What About the People?

■ **By Andrea Houtkin**

There has been an increased awareness in all processes related to business continuity planning and disaster recovery – whether due to experience after 9/11 or enhanced federal and state regulations for businesses in certain sectors. Businesses are beginning to perform business impact analyses, create business continuity plans, define their mission critical and critical applications and deploy these systems and applications in a disaster recovery environment.

But no one is stopping to ask about *The People*. We cannot invoke our disaster recovery process and the business continuity plan if we do not have the people to manifest these processes and procedures. In this article we ask the question: What About the People? We also offer some ways to ensure that, by including *The People*, we can realize our plans, processes and procedures.

The Many Plans and Processes

If we take a long, long look at what we are creating, we see that we have many processes and procedures and many plan documents: sometimes asking for the same information and owned by many departments inside and outside of the corporation. But despite the focus on plans, data, deployments and application/site testing we may be missing an important point: What happens to all these elements if we do not have people available to use them? Who are the people in this case? Table 1 suggests logical owners of various activities

Our plans define how to conduct business after an event and in some cases, during an event. But have we taken time to determine which staff will be able to address mission critical systems, applications and processes that are needed to run the business? If we ask BC planners and emergency team members, we may find that their primary

desire is to be with their families. Will sufficient staff be available to manage the plan? What happens to staff at the onset of an event?

We have to begin listening to staff when we ask the most basic questions. It's not uncommon to hear staff say that, when activating an alternate site, "In the next event, I'm going straight home," "I am going to be with my family," or "I am not going to go to the alternate site. I did that once already and I am through with that." The problem that occurs from not listening to people is that a BC plan will not address reality. If we write a plan that documents required business process and no one is available to perform the work, the plan is of no value. People must be considered in the planning process.

Responding to the Problem.

Activities that directly impact people are the evacuation process and staff accountability. But before we can define these processes, we have to understand the people who may be involved. What is their experience? How were they affected by previous events, such as September 11, 2001? Did they lose loved ones? How did they handle the Blackout of 2003? How do they feel about terrorism, and being in an industry that may be a focus of terrorists? How will they handle situations that take them away from their loved ones? Some suggested actions include:

1. Use the business impact analysis to determine mission-critical and critical business process that need to continue during a disaster.
2. Introduce workshops in mission-critical business areas to help them understand their true feelings about the Company, and how they will respond to an emergency situation
3. Management must let staff know they will be respected for the decisions they make.
4. Build a BC plan based on required mission-critical processes *and* who will be available to keep them oper-

Table 1

Activity	Owner
Business Impact Analysis	Business Continuity Management/Business Analyst
Business Continuity Plan	Business Continuity Management/Business Analyst
Disaster Recovery Deployment Process	Technology in Partnership with the BC Team
Disaster Recovery Process Phase 1, Evacuation	Physical/Corporate Security
Disaster Recovery Process Phase 2, Staff Accountability	Business Continuity Management/Business Analyst
Disaster Recovery Process – Phase 3: Declaration	Business, Technology, BC Management
The Disaster Recovery Process – Phase 4: Normalization	Business, Technology, BC Management
Fire Drills	Building Management/Physical/Corporate Security
Staff Preparedness	Physical/Corporate Security or BC Management

ational. This is an opportunity to identify employees that prefer to work from home and still support the BC process.

5. Create a cross-training program to ensure that mission-critical processes and procedures can continue, even if the primary team is unavailable.
6. Consider shifting mission-critical or critical processes/procedures to business units in other regions.
7. Exercise the evacuation and staff accountability processes. Evacuation practice helps people face their fears. It is difficult to make decisions regarding continuation of business processes if we do not know who is there to perform them.

If employees feel that the company has neglected or overlooked them, they may not communicate their whereabouts after an event. We must be prepared to ask them to reconcile their need to be with their family with the company's need to know how they are. ■

Summary

Our industry clearly must do more when considering the fears and concerns of employees when developing business continuity plans. We must do everything possible to address staff needs and concerns, especially emotionally distraught employees, while keeping them actively engaged in efforts to keep the business running. We learned a lot following the events of September 11, 2001. It's clear that we are still learning.

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