

Business Continuity Management

– our top ten tips



No company is immune from business disruption, so it's important that your organization is well-equipped to effectively minimize the disruption to your business. Read our top tips on how you can prepare and respond to disruptions to your business and supply chain using ISO 22301.

1. Identify critical business functions

According to the Greater London Authority around half of all businesses experiencing a disaster with no effective plans for recovery fail within the following 12 months. Mitigate this risk by identifying your critical operations and applying a methodical approach to the threats that are posed to them.

2. Produce a plan

Make a plan considering the seven 'P's needed to keep your business operational: providers (internal and suppliers), performance (service level agreements you need to meet), processes, people, premises, profile (your brand) and preparation. Existing frameworks can help, including ISO 22301 for general business continuity planning and PD25222 to specifically address supply chain continuity.

3. Document your plan

Have a plan in mind? Then write it down. Plans for disruption should never remain in the mind of the Managing Director alone. Work with your key stakeholders (including suppliers) to put in place 'back to normal' recovery plans and ensure they are agreed and documented.

4. Communicate

Don't let your plan gather dust on a shelf. Ensure plans are communicated, understood and made available to key staff. Equally, share non confidential aspects with clients and other key stakeholders to boost their confidence in your ability to maintain 'business as usual'.

5. Test your plans

Exercise your business continuity plans in mock scenarios to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and that any flaws are exposed. If possible include clients and suppliers in your exercises. Remember to test them, not only in scenarios where there may be a physical risk such as poor weather conditions making premises inaccessible, but people risks such as supply chain challenges and boardroom departures.

6. Your suppliers need BCM too

While lean and efficient supply chains make good economic sense, unexpected events can have a significant impact on the operations and reputation of businesses. A 2012 BCI Supply Chain Resilience Survey found that 73% of respondents experienced at least one supply chain disruption in the preceding 12 months – illustrating just how common supply chain disruptions are.

To avoid this, identify your 'critical' suppliers and ensure they have business continuity arrangements in place that fit with your objectives and are defined within your contract. Also consider setting up more than one source of supply or increasing your stock of critical resources.

7. Ensure continual improvement

Business continuity plans should be nimble and continually improving. If your plans haven't been reviewed for a few years then they probably won't meet current requirements. Organizations engaged in business continuity management will be actively learning from their internal audits, tests, management reviews and even from incidents themselves.

8. Align to organizational objectives

Plans that don't reflect the organization's strategy and objectives can lack credibility and are unlikely to succeed in the longer-term. Instead, make sure your plans allow you to get back up and running in a way that aligns with your organization's objectives.

9. Insure your organization

Unexpected disruption can have a huge cost to business, so insure your organization against worst case scenarios. For example, employer's liability insurance is a legal requirement in the UK and can help pay for medical treatment and compensate employees in the event of a crisis.

10. Have an incident communications plan

Don't let an unexpected disruption in your business or supply chain spell disaster. Have a business continuity plan in place, so that once the situation has been assessed, a nominated senior spokesperson can communicate a strong message to your stakeholders. Reinforcing confidence in your organization's ability to recover is half the battle in business continuity.

Find out more about
managing business continuity
with BSI using ISO 22301

