Business Continuity Basics
How to Develop a Basic Continuity Plan

Introduction

What would you do if your business experienced a disruption impacting your staff, your facility, the technology you rely on, or the resources you require to provide vital services?

Would your business survive such a disruption or, would you have to close the business permanently due to an interruption in services?

These questions will help determine the readiness of your business and should prompt you to want to prepare the business for disruptions by developing a continuity plan.

What is business continuity planning?
Business continuity planning is a process aimed at minimizing the impact disruptions have on a business. Focus is on maintaining vital business services while identifying strategies to keep those services operational during and after a disruption.

What is involved in *basic* business continuity planning?
To develop a basic business continuity plan, one must:
- Identify the most important services and functions to be maintained during and after a disruption.
- Develop a plan that identifies strategies to help minimize the impact of disruptions.
- Ensure staff are trained on strategies that will be implemented during a disruption.
- Schedule time for the plan to be reviewed annually.
- Assess the plan to ensure the strategies are effective and appropriate.

Complexity of plans will vary depending on the organization, some plans will be simple while others will be more complex and provide comprehensive strategies for maintaining services. ***A continuity plan does not have to be complex to be effective!***

When developing continuity plans, often an all-hazards approach is taken which allows one to plan for disruptions affecting **facility, people, technology,** or **resources,** regardless of the cause of the disruption.

Facility Disruption:
Ask the following questions to help develop strategies that would enable services to continue if the building was inaccessible.
If you could not access your facility (for whatever reason) what would you do?
- Would your team work remotely?
- Would you require an alternate location?
  - Where would that be?

o Is the alternate site appropriate for your business needs?

o Have approvals been granted to use this site?

- What stakeholders would need to be notified the facility is not available?

- How does the work transition from the primary site to the alternate site?

- When the issue has been resolved, how does work transition back to the primary site?

- How do you address the back log of work that may have occurred during the disruption?

By addressing these questions, strategies are identified that will help ensure the continuation of vital services when disruptions to the facility occur.

Staffing Disruption

When an organization is faced with a significant reduction in staff or loss of key personnel, strategies must be identified to help maintain the most essential functions and services.

Identifying strategies and having procedures documented will help people who may be unfamiliar with the role step in and provide vital services.

If your business experiences a significant reduction in staff:

- Where would you find replacement staff?

- Who would need to be notified?

- How would backlogs of work that occurred during a staffing shortage be resolved?

Technology Disruption

In this digital age most businesses are dependent on technology, if for some reason wi-fi or phone service were unavailable how would that impact the business?

- How would you continue providing vital services?

- Would you have alternate ways to communicate?

- Would your organization have manual work-around procedures that could be implemented?

- Could some tasks be deferred until the technology was restored?

- Is data being backed up regularly?

- Who would need to be notified of a disruption in technology? How would this be done?

Resource Disruption

Resources would be considered as office equipment, tools, machinery, vehicles, appliances, supplies, services (i.e. delivery service) etc. that are required for your business to provide vital services. What would your organization do if these vital resources were unavailable?

- Have you identified alternate suppliers for the resource?

- Are there manual workarounds that could be implemented?

- Who would need to be notified if these resources were not available?

Training and Awareness
For continuity plans to be useful, strategies must be documented and shared with staff who will use them during disruptions.

Plan Maintenance
To ensure a continuity plan is current and up to date it should be reviewed annually, assessing contact information and strategies that may have changed.

Test the Plan
It makes sense to test the plan once it has been developed, this could be done simply by having a discussion where stakeholders walk through the process to identify gaps or deficiencies.

Conclusion
By asking the right questions in advance, one can develop an effective continuity plan that helps a business build resilience and will inevitably minimize the impact of disruptions and save money. It is up to every business owner to ensure their business is protected!

Brampton businesses interested in learning more about business continuity or emergency preparedness can visit:
[City of Brampton | Emergency Management | Brampton Emergency Management Office](#)
Email: bemo@brampton.ca