

Business Continuity: Getting Started

Business continuity is an organisation's ability to maintain essential functions during and after a disaster. This could be a cyberattack or a physical disaster such as a fire or flood.

It's about evaluating and implementing risk management processes and procedures that aim to prevent interruptions to mission-critical services, and to re-establish full function to the organisation as quickly and smoothly as possible.

The most basic business continuity requirement is to keep essential functions up and running during a disaster and to recover with as little downtime as possible.

A business continuity plan has three key elements: Resilience, recovery and contingency.

A company can increase **resilience** by designing critical functions and infrastructures with various disaster possibilities in mind. This can include staffing rotations, data redundancy and maintaining a surplus of capacity. Ensuring resiliency against different scenarios can also help businesses maintain essential services on location and off-site without interruption.

Rapid **recovery** to restore business functions after a disaster is crucial. Setting recovery time objectives for different systems, networks or applications can help prioritise which elements need to be recovered first. Other recovery strategies include resource inventories, agreements with third parties to take on company activity and using converted spaces for mission-critical functions.

A **contingency** plan has procedures in place for a variety of external scenarios and can include a chain of command that distributes responsibilities within the organisation. These responsibilities can include hardware replacement, leasing emergency office spaces, damage assessment and contracting third-party vendors for assistance.

A good business continuity plan should clearly state the business' essential functions in writing. The document should identify and prioritise which systems and processes must be sustained and provide the necessary information for maintaining them.

A business continuity plan should include the following information:

- Employee contact list
- Key supplier/vendor information
- Key contacts
- Prioritised list of critical business functions
- Recovery locations
- Copies of essential records
- Critical telephone numbers
- Critical supplies list
- Inventory of the company's equipment/machinery/vehicles
- Inventory of the company's computer equipment and software
- List of communication venues
- Disaster response plan

Principality IT can support you in every aspect of business continuity planning.

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