
Business continuity: awareness and training programmes

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States that business survival depends on the assured continuity of core business activities and supporting services. Business continuity (BC) plans are therefore developed to provide this assurance, but the best laid plans of mice and men can and often do go astray because the details of the plans are not effectively communicated to the people responsible for implementing them. There is no doubting the power of communication as a vital ingredient to success in all endeavours. This article draws on KPMG's long involvement in BC consulting and sets out a template for a BC awareness, training and testing programme.

Introduction

Business survival depends on the assured continuity of core business activities and supporting services: business continuity (BC). Plans are therefore developed to provide this assurance.

But the best laid plans of mice and men can and often do go astray because the details of the plans are not effectively communicated to the people responsible for implementing the plans.

There is no doubting the power of communication as a vital ingredient to success in all endeavours. KPMG recognises this and places great emphasis on ensuring its clients' staff members are made fully aware of and are trained in BC plans that we are involved in developing.

Drawing on KPMG's long involvement in BC consulting, we have produced this article. The details contained in this article are distributed on an "as is" basis without any warranty either expressed or implied. The use of the information is the responsibility of the reader and depends on the reader's ability to evaluate and integrate it into their operational environment.

Business continuity awareness and training programmes

Why implement business continuity training?

The most important reason organisations develop business continuity (BC) plans is to ensure they have a plan in place prior to a disaster occurring, thereby facilitating the speedy and cost-effective recovery of core business activities following a disaster. But a plan is only as good as your ability to implement it – and your ability to implement it will be highly dependent upon how well your staff members know the BC plan and can execute its tasks.

Even the simplest of BC plans will require a series of complex and interdependent tasks to be executed in a co-ordinated manner under adverse conditions.

During the stressful hours that a BC plan will be executed, you cannot expect your staff

members to be reading and apprising themselves of the plan for the first time. Nor can you expect that having documented your BC plan, your staff members will diligently read and absorb every word of it. Quite frankly, you will be lucky if many staff members even skim through the BC plan once.

Training or testing?

The question of whether to do business continuity training first or go straight into testing does not have a black or white answer. In fact, training and testing are part of the same continuum. For example, the training objectives that I described above form the natural test objectives for future testing. The consequence of this is that your training regime can also incorporate your testing. Once staff have had an opportunity to be trained and become practised in their necessary business continuity skills, the same training format can be used to test these skills to confirm that they are commensurate to the required performance criteria. So the only real difference between training and testing is that the performance criteria in training are not as strictly metered as they are in testing.

The queries over the need to implement training before testing often come from people who are used to a computing development environment. Normally, after you have developed a computer program or implemented a new computing system, you go straight into a testing phase of the program or system. This approach works well with pre-programmed computers, but is not so effective with people.

People need to be trained before they are tested in any particular skill. If you run a test of a highly complex skill before a person has had a chance to practise it, you are highly likely to find that the person fails the test (remember the first time you ever tried to play one of those space invader games?). The result will not only be a waste of testing resources, but will also be a disaffected person who is less eager to perform again because of the fear of repeating his failure. For humans, training is an absolute must!

The only way to ensure that you have a BC plan capable of being executed with relative

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effectiveness during a disaster is to undertake BC training.

Training aim and objectives

BC training, as with all training, should be conducted in line with a strictly set aim and objectives. Once these have been determined, the BC training programme can then be established to cover each of the individual training objectives so as to achieve the aim of the training.

Aim

The training aim must be a clear statement of the overall intent of the BC training programme. For example:

To provide all staff members with appropriate levels of understanding and competency in the execution of ACME's Business Continuity (BC) Plan.

Terminal objectives

The terminal objectives (TO) are the training milestones that must be achieved in order to meet the BC training programme's aim.

Following on from the example above, the terminal objectives would therefore be a list of the key skills and success requirements for the effective execution of the company's BC plan. These might include:

TO1: Management responsive to crisis and disaster situations;

TO2: Call out procedures known and effectively implemented.

Enabling objectives

The enabling objectives (EO) are the individual skills required to ensure the achievement of the terminal objectives. These enabling objectives provide the detail for the training syllabus and form the basis of the training sessions. Some of the enabling objectives for the example terminal objective one above would be:

TO1: Management responsive to crisis and disaster situations.

EO1.1: Recovery management team (RMT) members understand requirement to be available to respond to crisis and disaster situations.

EO1.2: RMT members understand the limits of their authority in a crisis or disaster situation.

Establishing a BC training programme

BC training programme considerations

Most organisations will allocate part of their operational resources, staff and annual budget to general training. BC training must also fall within the overall framework for training within an organisation and be allocated an appropriate priority within it.

