



Planning Guidance

Business Continuity with a Pandemic Emphasis

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The Basics*

- Keep it simple and flexible
- Address the following:
 - Core business offering
 - Critical business functions
 - Infrastructure and Supply Chain dependencies
 - Employee care
 - Information Flow and Communications
 - Leadership responsibilities
- Consider forming a team of representatives from each of your business units.

*This is not meant to be all-encompassing. This is geared toward giving you the actionable basics. Your continuity program will grow from here.



Core Business Offering*

- STEP 1: Identify your core business offering
 - Do you sell a service? Examples of include:
 - Consulting: to include management, efficiency, government
 - Professional Services: Medical, legal, beauty salons, dry cleaners, financial, electricians, plumbers
 - Communications: Verizon, Cox, AT&T, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, news outlets
 - Logistics: Transportation, Construction, Road clearing
 - Do you make or sell a thing? Examples include:
 - Retailers such as grocers, hardware stores, pet stores, and clothing
 - Manufacturers and producers such as factories, furniture makers, pharmaceuticals, food and beverage producers (water, canned goods, etc), farmers

*If you fall into multiple categories, focus on the one you are most dependent on for revenue. This is your anchor for ALL planning.



Critical Business Functions

- Step 2a: Identify your critical business functions
 - Business Functions are those activities within the business that enable the business to deliver their *core business offering*
 - Virtually every company can divide their business functions into the following categories (and some may overlap):
 - Human resources: hire, fire, promote, pay, benefits, etc
 - Financial: Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Invoicing
 - Operational: everything that is involved in the actual business production(labor, processes, materials)
 - Administrative: Legal, Banking, administrative support....and Leadership
- Step 2b: Identify the essential people and processes in each of those areas
 - What skills are required to perform those processes?
 - Who can backup the primary performer?



Infrastructure and Supply Chain Dependencies

- STEP 3A: Identify the essential tools and materials needed to conduct your critical business functions.
 - These tools commonly include: phones and other telecommunications, computers, systems and applications (ex: email, software, internet), vehicles, paper, data (records, files, etc), raw materials, and facilities.
 - The easiest way to work through this is to have people imagine a normal work day and write down each tool they use
- STEP 3B: Identify the providers for the tools and materials
 - Do you depend on someone else to provide the tools and materials you depend on? If so, that is your supply chain.
 - Document contacts, have contract information handy, and ask about their own planning and dependencies.
 - Look for alternatives if one or more components of your supply chain fail



Putting it together

- Your core business offering, critical business functions, and infrastructure and supply chain dependencies are the why and how of your business. Use what you've done so far to create the focus point of your plan.
 - Your plan can be a simple document, a PowerPoint presentation, entries in a computer tool, or a series of basic checklists. What matters is that you have a common understanding of what your business does and what it needs to conduct its essential business activities.
 - For larger and/or more complicated businesses you can have cascading plans that get down to the specifics of each business unit.
- Now create your contingency plans for a failure in any of these areas. A contingency plan simply documents how you will conduct your critical business functions should any person, tool, or material fails or becomes unavailable.
- Keep these simple. Examples:
 - “If the primary phone system fails we will use cell phones”
 - “If ATM’s fail, we will go to a physical branch of our bank”
 - “If our payroll system doesn’t work, we’ll cut checks”



Employee Care

- STEP 4: Identify your employee care needs.
 - People are the heart of every business and/or industry and business success or failure depends largely on its employees.
 - These are some questions to address:
 - Will they be working? If not, what happens to them?
 - What are risks if they are working (exposure to toxins, etc)
 - Will you be able to pay your employees? Is there any impact (positive or negative) to their pay?
 - How will you handle employee personal needs – such as family or risk factors?
 - Will benefits be affected and how?
 - Communicate as forthrightly and transparently as possible
 - Consider designating an Employee Care point of contact



Information Flow and Communications

- STEP 5: Plan for communications and actively communicate
 - Identify how you will keep information and communications flowing
 - This can include regularly scheduled email updates, employee Q&A portals, having leadership and ombudspersons “available” (via online communications, etc)
 - Identify alternate communications mechanisms if primarily communications are unreliable or fail
 - Ensure consistency and truthfulness in your messages
 - If you can’t disclose information for legal, privacy, or ongoing investigation reasons, acknowledge and move on.
 - Ensure you have contact information for your employees, clients, suppliers, and partners.
 - Reach out to them and let them know what your plans are.
 - Make sure you know what their expectations of you are and whether or not you can meet them
 - Find out what their plans are
 - Government contractors should work directly with contracts officers, program managers, and partners. Pay close attention to contract requirements
 - Coordinate and communicate quickly.
 - Absence of information often leads to speculation and the creation of mis-information



Leadership

- Leadership is one of the most critical components of successful continuity before, during, and after disruptive events
- Leadership occurs at all levels of an organization
- Key components of good leadership during a crisis:
 - Remain calm and compassionate
 - Focus on providing accurate and truthful information
 - Encourage and enable employees throughout the event
 - Discourage drama or the spreading of unconfirmed information
 - Be aware of burn-out and take steps to avoid it in yourself and in your employees
 - Acknowledge your own stress and apologize when necessary



Pandemic Planning Considerations

- The US doesn't have a lot of recent experience dealing with pandemics of this nature. There are few absolutes.
- Expect impacts to last for months and plan accordingly
- As organizations move to distance work and learning, there may be impacts to telecommunications infrastructures.
- Supply chain impacts may not appear immediately. Continue to monitor and prepare to respond.
- Pay particular attention to employees who may be ok initially and fray as the event continues.
- Plug into your local business community, health department, and Office of Emergency Management.



Media Planning*

- First – try not to have your company’s first exposure to the media be for a bad thing!
- Discuss who communicates with the media officially and under what circumstances
- Be prepared to have a senior member of your company ready to speak on the company’s behalf.
 - Your messages should have:
 - *Clarity:* The information you’re trying to impart should be clear and relevant to the intended audience. The speaker should enunciate, speak loudly enough to be heard, minimize the use of pause terms such as “uh” or “mmmmmm”
 - *Consistency:* The information should be consistent and as non-contradictory as possible. If contradictions are unavoidable, acknowledge this fact and briefly explain why
 - *Connection:* Before, during, and after a disruptive event the “why this is important” is as much about connecting emotionally with your audience as it is about sharing the actual information. If the event is sad, it’s okay to show grief. If appropriate, dry humor can also help drive the connection.
 - *Expertise:* If you are an actual expert on something – for example, influenza, be the expert. Don’t let non-experts communicate the message for you. And if you aren’t an expert, acknowledge this fact and present one.
 - *Truthfulness:* Tell as much as you legally and/or legitimately can, acknowledge that you can’t share everything, and remember that not all information is yours to share – and be up front about that.
- Give clear guidance to employees about who can, and cannot, speak on behalf of your company
 - Unfortunately, you probably can’t do much about their own opinions and how they choose to present them. This often backfires on companies.
- The media can be an important component of getting information out – treat them as a potential partner

*This advice is not all encompassing.



In the end...

....the act of planning is just as important as the actual plan itself. At a minimum, you'll have had important discussion. At best, you'll be ready for nearly anything.