



The essential question is not, "How busy are you?" but "What are you busy at?"
~Oprah Winfrey



So who has a suntan? If you have then you must either have been in the lower half of the South Island or overseas. The weather has been anything but summer for more than a few days at a time for most of us. However we can guarantee that now we have returned inside and are behind our desks the skies will be blue and we will be left looking at our full bottles of SP30 suntan lotion. No need to go on about it as we are all walking around with confused looks on our pale faces. A suggestion is that we all push for our children to take up careers in meteorology, as they can make mistakes and blame it all on nature.

This month I am focussing on updating my Business Continuity Plan. Unfortunately, the prompting was due to an accident my daughter had, that, if there hadn't been some amazing luck involved, could have had me out of the office for quite a while, as family comes first. (Special thanks to St Johns Ambulance, Whangapoua Volunteer Firemen and Auckland Westpac Rescue Helicopters.)

It is unfortunate that it is accidents that make us think of updating our plans (or even creating them!), as these should be updated on a far more regular basis. Accidents, breakdowns and disasters don't announce themselves in advance, and it is better to be prepared than not.

I last completed a big Business Continuity Plan for the last company I worked for. They were a big international biotech company, and I have to admit to thinking at the time it was pretty silly spending months making up a fully comprehensive Continuity Plan to cover every possible contingency, from losing key staff unexpectedly to mechanical breakdowns through to natural disasters – I mean, come on, how often have we had major earthquakes in New Zealand! We had developed contingencies to cover every possible scenario, and while I wish they never had to use the Plan, it helped in major ways for both the sudden death of a key staff member, and for the Christchurch earthquake. Because of the Plan being in place, the business moved quickly to sort out the situations, and the company was back up to full pace within only a short time.

While I hate that these events happened to such a great company, the Plan helped them prevent major delays, and ultimately losses because it was there. This also worked for having all their procedures mapped out. Yes, it was a pain continually updating them, especially the administration tasks that I did, as I was constantly amending them as I improved processes, but, again, when I had to take 2 weeks off unexpectedly, someone else could pick up the procedures and get the work done – OK, not as quickly as I could, and they didn't know instinctively what to do, but the work got done, and that is what was important.

I hope that you never have a situation when you need to use a Business Continuity Plan, but having one is important, and it is better to allocate time, either when there is downtime, or at least a couple of hours each week to producing one, because the time spent now, can save an incredible amount of time and money in the future, as well as giving you peace of mind. We have included an article on BCP's over the page, which gives some guidelines, but if you would like some assistance, please give me a call. The easiest thing to ignore in the Plan is to ensure that all the questions have been asked, and answered. We all hold so much information in our heads, and forget that not everyone knows what we do, let alone how we do it!

How to Create a Business Continuity Plan – Part 1 of 3

Sourced from wikiHow

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is the least expensive insurance any company can have (especially for small companies, as it costs virtually nothing to produce). Unfortunately, many companies have never taken the time to develop such a plan.

Following you will see the first suggested steps and considerations, in an abbreviated way, for small companies to create a BCP that will improve their chances of continuing operations during or after significant events. Development of a BCP for larger companies is not within the scope of this document.

Document internal key personnel and backups. These are people who fill positions without which your business absolutely cannot function – make the list as large as necessary but as small as possible. Consider which job functions are critically necessary, every day. Think about who fills those positions when the primary job-holder is on vacation. Make a list of all those individuals with all contact information including business phone, home phone, cell phone, pager, business email, personal email, and any other possible way of contacting them in an emergency situation where normal communications might be unavailable.

Identify who can telecommute. Some people in your company might be perfectly capable of conducting business from a home office. Find out who can and who cannot. You might consider assuring that your critical staff (identified in Step 1) can all telecommute if necessary.

Document external contacts. If you have critical vendors or contractors, build a special contact list that includes a description of the company (or individual) and any other absolutely critical information about them including key personnel contact information. Include in your list people like attorneys, bankers, IT consultants...anyone that you might need to call to assist with various operational issues. Don't forget utility companies, municipal and community offices (police, fire, water, hospitals) and the post office!

Document critical equipment. Personal computers often contain critical information (you do have off-site backups, don't you?). Some businesses cannot function even for a few hours without a FAX machine. Do you rely heavily on your copy machine? Do you have special printers you absolutely must have? Don't forget software – that would often be considered critical equipment especially if it is specialized software or if it cannot be replaced.

Identify critical documents. Articles of incorporation and other legal papers, utility bills, banking information, critical HR documents, building lease papers, tax returns... you need to have everything available that would be necessary to start your business over again. Remember, you might be dealing with a total facility loss. Would you know when to pay the loan on your company vehicles? To whom do you send payment for your email services?

Identify contingency equipment options. If your company uses trucks, and it is possible the trucks might be damaged in a building fire, where would you rent trucks? Where would you rent computers? Can you use a business service outlet for copies, fax, printing, and other critical functions? *(Hey, we can help here!)*

Identify your contingency location. This is the place you will conduct business while your primary offices are unavailable. It could be a hotel – many of them have very well equipped business facilities you can use. It might be one of your contractors' offices, or your attorney's office. Perhaps telecommuting for everyone is a viable option. Wherever it is, make sure you have all the appropriate contact information (including people's names). If you do have an identified temporary location, include a map in your BCP.

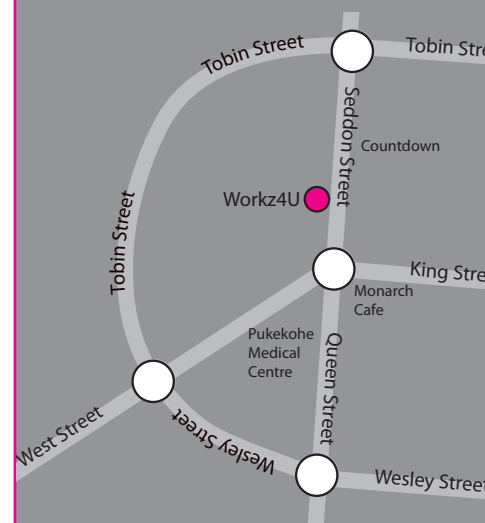


Part 2 coming next month, or available on our website.

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