

AN INSIGHT TO BCP IN CONTEXT TO MAJOR TERROR ATTACKS

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The corporate business world really changed the way from how it used to think about business resilience and business continuity after the events like the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers and the recent 26-11 attack in Taj Hotel, Mumbai. This event is a drastic eye opener to all corporate that Business Contingency Planning (BCP) should not be disregarded. According to the Info Security News Magazine (2007), an effective BCP and disaster recovery plan can reduce losses by 90% in the event of an incident. According to another study 81% of CEOs indicated their company plans would not be able to cope with a catastrophic event like the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 26/11.

Increased man made or natural threat levels have focused greater attention on defeating these threats head-on, by successfully integrating design, implementing a successful Business Continuity plan.

What is BCM

Business Continuity Management is a holistic management process that identifies potential disturbing events, provides a framework for building resilience and builds the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of key stakeholders, reputation and value creating activities. BCM must be owned and fully integrated into the organization as an embedded management process.

Benefits to organization

The main purpose of BCM is to ensure that the organization has a planned response to major disruptions that threaten its ability to deliver its services. There are other benefits that can be gained by embracing BCM as a management discipline

- Demonstrate an effective business continuity plan has a competitive advantage
- For some organization it is a legal requirements
- A Business Continuity plan helps protect the organization's image, brand, and reputation.
- Business Continuity planning will make the organization more robust. It can strengthen the organization not only against large-scale problems it can also help make smaller problems that might have caused continuity interruptions to become moot, through detailed planning

Life Cycle of BCP Implementation

In the present scenario Business Continuity is considered to be the umbrella known as “**The Business Continuity Management Program**”, under which take place several processes/activities related to the identification, mitigation, management and control of continuity risks, as well as the governance of such a project inside an organization. Broadly the successful BCP implementation has five stages as follows,

Business Understanding

Business Continuity Management Strategies

Developing and Implementing a BCM Response

Developing a Business Continuity Management Culture

Exercising, Maintenance and Audit

“The Business Continuity Management Program”

Business Continuity Management must be an accepted management process driven from the top of the organization. There has to be a vision statement which is fully endorsed and actively promoted by the Executive – this is formally presented as the BCM Policy for the organization. The key to a successful BCM program is the early identification of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and authorities to manage BCM program and process throughout the organization.

Business Understanding

To develop an appropriate Business Continuity Management program it is important first understand the business and what activities or processes are essential to ensure continuity of business critical activity to at least a minimum level.

The questions we can ask are

- What are the objectives of the organization?
- How are the business objectives achieved?
- What are the products/services of the organization?
- Who is involved (both internally and externally) in the achievement of the business objectives?
- What are the time imperatives on the delivery of the products or services?

Business Continuity Management Strategies

BCM Strategy is a broad term usually referring to the formation of a vision and direction, setting mission statements, identifying objectives so that the organizations objectives and goals can be achieved. In the context of Business Continuity Management it concerns the determination and selection of alternative operating strategies to be used to maintain the Mission Critical Activities.

In some organizations a high level risk assessment of risks that might threaten the achievement of an organization's strategic and operational objectives will be undertaken as part of the strategic business planning processes. The output of this exercise can provide a useful input when setting the overall context for the Business Impact Analysis (BIA). In some regulated environments this Risk Assessment is a mandated activity.

There are three levels of BCM strategy and planning that need to be considered:

➤ Department (Organization) Strategy

An organization strategy framework providing policy that reflects the key business, stakeholder, legislative and regulatory requirements

➤ Mission Critical Strategy

The resumption strategies for mission critical business processes and activities

➤ Resource Recovery Strategy

The deployment of appropriate resources to ensure acceptable continuity across all business processes and activities

Developing and Implementing a BCM Response

The various plans covered in this stage is to identify, as far as possible, the actions that are necessary and the resources which are needed to enable the organization to manage a disruption whatever its cause.

The actions outlined in the plan are not intended to cover every eventuality as, by their nature, all incidents are different. Likewise the predefined procedures may need to be adapted with flexibility and initiative to the specific event that has occurred and the opportunities it may have opened up. If the event falls outside the scope of the assumptions on which the Business Continuity Plan was based then the situation should be escalated to those responsible for implementing the Crisis Management Plan.

Developing a Business Continuity Management Culture

The successful establishment of a Business Continuity Management (BCM) culture within an organization is dependent upon its integration with the organization's strategic and day-to-day, management and alignment with business priorities.

The main techniques for developing a sustainable BCM culture within an organization include:

- Assessing the current level of awareness of and commitment to, BCM against the desired level; thus identifying the 'training gap' that exists between the two.
- Designing and delivering a campaign to create awareness and develop the skills, knowledge and commitment required to ensure successful Business Continuity Management.
- Checking that the awareness campaign has achieved the desired results, and monitoring BCM awareness in the longer term.

Exercising, Maintenance and Audit

A Business Continuity Management (BCM) capability cannot be considered reliable until it has been exercised.

Exercising can take various forms, including technical tests, desktop walk-through and full live exercises. Time and resources spent exercising BCM Strategies and Continuity Plan's are crucial parts of the overall process. The effort needs to be put into testing technical recovery capabilities; the key element is the role of people and their resilience in terms of skills, knowledge, management and decision making.

Consequently organizations must assure themselves of the readiness of suppliers of outsourced services to cope with disruption, by exercising their own plans and requiring evidence of the viability of their supplier's contingency plans and the testing of them.

A Business Continuity **Maintenance** Program must be established to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have the current and relevant parts of the Business Continuity Plan. Organizations exist in a dynamic environment and are subject to change in people, processes, client expectations, risk, environment, geography, and business strategy. To ensure that their BCM capability continues to reflect the nature, scale and complexity of the organization it supports, it must be current, accurate, complete, exercised and understood by all stakeholders and participants.

The BCM **Audit** process ensures that an organization has an effective Business Continuity capability. Audit has five key functions:

- To validate compliance with the organization's BCM policies and standards.
- To review the organization's BCM solutions.
- To validate the organization's BCP's.
- To verify that appropriate exercising and maintenance activities are taking place.
- To highlight deficiencies and issues and ensure their resolution.

Conclusion

The organization that successfully operates a true business continuity management culture will have systems that are more effective; more efficient; more fully utilized than their competitors. Such a company will be able to maximize the return on investment it makes in business processes. It will be more productive, more reliable and an excellent partner and supplier. When it sets a deadline it will meet it. When it undertakes a project, it will deliver on time and on budget. In this way, business continuity management becomes necessary not because it means you will survive into the distant future; but because it will make you a better and more competitive business today.