Close consideration should be given to the key factors that must be balanced in the development of an appropriate BC training programme, including:

- the resources required to implement the various types of BC training;
- the likely cost of providing BC training;
- the number of staff requiring various types of BC training; and
- the amount of time that can be made available to BC training.

Within the above constraints, a BC training programme should be developed that provides maximum awareness of the fundamentals of the BC plan throughout your organisation. It should also provide a detailed operational understanding of the plan to those staff members assigned key roles and responsibilities under the plan.

Types of BC training

There are two types of training best suited to BC Training:

- 1 Awareness training, and
- 2 Scenario training.

Awareness training. Awareness training is designed to give all employees an appropriate level of understanding of the BC plan. Typically, awareness training can be achieved through a two-tiered series of presentations to staff, covering:

- *Introductory awareness training.* This training is pitched at general staff members who will have only an indirect role in the execution of the BC plan. A session of not more than one hour should cover the framework, strategies and important procedures under the plan.

This will include organisational responsibilities, key groupings and tasks, emergency evacuation procedures, passage of information procedures, media and emergency services liaison procedures and major administrative support procedures.

A slight variant of this session, focusing on business issues, can also be developed for senior management not directly involved in the BC plan.

- *Detailed awareness training.* This training is pitched at staff members who will have a direct role in the execution of the BC plan. A half-day session should be sufficient to detail all aspects of the BC plan.

These sessions should cover much the same information as is provided in the introductory sessions, but in more detail. Attention should also be focused on the precise roles and responsibilities that the session attendees will have under the BC

plan, while also outlining how other groups will support these activities.

Awareness training should be conducted for all employees upon the establishment of the initial BC plan or following significant changes to it.

It should also be conducted for all newly recruited employees during induction training and for staff who have moved into positions with new responsibilities under the plan.

- *Scenario training.* Following on from the awareness training sessions, a series of regular scenario training activities should be conducted. These should be pitched at a level appropriate to the probable involvement various staff members will have in crisis or disaster situations. Normally, only staff members likely to be directly involved in the execution of the BC plan will participate in scenario training, although training on evacuation procedures and moves to alternative operating sites may involve all staff.

Scenario training involves practical exercises designed to confirm staff members' understanding of the BC plan, to raise their skill levels in the execution of the tasks and to identify issues relating to the further development of the BC plan. Scenarios are set that will elicit a response from participants through which BC training objectives can be achieved.

The format of these exercises can include:

- *Desk-top exercises.* These exercises are conducted within the office environment and do not require an operational response. Exercise participants are simply required to assess and comment on how they would react to the various events and issues raised as the exercise scenario unfolds.
- *Call-out exercises.* These exercises are used to practice the call-out procedures that support the initial responses to a crisis or disaster situation. Exercise participants are required to contact key staff members with responsibilities under the BC plan and confirm their availability and recall time.
- *Operational exercises.* These exercises require a full operational response to the exercise scenario. Exercise participants are required to physically implement all aspects of the BC plan, within the parameters set for the exercise. To limit the cost and business impact of such exercises, it is common for operational exercises to constrain the operational response to those activities that do not involve the activation of outside resources or the complete cessation of core business activities.

Phases for scenario training

There are four key phases in the development and execution of scenario training:

1 Planning phase:

- Set objectives and evaluation criteria for exercises (see example one).
- Develop a scenario that will provide an appropriate vehicle for the achievement of the exercise objectives.
- Obtain approval from management for use of resources and funds to support the exercise.
- Obtain clearance from external organisations likely to be affected by the exercise (e.g. land clearance from property owners).

2 Warning phase:

- Provide appropriate warning of the exercise to exercise participants and other staff that may be indirectly affected by the exercise.
- For "no-notice" exercises a window of dates within which the exercise will occur should at least be provided. This will prevent adverse effects on business activities and will allow staff to reschedule critical appointments.

3 Execution phase:

- Provide an exercise brief to participants, including exercise objectives and general conduct, safety aspects, time limits for the end of exercise activity and a code word to be used if the exercise needs to be called off prematurely because of a real accident or disaster.
- Provide exercise validation forms to obtain feedback from exercise participants on issues raised during the exercise.
- Deliver a general scenario at the start of the exercise to establish the assumptions and context within which the exercise will be conducted (see example two).
- Add specific updates to the general scenario throughout the exercise to facilitate the progression of the exercise (see example three).
- Monitor and control the exercise to ensure the exercise objectives are met and issues are captured and resolved.

4 Validation and review phase:

- Conduct a review of all validation forms.
- Conduct a joint debrief of exercise participants to obtain further feedback and discuss issues raised in validation forms.
- Draft an exercise report, including action items resulting from the exercise.

