

Business Continuity Program Steps

This table outlines the key steps in developing Business Continuity Programs.

		Objective:
Preparation Phase	<p>Preparedness Review – This is a high-level assessment of the company’s current level of readiness. Here we evaluate the status of your IT recovery plan, physical protection, emergency response, readiness of critical vendors, insurance programs, etc... The result is a scorecard with ratings for each program, plus findings as appropriate.</p>	Evaluate the current state of readiness
	<p>Program Definition – Establish the management structure of the program. Here we obtain top management approval and budgets, appoint the BCP coordinator, select the BCP planning committee, set BCP meeting dates, assign project tasks, develop the BCP project schedule.</p> <p>Identify the objectives of the BCP. Identify the types of disruptive events and disaster scenarios to be addressed by the BCP, define the objectives and assumptions for the program, update the initial project schedule and assignments.</p>	<p>Enlist participants and establish the scope of the BCP project</p> <p>Set objectives for the Business Continuity Program</p>
Initiation Phase	<p>Risk Vulnerability Assessment – Identify weaknesses that could lead to a disaster. This is a site walk-through to identify weaknesses in fire prevention, earthquake resistance, flood exposure, security, transportation, neighboring facilities, utilities, etc... The result is a scorecard with findings/recommendations to reduce risks.</p>	Identify ways to prevent disaster in the first-place
	<p>Business Impact Analysis (BIA) – This is one of the most critical steps of the BCP. Interviews are conducted with representatives from each department/business unit to gather information about their critical functions. The result is an inventory of the company’s mission-critical processes, equipment, suppliers, transportation, utilities, data, computer applications, etc. The BIA also identifies critical interdependencies between departments. The intent is to measure how long these critical items could be interrupted without impact to the company.</p>	Identify functions that are critical to the company’s success
Implementation Phase	<p>Strategy Development – Using the BIA, identify potential work-arounds for each critical item. This is the “meat” of the BCP. The intent is to develop strategies to restore critical items before they impact the company. The process involves workshops where the project team brainstorms “work-arounds” for each critical function.</p>	Develop “work-arounds” to get each critical function back in operation after a disaster
	<p>Loss Prevention Plan – These are the programs that prevent losses and reduce their severity. Examples include fire-prevention programs and physical protection features like security systems.</p>	Implement solutions to prevent losses
	<p>Disaster Recovery Plan – The Disaster Recovery Plan for computer systems and data. Access to information is the king-pin in all of the recovery strategies. The DRP defines priorities, contingencies and a process for restoring access to critical information.</p>	Develop an action plan for recovering critical data, software and networks

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Implementation Phase	<p>Implementation – During this phase, the company implements the strategies from the Strategy Development phase. For example: copy vital records off-site, create call-lists with phone numbers of key employees and vendors, establish agreements with vendors that could help during a crisis, define protocols for declaring a disaster, protocols for authority/delegation and notification/escalation, scripting detailed recovery procedures, procuring disaster supplies, etc...</p>	Implement the strategies from the development phase
	<p>Emergency Response Plan – This is the company’s plan for responding during the first critical hours of an emergency. This includes evacuation, fire-response, security-response, earthquake action plan, bomb-threat, etc....</p>	Stabilize the situation during the first hours of an emergency
	<p>Crisis Communication Plan – In this step, we develop plans for communication to keep customers, senior management, employees, key vendors, local authorities, etc., informed during a disaster.</p>	Keep customers, senior management and employees informed
Maintenance Phase	<p>BCP Summary – This is a report that can be used with external parties, such as customers, investors, insurance, regulators, etc., to educate them on the quality of the company’s Business Continuity Programs.</p>	Leverage the investment in BCP
	<p>Test/Exercise – These are tests of specific elements of the Business Continuity Plan. For example, a table-top exercise to test the strategy to divert materials to a temporary recovery site.</p>	Test the company’s programs
	<p>Awareness and Training – This is the program for informing key employees of their role during a disaster, rolling-out new programs for loss-prevention, training employees on specific duties, letting people know where to go for information about the BCP, etc...</p>	Keep employees informed about BCP
	<p>Maintenance/Updates – To keep the BCP up to date, some items should be checked quarterly (phone lists for example) and the BCP should updated about once per year.</p>	Keep the plans current