

The background features a large, dark, curved shape on the right side, resembling a sphere or a lens, filled with a pattern of binary code (0s and 1s) in a light gray color. To the left of this shape, there are several horizontal, rounded rectangular bars of varying lengths and shades of gray, some with small circles at their ends, creating a sense of motion or data flow.

LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING



STAGE2DATA



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1. WHAT IS BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Business continuity is an organization's ability to continue business operations, during as well as after disruption or disaster.

The key elements of a good business continuity plan include:

1. **Resilience:** the ability to resist interruptions and adverse conditions
2. **Recovery:** rapidly getting back to business after a disruption or disaster
3. **Contingency:** having temporary measures in place to make the transition to full recovery
4. **Ongoing improvement:** continually analyze, evaluate, plan and take the appropriate action



2. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A WELL-PRODUCED BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN?

Survival

Without one, some businesses have had to close down after the extended downtime associated with a disaster (whether human or natural) that resulted in data loss. A solid business continuity plan will mean the difference between chaos and a smooth transition from crisis to full recovery, and business as usual.

Reduced inefficiencies

Part of the business continuity process involves analyzing operations, equipment, personnel and processes to timeously identify inefficiencies and rectify it before any losses are incurred.

A marketing edge

Having a business continuity plan in place strengthens your company's reputation as being reliable. It furthermore emphasizes your organization as one with sound business continuity principles in place.



Increased staff morale

Employees are more likely to remain with a company if their ideas and input are appreciated and rewarded. Similarly, good leaders will rely on their employees to contribute to improvements and the culture of continuity.

Reduced insurance premiums

Insurance companies favorably consider factors such as a proper business continuity plan when calculating premiums. Added precautions such as vehicle tracking and asset management may reduce one's insurance premiums.

Compliance with industry standards

Business continuity has become a necessity in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR_) and other data privacy regulations such as the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Companies must report a data breach within 72 hours. But, if you're unable to access your critical business data (due to a disaster) you won't be able to comply with this requirement and may subsequently receive a hefty fine.

An efficient communication system

Communication is vital to business operations and survival. An important part of knowledge transfer is communication, and if it doesn't happen efficiently, key processes, operations and systems are affected.

Cost saving

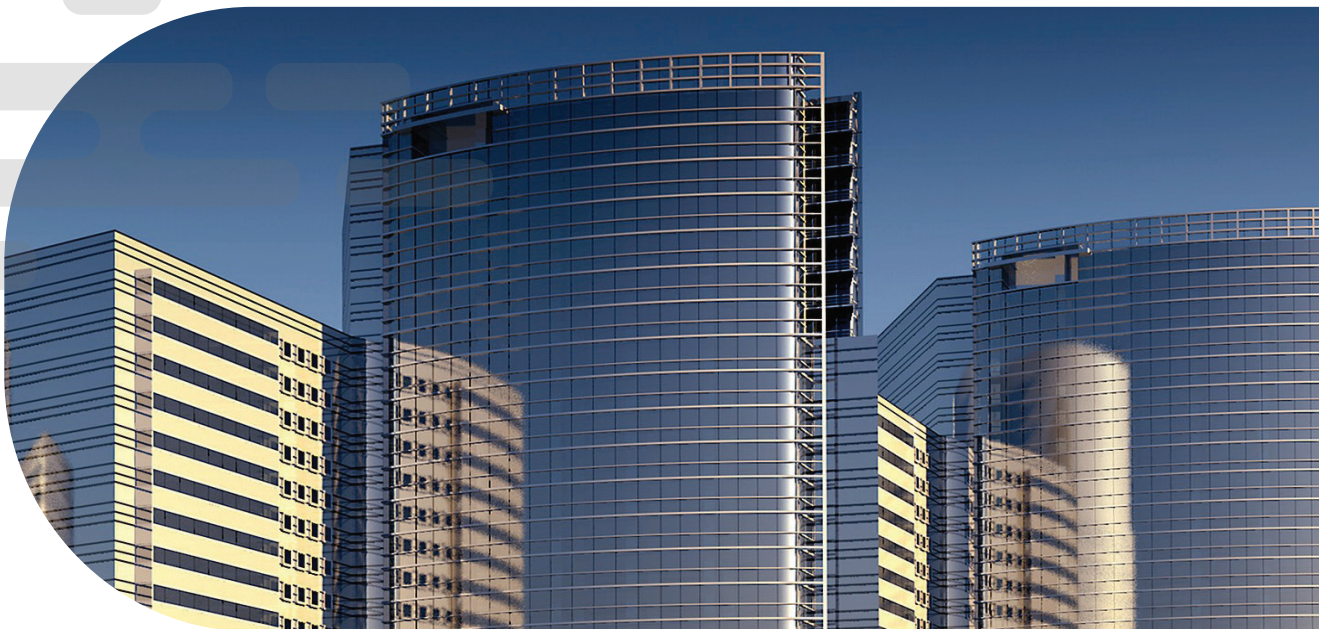
Losses incurred as a result of downtime, such as loss of revenue and productivity, reputational damage, customer loss, repair costs, compensation and overtime are all serious threats to a business. If you can keep your business operational while you sort out the disruption, you'll avoid all these threats.