- If necessary, amend the training regime and business continuity plan in response to issues raised during the exercise.

The training regime and administration
Details of the BC training programme should be kept with the consolidated training material for your organisation, rather than within the BC plan documentation itself. This will ensure that BC training receives appropriate priority within your organisation's overall training schedule and that the focus on it does not die off six to 12 months after the initial development of the BC plan.

A typical annual BC training programme would include:

- quarterly awareness training sessions for newly recruited staff members or staff who have moved into positions with new responsibilities under the BC plan;
- quarterly call-out exercises;
- bi-annual desk-top exercises; and
- an annual operational exercise.

Details on staff members participating in each BC training session and exercise, as well as copies of all reports generated by the exercises, should be recorded and stored within your organisation's central training records.

These records can then be used to validate test results by confirming or otherwise whether staff members have received

appropriate levels of training to enable them to perform at the required standard in tests of the BC plan.

Examples

Example one – training evaluation form
Table I is an example of a training evaluation form.

Example two – general scenario
It is Friday, 18 June 1999. Your organisation, a large bank with major offices in each of the Australian capitals and abroad, has been suffering recently from adverse publicity over its lack of responsiveness to customer requests for information. Trading for your bank this year has been reasonable, but your market position among the Australian banks has also taken a beating, falling back to third over the last quarter.

Adding to the situation, your stock is under pressure from institutional investors who claim that your management structure is top-heavy and overpaid and that your investment in IT is lagging behind your competitors.

Your bank has three major office sites relatively well dispersed around the Melbourne CBD, with each site housing approximately 600 staff. These sites cater for most of the national and state business functions for your bank.

The bank's CEO and three of its GMs are presently attending an international

Table I
Training evaluation form

Terminal objective	Evaluation criteria	Objectives achieved during exercises 1-7						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Management responsive to crisis and disaster situations		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Availability	The recovery management team (RMT) is available within 30 minutes of call out			✓				
Exercise of authority	RMT understands and operates within limits of authority	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Control of resources	All resources used in an appropriate and timely manner	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Effective passage of information	All staff involved in the crisis and disaster response are appropriately briefed and kept updated as necessary	✓	✓			✓		
Problem solving	Timely, appropriate and effective solutions found to problems	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaison with senior management	Senior management involvement sought at an appropriate time. Senior management fully briefed and kept updated	✓				✓		
Liaison with customers	Information about effects on supply of services available as appropriate to all customers	✓				✓		
Liaison with external agencies	Liaison with appropriate external agencies established promptly and maintained		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Liaison with media	Passage of information to media is controlled, timely, and accurate		✓			✓		
Call-out procedures known and effectively implemented				✓		✓		✓
Use of call-out tree	Call-out tree methodology known and implemented effectively by all participants			✓		✓		✓
Response times	Staff members are contactable within set limits			✓		✓		
Availability	Appropriate manning levels for crisis and disaster response can be achieved in a timely manner			✓		✓		✓

conference in New York and are not expected back in Australia until Friday week.

Example three – specific scenario

It is 6 a.m., Friday, 18 June 1999. As your radio alarm clock goes off you hear the newsflash that an armed man has taken over the 20th storey of a major building in the Melbourne CBD.

From the description of the office block, you soon realise that it is the building opposite one of your bank's offices in town. The news report states that the police have cordoned off the whole city block surrounding the building containing the gunman. The police have also evacuated all of the buildings in the area and are preparing for a drawn-out siege in the hope that police can negotiate with the man. It is clear that no one will be able to work in your bank's building in the area and, going on previous such incidents, the situation may not be resolved for days. This is particularly disconcerting given that the building houses, among other departments, your national treasury group.

Problem one (ten minutes)

- 1 List below your immediate actions (i.e. what you would do in the next 20 minutes), in priority order.
- 2 If you choose to contact anyone, list their names in the order that you would contact them.
- 3 List any further pieces of information you will need immediately, and how you will gather that information.
- 4 Be prepared to justify your responses.

KPMG's business continuity planning services

KPMG is committed to delivering quality BCP services and the proprietary methodology has been used successfully on over 100 Australian and international BCP projects. BCP training is an essential element of our methodology. During the BCP project, there are opportunities to transfer our skills and experiences to management and staff which we welcome and encourage.

We have a highly experienced team of specialist consultants and stringent quality assurance procedures to ensure that our work maintains a high standard consistently. Our management consulting firm has obtained and maintained the ISO 9001 accreditation as evidence to our commitment to quality.

By including client personnel in the BCP project they champion the BC process and the BC plan. They take the initiative for its continued tuning and testing, and if a problem that escalates to a crisis or if a disaster were to suddenly occur, they would provide the leadership necessary for business survival.

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