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The show must go on: Developing a business continuity plan

By Thomas Mawson, CAE, exec dir, DRI Intl, Falls Church VA

Security concerns have been top-of-mind for all organizations during the past year. Virtually all assns have taken a closer look at their crisis mgmt plans and emergency preparedness. These activities are part of a larger agenda that all assns should be addressing — business continuity planning.



Mawson

How is that different from security planning? “Business continuity” is the ability of a business to continue its operations with minimal disruption or downtime in the advent of natural or intentional disasters. It encompasses dozens of scenarios, including terrorist attacks, earthquakes, fires, information technology disruptions caused by computer hackers or viruses, hostage situations, structural failures, or any number of other scenarios that could interrupt operations.

While most organizations have established a disaster recovery plan for core technology and infrastructure, very few have a full-fledged business continuity plan. According to DRI Intl statistics, 80% of small businesses experiencing business interruptions go out of business within 5 years. Many more suffer losses in profitability. So there’s a lot at stake in doing proper planning.

DRI Intl’s “Professional Practices for Business Continuity Planners” contains 10 core professional practices for building an effective business continuity plan:

1. Project initiation and mgmt — Establish the need for a business continuity plan, including obtaining mgmt support and organizing and managing the project to completion within an agreed upon time and budget limits.

2. Risk evaluation and control — Determine the events and environmental surroundings that can adversely affect the organization and its facilities with disruption as well as disaster; the damage such events can cause, and the controls needed to prevent or minimize the effects of potential loss. Provide cost-benefit analysis to justify investment in controls to mitigate risks.

3. Business impact analysis. Identify the impacts resulting from disruptions and disaster scenarios that can affect the assn and techniques to be used to quantify and qualify such impacts. Establish critical functions, their recovery priorities, and inter-dependencies so that recovery time objectives can be set.

4. Developing business continuity strategies. Determine and guide the selection of alternative business recovery operating strategies for recovery of business and information technologies within the recovery time objective, while maintaining the organization’s critical functions.

5. Emergency response and operations. Develop and implement procedures for responding to and stabilizing the situation following an incident or event. This step should include establishing and managing an Emergency Operations Center to be used as a command center during the emergency.

6. Developing and implementing business continuity plans. Design, develop, and implement the plan that provides recovery within the recovery time objective.

7. Awareness and training programs. Prepare a program to create organizational awareness and enhance the skills required to develop, implement, maintain, and execute the business continuity plan.

8. Maintaining and exercising business continuity plans. Pre-plan and coordinate plan exercises, and evaluate and document plan

exercise results. Develop processes to maintain the currency of continuity capabilities and the plan document in accordance with the organization’s strategic direction. Verify that the plan will prove effective by comparison with a suitable standard, and report results in a clear and concise manner.

9. PR and crisis coordination. Develop, coordinate, evaluate, and exercise plans to handle media during crisis situations. Do the same regarding communicating with and, as appropriate, providing trauma counseling for staffers and their families, board mbrs, customers, critical suppliers, and the rest of the membership during a crisis. Ensure all stakeholders are kept informed on an as-needed basis.

10. Coordination with public authorities. Establish applicable procedures and policies for coordinating response, continuity, and restoration activities with local authorities while ensuring compliance with applicable statutes or regulations.

Details: www.drii.org.