



Successful Business Continuity Planning

In today's global environment of real time transactions, Internet enabled applications and distributed computer and client server technology – the volume and speed of information transfer is on the increase. As a result, the amount of work and business that a company can lose during an hour of system and process downtime is far greater than before.

The offshoot of this is that companies are at greater risk of the implications of disaster or business interruptions than they have ever been before. In the international business environment, the traditional focus on recovering the data centre after downtime and business interruptions is no longer enough. Rapid technological innovation, call centre dependence and supply chain dynamics mean that there are new challenges and risks that call into question older methods of business recovery.

As far as disaster recovery is concerned, the shift from centralised IT structures to distributed technology has been accompanied by a shifting focus from traditional disaster recovery towards a more embracing approach of business continuity planning – aimed at assuring the continuity of all business critical processes. Nowadays, protecting business processes is as important as safeguarding data.

Prevention is better than cure. To ensure the continuation of business critical processes, potential risk needs to be identified, assessed and mitigated. However, protecting the revenue

stream requires investment. A survey conducted by Ashton, Metzler & Associates in March 2002 asked over 600 network professionals to indicate the primary new technology that they would focus on over the next 12 months. The results show that for many companies, implementing a disaster recovery / business continuity plan is now a priority.

Yet despite this recent upsurge of interest in BCP - the rhetoric is still somewhat different from the reality. Research has shown that over a third of companies have no disaster recovery plans whatsoever. Figures also suggest that 40% of firms that suffer a disaster have collapsed within five years of the event.

Overall, companies that undertake business continuity planning with a healthy dose of pessimism tend to be successful. Taking a complete view of the range and extent of damage a disaster could inflict, and the level and speed of recovery required - is a vital consideration. The basic premise is that a company's chances of disaster survival are better if it has a plan than if it doesn't.

This report outlines the key approaches and steps required for business continuity planning, provides a headline view of the important considerations required for successful BCP, and outlines common methods of estimating the cost of disaster or business interruption.

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