



GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN (BCP)



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Developing a BCP

What is a BCP?

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) outlines critical information a business requires in order to continue operations during an unforeseen event. These events can range from natural disasters, to data breaches, moving premises, and anything in between.

Why do you need it?

In an emergency, or when you least expect it, external factors will impact your business and operations. A carefully planned, well communicated BCP enables the business to resume or continue business operations whilst you navigate the issues and challenges at hand.

Regardless of the scale of the business (from regional SMEs to multi-million dollar operations) it may not be feasible to maintain all business functions during or following an unforeseen event. However a BCP will give the business the opportunity to identify, assess and action which activities are critical to the business, how they will be implemented and who will take the lead in doing so.

What makes up a BCP?

The size, and level of detail in your BCP is dependent on the size, nature and complexity of your business. That aside, most BCPs contain the following elements:

Executive Summary

This will outline the overall BCP; what to do to recover, resume or continue business operations during an unforeseen event. It is important to note the executive summary is usually written last, once all other aspects are complete.

Distribution List

This section will advise where the plan is located (either hard or soft copy), who is required to receive a copy of the BCP & the location of any other plans or checklists which may be needed during an event, (evacuation plans, emergency checklists etc.). It is important to ensure that either hard or soft copies of the BCP should be available offsite from your premises in case they are destroyed in an event.

Risk Mitigation & Management Plans

Here, it should identify:

- Potential risks for the business and how likely these risks are to occur.
- Consequences of aforementioned risks and the ranking priority of these risks.
- How to manage or mitigate these risks.
- How long these risks could impact your business moving forward.

Incident Response Procedures (IRP)

The IRP should include all the information required to respond imminently before, during or after an event. Further to this it should include any associated documents that may be required (e.g. evacuation plans, social media account passwords, holding statement, insurance information).

Key Personnel

Determining who the key people are to handle operations in an event is dependent on the size, nature and complexity of your business.

In some instances, external people or agencies may be required to assist (e.g. IT Company, lawyers or accountants). Identify those who are critical to business operations, and their areas of expertise; these are the people to engage. Where possible, also look to have backup personnel in case of annual leave etc.



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Contact Lists

Whilst self-explanatory, this section is a list of people you may need to contact in an event. This includes but is not limited to:

- Staff and their emergency contacts.
- SES, Council and emergency numbers.
- External operators (e.g. insurance brokers/providers, legal, IT, accountants, suppliers, customers).

There should also be some “first 24” procedures and checklists included in this section. This enables critical personnel to undertake tasks efficiently with minimal room for error. This can include items like staff communication & distribution plans, emergency risk assessment and, depending on the size and nature of your business, even include media/PR release procedures (see more below).

Crisis Management Communication

Depending on the nature and severity of the event, you may find yourself in need of enacting generic and/or wide-reaching communications to industry and customers to address the disruption or impact of an event on the business. You might consider:

- Developing a ‘holding statement’ about the business.
- Template social media statements, and a record of social media accounts and passwords.
- Record of involvement/membership with industry associations.
- Procedure for crisis management communication



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Recovery Plans

As the name indicates, the recovery plan is the steps put in place to get your business up & running again after an event. Be realistic over idealistic when creating this plan. Be conservative when thinking about minimising losses (both financial & reputational).

Drill Schedules & Review Dates

It is imperative that plans & procedures are tested, evaluated & updated regularly. This section should outline how & how often you test your BCP items, how you determine their effectiveness, and the frequency of updating them. Timetables, calendars and revision histories will also showcase easily definable parameters, as well as how your business has adapted over time.

Additional Resources

This guide to developing a BCP serves as a starting point to what might be include in your own BCP. The Australian government has many resources for the creation & adaptation of BCPs which can be accessed via the links below:

[Guide to continuing your business](#)

[Developing an Emergency Management Plan](#)