

Is your business ready for the unexpected?

Running and managing any business in today's hectic commercial environment requires persistence, tenacity and resilience. But have you ever taken the time to consider how resilient your business maybe in coping with an unforeseen incident?

Be that an incident involving your own premises or suffering the resulting consequences and impact from an incident to a premises in close proximity.

Have you considered how your organisation would cope with an interruption to its services and those it provides, the risks which your organisation may face and the impact that a business critical incident may have, not only on your own business but on other businesses that you rely upon or who rely upon your business?

Incidents can include, fire or water damage, disruptions to utility services and IT, severe weather, accidents, natural disasters or even terrorist attacks all which can cause massive disruptions to the supply chain and to customers. Having a Business Continuity Plan may be the difference between keeping or losing your business in the event of an incident. Failing to plan is planning to fail and could result in exposing your business to unnecessary risks.

Whatever the risks, having effective contingency arrangements in place will reduce the impact of an incident. Formalising what you need to do, who does what and when, communication methods, resource requirements and where you would relocate to if necessary will reduce the effect of an incident.

With some simple planning, you could lay the foundations which may enable your business to survive and continue to operate and flourish, whilst others around you may not. Any business that undertakes a logical and structured view of the threats facing it and then works out how to respond to them has already reduced the impact if an incident occurs.

The following five steps may assist you in being prepared;

1. Recognise how your business functions and what its core/key processes are, this will assist in identifying those areas that are at greatest risk.

2. Carry out a formal assessment of the threats, likelihood, duration and impact of the risks; this will help the organisation to be better placed to reduce the impact.

3. Develop a simple but robust plan including details of the scope of the plan, declaration and implementation methods of the plan, resources, contact numbers (staff and suppliers), relocation arrangements, procedures, critical systems and documents and access to finance in the event of an incident.

4. Create a culture whereby business continuity becomes second nature and is developed into a ethos of "this is how we do business round here"

5. Regularly update the plan, and test and train your staff in using the plan. By doing this, businesses have an excellent chance of surviving. Such activities also assist in identifying weaknesses in the plan and in its implementation, so strengthening the process.

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