business remains profitable in the event of a disaster.

COMMUNICATION

Employees in IT, human resources, business and security must all be planned for and work together, knowing their roles in a disaster. While mainframes may be critical to being rebuilt in a certain amount of time, some business may be concerned with receiving supplies first. Employees must understand how critical IT is to continuity as well. All workers must know their roles ahead of time to ensure the best flow of business continuity.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment analyzes the outcomes of possible dangers if and when they occur. For each type of disaster there are different



possible outcomes that need to be assessed. Personal injury should be first and emergency arrangements need to be put into place. Individual employee situations must be taken into account, with considerations as to why they may not be able to return to work immediately.

BIA

Having a Business Impact Analysis is necessary to business continuity as it considers many facets of the disaster situation. The BIA will determine what needs to be reacquired and the timeframe you have to do it in. It analyzes the importance of time sensitive business procedures and consequences of loss. This plan should include identifying the employees that are leaders and can perform emergency assignments. Ways to communicate if phone networks stop need to be established. There additionally has to be practice responding to an emergency situation as well

as partnering with local emergency response organizations. Who will take over for the CEO if they are incapable of performing duties must be put into place. Financial impacts from a disaster need to be known following the risk assessment which can include:

- Lost sales
- Lost income
- Extra costs including overtime pay
- Delay in income or sales
- Fines
- Customer loss due dissatisfaction

EMPLOYEES

To further elaborate on what is expected of employees in the BIA, it is critical that it involves making sure your employees are prepared. The BIA is a documented, organized set of instructions that ensures successful business continuity by letting employees know how to continue with their responsibilities and where to do it if a disaster strikes. All workers must know their role and what is expected of them in this situation. One way to do this is to set up a remote access technology so workers can continue to do their jobs. The technology should enable staff to connect to their work stations or desktop from an alternate location or even their homes to remain in touch with company operations. They should additionally be able to remain in touch with all co-workers to continue collaboration. Keep in mind that they will need access to all files and applications on their computers that might not be part of a corporate network. Employees need instructions on who

ranks in importance and who to contact first in terms of customers, vendors, investors, partners and VIPs.

Disaster drills that are a surprise and realistic are a helpful part of the plan as the company will know how the staff will react physically and emotionally. The employees will get a chance to practice their roles and how to use the remote access, and be evaluated on their performance. The drills will point out what areas of the business continuity plan need to be changed and what aspects work well.

INTERIM MEASURES

In the situation where a disaster has occurred, interim measures must be planned for and implemented following the risk assessment. For example, the recovery of IT systems may include relocating their operations to a different site that should have been established in the BIA. Other factors to consider are the use of substitute equipment that may not be as familiar to the IT department, or a plan to outsource work to a non-affected area. All costs must also be accounted for in the BIA.

Business continuity plans are important and it is best if they are handled by professionals. Work with a reliable managed services provider and they will ensure your business is ready to operate when faced with any kind of disaster or problem.



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