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TECHNICAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT
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WHITE PAPER

Disaster Recovery Best Practices

Best Practice No. 1: Maintain Management Support for the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery programs

Disaster Recovery Best Practices -

Best Practice 1: Maintain Management Approval.

1. Introduction.

Management support for a safety, business continuity and/or disaster recovery program is mandatory. Period. Why? Management support: 1) acknowledges the business mission and vision; 2) provides funding; and 3) ensures support from all levels of the company.

What is bundled into the support you receive from Management? The understanding that business continuity and disaster recovery is an enhancement to their mission and vision for the company. This is very important as it raises business continuity and disaster recovery to an integral part of the daily business process and re-adjusts concepts that they are just insurance policies or "point-in-time" events.

Receipt of initial management approval is a start. Maintaining this support is key to the health and welfare of the business - no matter how the industry or the business changes.

Even if you are a small business, and you are "Management" it is important for you to consider disaster recovery planning as a normal aspect of your business operations.

This article looks at some ideas to consider when gathering and maintaining management approval for a safety, business continuity and disaster recovery program or solutions.

2. Gaining Management Approval and Buy-In for the Initial Program.

Every program needs to start somewhere. And lets face it, everyone hates business continuity and disaster recovery because: 1) it costs money and 2) it's difficult to think about and deal with -- depending on your CEO's or your level of risk aversion. To handle it, many people consider it an insurance policy. I like to think of it as a normal part of the business life-cycle. If you generate revenue then you need to determine what would stop you from generating revenue.

The initial bid for Management approval for the initial outlay for the program requires thorough research and a presentation that can meet its goal in 7 minutes or less. If you are the owner of your small or mid-sized business, you will need to spend more than 7 minutes but you will need to ask yourselves the same questions and do the same amount of work.

In going to Management for approval of your plans, you are: acknowledging their company vision by providing: 1) safety process/solutions for staff that results in a higher percentage of staff retention after an event; 2) identification of the mission critical business process and those functions that perform them; 3) cost effective and selective disaster recovery solutions and processes to support their mission (resiliency or continuity / RTO and RPO).

2.1. Meeting Cycle.

It is sometimes best to handle approval of all or any aspect of the Safety-Business Continuity-Disaster Recovery program/set of solutions in two separate meetings. Sometimes it is best to request to be on the agenda for a meeting of the CEO and their direct reports. This way you can reach everyone you need and ensure that they all hear statements from the CEO at the same time and in the meeting minutes.

The first meeting agenda outlines your research and what you need from Management:

- The results of your assessment of the business;
- Recommendations for the mission of the company; e.g. Recovery Time Objective (RTO) and Recovery Point Objective (RPO);
- A recommendation to integrate business continuity and disaster recovery planning into the day-to-day business operations of the company; and
- Approval from Management:
  - for the mission;
  - for the program;
  - to come back for a second meeting in order to present costs and solutions.

The second meeting reminds Management of the decisions they made regarding the program and mission in the first meeting. Your job in this meeting is to provide at least 3 levels of solutions based on their ability to handle risk and what kind of funding they are comfortable with.

2.2. Meeting 1: The Goals.

The first meeting focusses on what you need from Management. If you are the owner of the business, this work is crucial for establishing the foundation of your mission for your company in times of a disaster event.

- Achieve acknowledgement of:

  1) identification of mission critical business process;
  2) the Recovery time objective for the business process;
  3) the Recovery point objective for the data supporting the mission critical business process;
  4) the functions that perform the mission critical process and who on staff perform these functions;
  5) cost effective solutions and the cost
  6) the planning, deployment and testing schedule and required resources

- Communicate the importance of integrating disaster recovery planning/resources and financing into daily business operations.

- Request approval to implement the program.

- Request the opportunity to hold a second meeting in one week to provide solutions and related costs that support the program and deploy the solutions.

Give your management the end results of your assessment of the business so that they can see how you have mapped the actual business continuity/disaster recovery mission to the mission that has been identified for the business. This mission is the foundation of your work and guides you and the business towards the ultimate requirements and plan for the business in times of an event and those solutions that support disaster readiness.

