

Business Continuity Plan Guidance

Preparing your Business

Business continuity planning – it's not as hard as you think! And by planning ahead and building in resilience you will save yourself significant time, money and stress when you need it most, ensuring your business survives disruption and even thrive in a changing environment.

A disruption could come in many forms –

A business continuity plan identifies how your organisation can keep its essential functions up and running during a time of disruption. Planning in advance will give you a better chance of recovering quickly. If you are a small to medium sized business or organisation, charity or operate in the third sector and are finding it hard to make the time to complete a plan, then this guide to business continuity planning is designed to help you.



Staffing

STEP 1

People are your most important asset. They bring unique skills and knowledge, hold key relationships, and provide a high level of flexibility to your organisation. During a time of disruption, your staff could be the difference between success and failure. It is important to involve your staff in discussions around what they would do in an emergency. As a business owner you will need to understand and appreciate everyone's personal circumstances.

You should also encourage staff to take steps to be better prepared personally for an emergency. Consider storing items at work to support staff after a disruption (e.g. dried food, emergency water, torches etc.).

Practise your plan with staff to minimise the effect on customers.



Core Product or Service

STEP 2

Your key products and/or services define the purpose of your business or organisation, or provide the majority of your income. Key considerations:

- What is your business or organisation about?
- What are your products and/or services?
- Which of these are critical to maintaining essential contracts or customer relationships?
- What products and/or services could you stop delivering and still continue to function?

The Business Continuity plans suggests considering your three most important products of services, but this can be tailored to suit your business needs.

Once you have determined what is cost critical to your business you should consider what resources you need to carry out these. You should document:

- **Essential roles and tasks** required to delivering your core product/ service. Are there essential skills or qualified staff needed, and how many people within your organisation possess these?
- **Suppliers** who provide your required resources. Consider if there are alternative products or suppliers you could substitute into your process if required. You should always ask your suppliers about their business continuity arrangements.
- Equipment or tools required to deliver your product or service. Consider how easy essential equipment is to fix or replace if needed or if an alternative can be used.

Single points of failure make your business vulnerable. If you identify key personnel, equipment or supplies without alternatives, these are risks you need to address. Consider cross training members of your team to provide backup for different roles.



Key customers/ clients

STEP 3

Maintaining positive relationships with your customers is key to operating a successful business, and communication during times of disruptive can be crucial. Even if you can't operate for a period of time, keeping customers or clients informed will help to maintain those relationships. It is important to identify which clients you may need to prioritize product delivery or communication with. These maybe the ones who provide your business with the majority of your income, you have important relationships with, or your critical to their operations. Consider how you inform them of any disruption and prioritise maintaining or re-establishing service delivery with.



Relocation Options

STEP 4

Floods, fire, gas leaks etc can make buildings unsafe to operate from. In the event that you lose the use of a key premise you may wish to explore other potential venues or business models, even just for a short-term. Consider if you can carry out your key functions from home or from within another business premise. What short-term lease options are available to you? Could your business operate a mobile model?



Insurance Requirements

STEP 5

Having adequate insurance in place will short your business recovery following any disruptive impacts. It is important to ensure the cover you have is tailored for your business needs and covers all relevant risks. You should speak with your insurance company or broker to better understand what insurance cover is available and what applies to your needs. Make sure you review your insurance regularly, as your circumstances will change over time.



Delegation of Authority

STEP 6

As the business owner there may be times when someone else needs to step and make decisions in your absence. Deciding this ahead of times ensuring everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities and will help prevent further disruption. Having a conversation with staff ahead of time will help set expectations and confirm what they have the power to decide. You may wish to seek legal advice as an individual may require a power of attorney to operate on your behalf.



Data Backups

STEP 7

Most businesses store data electronically and while this allows for easy backup, it is vulnerable to a cyber attack, or simple user error, meaning vital records can be lost. You should consider what information is most important to your business and how best to ensure this is backed up in a secure environment. You may also want to consider what records you may require access to if electronic systems are unavailable for example during a power outage. This might include key contact details for staff, customers, suppliers or your insurance provider.



Plan Authorisation and Review

STEP 8

Congratulations! You should now have your business continuity plan. It should be signed off by the relevant manager/ business owner and a date for review identified. Record the locations where you have saved your plan to make sure you update all saved copies and inform staff when you make any changes. It is important that this plan is available to all critical staff, and is accessible in as many ways as possible. Practise your plan with staff to ensure confidence in any action required.

Your Business Continuity Checklist

I have:

1. Involved my staff in the development of this plan, and encouraged them to be better prepared at work and home
2. Identified our core products and/or services, and the essential roles and tasks needed to deliver these
3. Listed the essential supplies and equipment needed to provide these core products and/or services and identified alternatives
4. Added my key customers/clients to a list and have a plan for maintaining a good relationship throughout a disruption
5. Identified our relocation options
6. Reviewed my insurance needs
7. Considered my business or organisation's delegation of authority
8. Backed up all my records
9. Saved my plan and contact list in multiple locations allowing for different access methods
10. Set time aside to practise and review my plan