

# Business Resilience Toolkit

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## Writing a business continuity plan

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### Transcript:

As a leader, where would you go and what would you do if you were hit with a crisis?

Actually, maybe there is a different way to think about this – as a leader, what *did you do* when the coronavirus pandemic came to your city and impacted on your business?

Did you just panic? Did you jump into action? Did you respond well? How well did you communicate with your staff?

Whilst it is impossible to think about every possible emergency scenario beforehand, it is useful to think about what you see as the most likely scenarios; and to have a pre-prepared plan on how to deal with these which we call a business continuity plan.

Today, we're going to spend a few minutes going through some helpful tips on how to write a business continuity plan. This will help you to prepare the organisation and management to run your business following a critical incident or in an emergency type situation.

My name is Andrew Ellis and I am a business consultant with CBB.

Maybe you have a Business Continuity Plan. Maybe you don't. Maybe you've only just written one since the coronavirus pandemic.

A business continuity plan is important in helping you to manage those external risk events which can be quite rare/low likelihood but have a significant impact or consequence when they occur.

There are a number of examples of this: fire/flood, power failure, cyber-attack, and as we have seen more recently – pandemic, societal lockdowns, fast impacting government regulation changes. Each of these risk scenarios will have a different impact on different parts of the business.

A business crisis can cost your organisation a lot of money and ruin your reputation if you aren't proactively prepared to handle it. If you want your company to be able to maintain its business continuity in the face of a crisis, then you'll need to come up with a plan to continue your most basic functions.

Here are five tips:

1. You should **never** do risk alone! Get a group of staff together to contribute – since different people bring different ideas. Use a combination of managers, front line staff and volunteers as the different perspectives will enrich the outcome. For very small organisations, you might also include the Board

if they will need to be hands on in recovery. Identify the different critical functions in your organisation.

2. Think about the different risk scenarios or types of threats (fire, flood, cyber attack, etc). What is potentially possible, and how would you need to respond to each situation? You can also think about non catastrophic events that may affect part of the business, not all of the business. Whereas some work can be delayed, what are those most important areas where you have to find a way through? How long can you go without delivering service, or without access to key systems or resources? This will help them to prioritise which areas need to be recovered or prioritised for continuity. For example, staff getting paid; or with service delivery, how long can we go without doing your normal activities; the what about catch up work if you've stopped operating for several days, how long will it take to catch up with all the activities that we should have done in those days); and when it comes to data loss – how many days or hours data could you lose?
3. Who are the key stakeholders internal and external that a/ are most impacted; b/ are interested but not impacted, and c/ can help you get out of the situation– you should make sure their contact details are in a safe place and included in the plan, and might even consider draft communications strategies for each group. This includes:
  - ▶ Internal contacts such as Board, executives and key staff
  - ▶ External contacts such as phone and internet provider, utilities providers, insurance company, bank(s), IT support, public relations, legal, funders or regulators
4. Draft a business continuity plan outlining:
  - ▶ What key activities to undertake in relation to the different risk scenarios we spoke about earlier
  - ▶ Key people to contact – including board, clients, suppliers and other stakeholders
  - ▶ Communicating with staff and other stakeholders
  - ▶ Proactive strategies that can help in a crisis (e.g. data back ups, back up internet connections for example )
  - ▶ Incident response plans – e.g. how to do a workaround so staff can keep working and you can continue to deliver service
  - ▶ Recovery plans – e.g. the priorities and how you will get your servers and IT back up and running, and how you communicate with customers to get back to normal service delivery
  - ▶ And identify who is responsible for each – this can be a big challenge for small organisations. The key is to not give too many responsibilities to one person – e.g. CEO. You might need to pull unaffected staff off day to day activity to help with some of the continuity activities, or deploy volunteers or Board members to support.
5. Lastly, test the plan for gaps. Review with key stakeholders and take feedback on board.

Where the BCP covers multiple sites/locations or regions/states, consideration is to be given to different levels of planning to accommodate local versus whole of organisation events.

After you have drafted the business continuity plan, you should reflect on what your BCP process has told you about existing policies, procedures and systems, and current risk management.

For example: do you need to strengthen your IT security and increase frequency of back-ups, move data from on premise to cloud etc Have you got the necessary stakeholder relationships – e.g. would it be worth selecting and briefing a PR firm, so you have someone who can jump into action at short notice?

You should ensure that current policies and practice are reducing risk exposure and consistent with the implementation of the BCP.

Also, writing or updating the BCP can lead to discussion on resourcing and budgeting for activities within the BCP? E.g. do staff have access to equipment (and know how to use it) so that they can work from home? Do you need to develop 2IC capacity in teams so that leaders can step up to deal with BCP and 2IC can focus on day to day business?

So, there you have five tips to help you develop a business continuity plan – doing these steps will leave your business more resilient when faced with a major external or strategic risk.

**Related video to watch next: testing and updating your business continuity plan.**