Remember that even though you and your Management may be focussed on the bottom line, the bottom line will be $0.00 if your business is wiped out within 24 hours of an incident. As well, if you are going in-front of Management for approval, it is important that you find a point of relevance with their vision and plans for the Company. Your management will be more willing to spend funds on a program that supports their tactical and strategic plans for their business.

If you are a small business, you will have to do this work for yourself. Write up answers to these questions and add them to your business plan so that you have a complete view of your business and your requirements for disaster recovery - from all angles.

2.3. What tools will you use to gain Management approval?

- A power-point or keynote presentation. Keep the presentation down to 5 pages, if possible. Keep it brief and interesting.
- A sharepoint or Web site to post the presentation and samples of the program that you are attempting to get approval for. This permits Management the time to review items on their own time.
- Meeting Agenda that identifies what your goal is for your presentation.
- Meeting Minutes.
- The Company's mission statement.
- The disaster scenarios that are most related to your business.
- One page each defining the Safety, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery program or solutions as detailed in the following pages.

2.4. The Components of Approval.

2.4.1. Step One: Safety (First)

Simply put, if you do not have the human assets to support the continuity and resilience of a company or business your business will not make it through an event. This refers to those injured during the event and those who carry the injury into their daily life. Staff retention can be an issue up to 3-6 months after an event in addition to staff lost as a result of an event. Can your company deal with the loss of staff over a 3-6 month timeline?

It is important that small business and Management of larger companies/corporations support a safety program. Remember that Management are people too. They want to know how to take care of themselves and their staff should a major incident occur. They want to go home to their families just like everyone else.

The business has a better chance of survival the sooner you engage the safety program and perform staff accountability - within the first 2 hours after an event and up to 48 hours after.

The basics of the safety program are:

1) Evacuation or Shelter-in-Place;
2) Staff Accountability and Communication up to the point of business normalcy;
3) Medical Support for Staff;
4) Crisis Management Plan.

If you are an enterprise, part of this may be covered by Corporate Security or the Building Management (Evacuation/Shelter-in-Place) and Human Resources (Medical Support for Staff). But every business, whether a Corporation, Company or small business, is responsible for putting a process in place for Staff Accountability, Crisis Management and Communications -- during an event, after the event and for sometime after the business resumes its day-to-day business process.

So, what are the components of a Safety program that will require yours or Management approval?

1. Evacuation, Staff Accountability, Staff Communications.

- Check with Corporate Security or your building manager regarding the services they offer in support of Evacuation and/or Shelter-in-Place.
- If you do not have a corporate security department, you should check with your building manager regarding their emergency notification and evacuation program. You may need to request the local Fire Department to come in quarterly to present the evacuation process if there is no-one to cover this.
- You may be required to provide a Fire Warden for each floor your company inhabits - in support of the building manager's emergency program.
- You will need to provide a small evacuation kit or at least the basics: mask, key-ring light, goggles.
- You will need to identify an assembly point for the company immediately after evacuation.
- You will need to create a call tree that identifies who will call who to ensure you can reach

everyone after an event. You do have services that you can consider if you want have the money to spend. These programs will have an initial charge and possibly a maintenance fee. As well, you will need to identify resources to maintain the listing. But they are absolutely wonderful and will perform the work of contacting staff when you may not have the resources to do this.

- If you have concerns for shelter-in-place, again, check with Corporate security or your building manager to see if this is supported. If not, you may need to make a policy re: shelter-in-place. If your building manager provides a "personal choice" policy, you can go along, however, you have to make it clear to staff that they stay at their own risk. This includes running up/down 26 flights of stairs for pizza or food from the local deli.
- Sometimes, it is safer to be inside than outside. A good example is civil unrest. Either way, you need to be very clear about what your policy is regarding staff who choose to stay inside.
- If you have staff with medical conditions, consider purchasing a gurney so you can carry ill staff down the stairwell.

Net/Net:

- Consider contacting a consulting medical service to provide post traumatic stress solutions for staff after an incident.
- Check with local city/state authorities regarding loss of staff on premise and what the process is in dealing with city agencies and family.
- Determine what insurance you may require if staff are injured or if they die during the work day - on premise.
- Check with your health insurer to see what they will cover in case of the need for post traumatic services for you and staff.
- Check with your building manager regarding their non-fire emergency process and their policy regarding shelter-in-place as well as their policy regarding loss of staff on premise.

