



## **Business Continuity Management: Getting Started for SMEs**

So, in amongst the mountain of other things on your to-do-list, you have just been asked to tackle business continuity management (BCM) as well! Where do you start? There are plenty of websites, Local Authorities are offering templates to download, the Business Continuity Institute offers a “*Good Practice Guide*”, and a quick Google search gives an endless list of consultants and software. What comes first?

The following offers an outline guide to implementing BCM for a small organisation.

### **Programme Management**

The first step is to understand the support that you will have. Will senior management provide executive sponsorship and, more importantly, will they back this with resources? Will staff be encouraged to give their time where necessary? For many small businesses, it is simply not cost effective to be able to develop the skills in-house for a comprehensive BCM programme, and consultancy support may be desired.

### **Understanding Your Organisation**

This is frequently the part of the BCM programme that is misunderstood or simply not tackled. A business impact analysis (BIA) will help you to understand your most critical activities, and the resources that you would require to recover those activities. It is an important process: a manufacturer may initially believe that manufacturing is the most time-critical activity, but the BIA can highlight other priorities such as customer services, taking orders, or despatch, and will help you to identify what is required over time as part of a recovery. Thus, through this process, you will be able to identify the staffing levels, IT requirements and other resources needed in the immediate phases of a response. You will also be able to understand your IT in more detail; the back-up regime and the prioritisation of systems. Another aspect to consider is your supply chain: which supplies are critical in the event of an incident?

Also, during this phase, it is important to understand the risks to your business. This will help you to prioritise any mitigation, such as uninterruptible power supplies, emergency generators or flood defences.



## Implementation

This is where you start pulling together your plan of action. It is very tempting to borrow a plan, and cut and paste into it, or to download a template from the internet; I would advise against either approach as this could result in a plan that is not fit-for-purpose.

In your plan, focus on:

- How you would invoke an incident response;
- Who would manage the incident response;
- What the priorities are for recovery and how you would achieve this;
- How you will manage your internal and external communications; and
- How you will ensure the welfare of your staff.

There are many other things that you could include in your plan, but these fundamentals will ensure that you at least have a starting point.

## Training, Testing and Exercising

Training, testing and exercising are critical to the success of your plan. This need not be complex, particularly for small businesses. Training could involve providing an initial briefing for all staff, and then maintaining awareness as part of normal team briefings. Test your ability to contact staff out-of-hours. Ensure that your IT back-ups are working, and document any tests.

## Maintenance

BCM has to be an ongoing process. The BIA and plans will need to be updated and checked for relevance on a regular basis, or following any major changes to the business. For a small business that is growing rapidly, it is important to ensure that BCM keeps up with the growth of the organisation.

## Summary

BCM need not be onerous for small businesses. By ensuring Executive support, and following the simple steps described above, it is possible for even the smallest business to implement a basic BCM programme quickly and cost-effectively.