3. IS A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN REALLY NECESSARY?

Well, not having an adequate business continuity plan can have far-reaching and potentially financially crippling consequences. It's not only concerned with protecting your digital landscape, your hardware and vital information, but also protecting your ability to deliver orders, provide customers with the service they expect, and accomplish critical business ops. Without a business continuity plan, your risks may include:

- Business downtime
- Loss of money and income
- Higher operating costs
- Poor staff morale
- Loss of customers due to bad service
- Legal action taken by unhappy customers and/or employees
- Legal non-compliance
- Possible business closure



4. WHAT SHOULD A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN CONSIST OF?

An effective communication system

It should be able to track whether memos have been read, test if they've been understood and most importantly, actioned, and send out new updates.

A decisive risk-analysis method

This is necessary to enable you to identify, analyze and rate threats in an easy and informative way. It should ultimately guide you in making informed decisions.

A way to measure and audit

The purpose of this is for you to be able to test and evaluate all your systems and your personnel, and move forward with crucial improvements.

Proper security procedures

This includes security policies and access control to ensure the safety of your assets and vehicles. The loss of assets or intellectual property can cripple a business.

Cyber security and information systems management

To enable you to manage and control access to devices remotely. It should also include antivirus and Internet security, automated software installation and maintenance tasks, as well as a way to control access to productivity-killing websites and, finally, a contactable customer service team.

Data backup

This is to ensure that your confidential and critical data are securely backed up online and off-site, and retrievable without unnecessary downtime or data loss. The advent of cloud backup has seen many businesses move away from the risky and cumbersome practice of backing up to an external hard-drive.





Backup provider check

Make sure your backup provider has a business continuity plan in place itself. You should also make sure your data is stored in an encrypted format on secure servers and that the hosting facility provides redundancy, that is, the duplication of key components in a system so that in the event of a failure of one, another will take over.

Passwords and keys for the encrypted data should only be available to the backup account holder. In the event of a data loss, the backup provider must have the facility to restore the data as soon as possible and, in the case of large volumes of data, provide a snapshot service in terms of which data is sent to the client on a hard-drive by a reliable courier.

Asset management

Is about knowing who uses your assets (from vehicles to computer monitors), their location(s) and who the suppliers and service agents are. In addition, all vehicles should have satellite tracking to monitor their locations.

Mobility

Means accessing your business continuity management system remotely or via a mobile application. Smartphones have made it possible to perform functions that weren't possible before.

Automation

Involves your business continuity management system being able to SMS and email employees or key holders automatically should a disaster or incident occur.

5. QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTING A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Will it cost a fortune?

Implementing a business continuity plan doesn't have to be a laborious task or overly expensive. A well-designed system will have all the important aspects presented in a simple format.

How does one build a business continuity plan?

While there may be times when a consultant will be needed, in most cases, if a simple, logical approach is followed and the right tasks are assigned to the right, a business continuity plan can be designed in-house.

Is it easy to do?

Absolutely. If you use a structured, logical approach, setting deadlines and encouraging a collaborative effort, implementing a business continuity plan can be easy to do.



6. A SIMPLE APPROACH TO CREATING YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

The process listed below is based on ISO 22301, but without its ambiguous jargon. The steps are separated into phases that don't have to be followed in sequence, but can be completed by different people, concurrently. The four steps are:

1. Conception

Decide to implement a business continuity plan, allocate a budget, and invite staff to take on roles that interest them.

2. Analysis

Analyze your employees, services, assets, service providers and the possible threats to your business. The following threat analyses are relevant here:

Employee analysis

Create a schedule of roles fulfilled by each employee and the additional skills each one can offer in an emergency.

Service provider analysis

Create a schedule of contact details for service providers and backup service providers in the event of a crisis.

Asset analysis

Create a schedule for inspecting assets and checking if consumables are available before a situation arises.

Threat analysis

Rate the possibility of disruptive incidents happening and the effects they could have.

Quarterly simulations/emergency drills

Your business continuity plan must be simulated and audited quarterly to ensure the procedures set out there in allow personnel to effectively respond during a controlled disruption.

3. Formulation of business continuity plans

Compile a roadmap of how to recover from a disruption, with an explanation of who would do what.

4. Testing and maintenance

Give employees access to your business continuity plan and test it with a drill every quarter.

7. CONCLUSION



The initial costs of setting up a business continuity plan and getting it up and running will yield rewards in a short space of time. Not only does a business continuity plan prevent losses, it can bring about a healthy team of members who works together, are rewarded for their contributions, and who will strive to keep the business operational.

ABOUT STAGE2DATA

Stage2Data is one of North America's fastest growing and most trusted cloud solution providers. We offer Backup Services with the freedom to outsource your data storage needs with confidence and cost efficiency.

As North America's Premier Private Cloud Solution Provider, we provide Cloud Backup services that give you the freedom to outsource your data storage needs with confidence and cost efficiency. Your data will be safe and secure as all Stage2Data backups are protected

For more information on the cloud services offered by Stage2data contact us today.