2. Crisis Management Plan

The Crisis Management plan is the roadmap that Management will follow in light of a disaster event. It covers:

- The Business Mission for all relevant disaster scenarios.
- Roles/Responsibilities.
- Communications Statements for Press and Staff.
- The step-by-step process following "0" hour after an event through to one month after the business resumes normalcy.

Be aware that just because someone is on the Management team does not mean they have the stomach for handling anything during a disaster event. Keep in mind that people are not always aware of how they will act an event. For your first presentation, keep team membership out of the discussion. After you receive approval from Management to deploy a Crisis Management process and team, go to each person and privately ask whether they are comfortable being a member of the team and then how they plan to implement their roles/responsibilities.

If you run your own business you have to deal with how you are going to handle crisis management. You may need to engage members of your family, other business owners in the

same business, etc.

2.4.2. Step Two: Business Continuity

Looking at your business and its ability to weather any event should be a normal part of being a CEO or a business owner. When you model new investments you model for profit **and** loss. It's the same with being in business. Determining your best continuity plan for small and mid-sized business is based on asking yourself some questions:

- What business processes are mission critical to my business?
- What functions are required to support these processes and who performs them on my staff?
- How many days / hours can my business last after an event without performing the mission critical business process?
- What staffing resources are required to perform the mission critical functions that support the continuity of the business process? What if they are not available?
- What disaster scenarios will break the business?
- Finally, what is my mission for my company in case of a disaster event:
    - Keep the business going through a home office or remote access solution
    - Work through another office or alternate seating site?
    - Work through the safety process and start revenue generating process 24 hours after "0" hours?

After identifying the answers to these questions, ask yourself whether they mold to the vision set for the company in the next year or through a growth period - and how flexible your responses are in light of possible changes in your particular industry or company.

If a small-mid-sized business, write up a section for your business plan that documents your responses. These answers will also be helpful in identifying policies and solutions that you plan to enact and implement for your company in case of an event.

For those of you who need to gain management approval, keep your presentation clear and focussed on your primary aim: You need Management to take responsibility for their business continuity/disaster recovery mission so that they will 1) fund it and 2) support it for the duration.

2.4.3. Step Three: Disaster Recovery

Disaster Recovery, to me, are the logistics and solutions you put in place to support your company's mission for business continuity or your plans for business continuity or resilience. The sooner your Management sees your company starting up after an event (or not stopping its revenue generating process) the more expensive your solutions will be. However, always remember that it will always be more efficient to integrate disaster recovery solutions into the day-to-day business operations so that:

- it is easier and less stressful to "fail-over" to the disaster recovery solution because you are using the same technical solutions and architectural precepts that you use to support the day-to-day;
- It is more efficient and cost effective to expand upon the existing vendor-contracts for technology and services; and

- you can rely on less staff to handle "fail-over" to the technical solution because your staff already understands the technology as they use/maintain it on a daily basis.

Depending on your company's risk aversion, there are many layers of solutions you can consider. Yes, some research will be required and you may have to work with vendors to cut the numbers so that the initial outlay is palatable to management or your accountant, but this work needs to be done so that you can identify a viable solution or solution set.

2.4.4. Step Four: The Issues: Be Honest

There will always be some issues when attempting to integrate a new process into the existing business process:

- There may be various systems/applications architectural types that make an efficient fail-over impossible and require more resources because more manual procedures are required.
- You may find that changes may be required to the production environment in order to facilitate a consistent technical solution that can be "failed-over".
- The "perfect" plan may be too expensive so you have to prioritize what business process is absolutely crucial for continuity or resilience and only identify solutions for these processes.
- Your staff may be unwilling to "deal" with a disaster solution because of previous experiences or loss of a loved-one during a previous event.
- You have other offices/stores in the same power grid or vicinity as each other.

What ever the issue is, be clear about what it is and the impact on the disaster recovery solution.

2.5. After the First Meeting: Work the Room!

Always confirm the decisions that Management have made in the first meeting with meeting minutes sent within 24 hours after the meeting and through individual calls to ensure that the decisions are real and to better understand how they are substantiating their decisions.

