Crafting Your Business Continuity Plan

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Published May 12, 2020

What the current COVID-19 crisis has taught us all is that we are not always fully prepared for long-lasting emergencies, especially when it comes to business continuity. And it's not surprising – events like this pandemic do not happen as often as, say, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornadoes. If your business doesn't already have one, a business continuity plan will help your organization be ready for natural disasters, pandemics, and massive cyberattacks. In other words, it is never too late to start!

What is a Business Continuity Plan?

It's an outline of instructions, procedures, and processes that help a business continue functioning during and quickly resume normal operations after a disaster.

Why Should You Have a Business Continuity Plan?

Whether your organization is small, mid-sized, or large, it's important to have a plan for what to do in emergency situations. When an emergency happens, staff will know the procedures that need to be followed instead of trying to figure it all out on the spot. With this blueprint, your workforce will be able to effectively handle many incidents. Everyone feels better when there is a plan – even if you have to make small adjustments.

What Does Your Business Continuity Plan Look Like?

If your organization doesn't have a business continuity plan or hasn't updated it in a while, start by assessing your business processes. Determine vulnerabilities and potential losses, how to manage and pay your workforce, and how you will communicate with your employees and clients. When making your business continuity plan, keep the following in mind:

- What is the scope of the plan?
- What are the key business areas?
- What are critical business functions?
- What are potential threats?
- What are potential problems that can arise?
- What are the steps and procedures to maintain operations?

- How will you communicate with your employees and clients?
- What policies will need to be in place before, during, and after an emergency?
- How will your workforce be managed, and do you have the technology?
- Who will be vital with helping carry out the plan?
- How will staff be trained with the business continuity plan?
- How will the plan be deployed?

Once you have considered these questions, analyze the impact of your business continuity plan and try to foresee anything that could go wrong. Plan what resources you'll need, but make sure you have extra, and create backup plans. If something does go wrong, it's better to not only have a plan A and B, but plans A through Z. Once you have those, it's time to figure out how to implement your continuity plan in case an event occurs.

Conducting Your Impact Analysis

When crafting a business continuity plan, analyze and identify the effects that various emergencies could have on your business, such as functions and processes. For example, in a pandemic, what would you do to prepare? Can you send your employees home, and how would that affect your business? Being able to identify these will help you make decisions about your recovery strategies and what you should prioritize. In order to be able to identify functions, processes, and operational and financial impacts that your business could face, you should gather leaders in your company that will help you identify and answer Ready.gov's Operational & Financial Impacts worksheet – this will also help you with your Business Impact Analysis. Once you are able to identify and cover all your bases for your business continuity plan, distribute this information to everyone that will help maintain the business during any potential emergencies.

Identify Resources for Your Recovery Strategy

In order to restore business functions after an emergency event, you will need to identify the resources that are necessary to resume your organization's normal operations. These resources include your employees, any technology (such as computers, laptops, and communication tools), and any essential documents, to name a few. To help you figure out your recovery strategy read Preparing Your Workforce to Work From Home Due to COVID-19.

Identify Backups and Workarounds

Although you may have prepared heavily and crafted a great plan, as with many things in life, things don't always go like you hope they will. Perhaps you have a few employees on paper payroll and a disaster causes the delivery carrier company to shut down – what do you do? You should always have a backup plan to your backup plan and a backup plan to that one. Anticipate and prepare for multiple

scenarios where something goes wrong with your strategies, functions, and resources. Then, in the event any of these situations does occur, it won't stop your business from running. Read Flexible Pay During Emergencies to get resources on how to continue paying your employees. Check out FEMA's Business Continuity Plan and Ready.gov for a checklist and ideas to help you create your plan. As you work on crafting a new plan or modifying an existing one, don't forget to ensure key personnel and leaders are in place to help effectively carry it out. There is no better time to hop on a free webinar and learn from those experts on what they see working and what you might as well skip. Litter Mendelson P.C have great COVID-19 Rescources for Employees.

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