If you are a small business, present the solution to your accountant, legal council and seek some guidance from a human resources consultant or other companies in your industry to bounce your ideas off of. Consider grouping businesses together to share the costs of the solutions.

2.6. Meeting 2: Reminders of the Mission; Provide Solutions; Request Funding

Always remind management of the decisions with an initial slide and always provide at least three alternative solutions and show the comparisons of each as a summary slide:

- Temporary solution.
  Remember that an event could happen any day. Always have a solution to cover the business while you are deploying your full solution.
- Cost-Effective Solution.
  Provide a low-cost solution but identify the impacts to the business.
- Mid-Level Solution.
  Provide a mid-level solution but identify the impacts to the business.

- "Perfect" Solution.
  Provide the full costs of a solution that meets the company's mission for a worst-case disaster event.

Each solution should include all three aspects: Safety and Staff Communication; Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery.

In essence, you need to include:

- Safety: How you plan on communicating with staff and your insurance requirements for injured or dead as well as how you plan on engaging the Crisis Management team and related processes.
- Business Continuity: How you plan on organizing your program to gather and maintain business requirements and planning.
- Disaster Recovery: Logistics and technical/manual solutions to either continue or maintain the mission critical business process. This should also include solutions for staffing and staff retention.

Even if you are providing solutions for just Disaster Recovery, remember that Safety, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery are all entities in one single end-to-end process. Consider all three entities when looking at solutions.

3. Maintaining Management Support.

Now that you have created your program, performed business continuity or disaster recovery planning and deployment, you need to ensure that you continue to receive the support and funding from Management, your accountant and/or lawyer.

Whether you represent the enterprise or a retail store, there are some basics to maintain interest in the program and hence, maintain support from those of whom you require it from.

3.1. Test.
Engage your team and the business into regular testing:
- Scheduled evacuations with the building manager.
- Testing the assembly point
- Testing the call tree process and contact information for accuracy;
- Test performing business from an alternate site or via remote access;
- Test failover over your solution and running your business using that technology or manual solutions.

3.2. Hold Monthly Safety Presentations.
- Hold monthly safety presentations reviewing the evacuation and safety processes for new staff and staff who would like a refresher.
- For the corporate side, ask businesses if you can attend a monthly staff meeting.

3.3. Bring in Professionals to Speak to Management/Staff.
- Hold quarterly presentations with professionals to engage staff in general safety or how to perform family planning, dealing with post traumatic stress, etc.

3.4. Provide an internal web site for Staff.
- Provide an easy way for Staff to gather information for the program

3.5. Provide User-Friendly Tools.
- Provide an easy way for Staff to gather information for the program

3.6. Send out a monthly newsletter for staff or clients.
- Keep the program alive in the eyes of staff or clients.

3.7. Distribute your plan to customers
- Let your customers know what your plan may be should an event occur
- Most importantly let them know how they can continue to communicate with you

3.8. Provide Management with a Monthly Status of the Program/Solution.
- Identify metrics for each aspect of the solution or program and keep these in front of Management or maintain for your business for tracking.
- Make recommendations for solutions.
- List the benefits of the program and monthly accomplishments.
- Identify cost savings on a monthly basis.
- Identify goals for the following month.

- Identify issues that require Management resolution.
- Get on Management's schedule and continue to remind them of the benefits of the program.

4. Summary

A company's mission for how it will handle a disaster event is as important as the mission statement for the company. Safety process, business continuity and disaster recovery planning is an integral part of the day-to-day business and hence, the mission of the company.

Once you have documented the plan and deployed your solutions they must be supported through the life of the company.

Gaining initial support from Management, especially after an event hits the news, may be easier than maintaining this support. Business issues change and so does the focus on Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery. It could potentially be viewed as a necessary evil and its focus may be the money being spent rather than the benefits it provides to staff and the business, itself.

Keeping management support requires some creativity with reporting and the program, itself. Being visible to management and staff keeps the program alive - and when it comes to review and maintain the budget supporting the program and related solutions and processes, it may be seen for what it is -- fundamental support for the integral mission of the company.