



Business Resilience Solutions

Business Continuity – Talk the Talk

In the business world today Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity, Business Resilience, Continuity of Operations are just a few of the terms in use. While these and other phrases are tossed about by everyone they are more often only partially understood. After all, why recover a disaster and don't we all expect a business to continue and support services to always be available?

The terminology developed over many years and is derived from several sources. The world of early technology coined the terms for data backup and restore. Disaster recovery started when “catastrophic failures”, generally hardware failure, were more common occurrences than today.

Confusing Terminology or Not

Information technology gave rise to the birth of information protection in the early computer age and with it the need to recover from disastrous events. Like many phrases in use they often do not say what they mean. Let us examine the progression from disaster recovery to the current business continuity management situation.

Disaster Recovery

Disaster Recovery (DR) was originally an information technology term encompassing the process of copying data from one media to another and storing it in a safe place. Sometimes that safe place was literally a physical safe (consider a metal box with a secure lock). The safe gradually moved to another building and eventually businesses started that would store your valuable information in controlled and secure buildings. The managers of the data center would often locate another facility with the same computers and peripherals and would then set up a reciprocal support agreement to allow there processing to occupy the free time at the other location should one or the other have a fire or other reason to leave their site. This process was designed to be used when a situation caused a sudden and unplanned stoppage of the processing, in other words a disaster. So the ability to recover from a disaster began to be called Disaster Recovery.

Business Recovery

Business Recovery (BR) is an adaptation of disaster recovery. The scope and difficulty of picking up the pieces of catastrophically interrupted business led to applying the disaster recovery principles to the balance of a business. Identifying required material and information, creating duplicates and storing them in a place where they are safe yet available. For business this is more difficult than the data center when it comes to making a backup since there is a far greater amount of physical things to consider. Without trying to oversimplify, it should be easy to understand that writing bits and bytes to magnetic tape or transmitting the same to a remote location for electronic media storage is easier than clearing desks and picking up files to be duplicated each day. So here is Business Recovery, by protecting the valuable information of the business recovery from a disaster is again possible and enhanced.



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Business Continuity Management

Business Continuity Management (BCM) the latest in the evolution of contingency preparedness and response planning combines the all the disciplines. The ties, when managed as a program, enable the on-going coupling of business needs balanced with the delivery capability of technology. Included in the full program of BCM is business resilience. By including physical, logical, systems, network, business process, crisis and emergency management into one comprehensive program strategies and mitigation implementation are able to address broad scale application. Enabling a business management structure that is flexible yet focused on being able to keep the business running through nearly all scenarios of interruption. When communications and project milestones march together the definition of requirements and implementation of appropriate solutions result in response, recovery, restoration, and return process that is efficient and cost contained.

Business Resilience

Business Resilience is the total shift to a proactive environment. Operating under a single directive and in a cohesive organization that is empowered to address all areas of exposure the business becomes capable of enduring though previously catastrophic scenarios. The well managed business resilience program functions by giving the business, which is potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting through mitigation or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure regardless of the threat. Though learning from past disasters, whether they were incurred by the organizational entity or through observance of the impact on another, and implementing controls and process to manage the situation the ability of an organization to rebound following a crisis or a disaster event.

Continuity of Operations

Within the disaster or business recovery program the concept is to address major and possibly catastrophic interruptions. When a finer degree of detail is needed or desired, then Continuity of Operations (COOP) is where the program should be aimed. COOP incorporates the recovery ability of disaster recovery and business recovery into a day-to-day program to manage and react to as many situations as may be identified. This may be a loss of a file, a reset of a server or response and recovery effort of a total catastrophe. This effort visibly combines disaster recovery, business recovery, and incident response into one program when properly managed.



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Crisis Management

Crisis Management (CM), the word crisis either should be understood as any situation that is severely out of the ordinary and has the potential or has caused a negative effect on the business. This may be what leads up to the declaration of a disaster event as may be caused by a hurricane, fire or power loss, or one caused by a political incident, i.e. disgruntled employee or profit seeker. Management in the term should be read as controlling the situation and potentially avoiding the catastrophic affects. The Crisis Management process is best viewed and acted on as a highly coordinated and practiced team that is able to respond, not just react, to any situation that may escalate to their level. The CM team is normally called in early in any escalating situation. They deal not only in the nuts and bolts of the business but in working with the media and public responders. This group becomes the first line of defense against what may be damaging company image at a time when possibly not deserved.

Emergency Management

Emergency Management (EM) is the program normally associated with life safety and response to life threatening issues. As with each of the other groups a management team coordinates the response and actions based on the situation and the extent of their capabilities

Emergency Management includes the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for dealing with all aspects of emergencies, in particularly preparedness, response, and rehabilitation. Emergency management involves plans, structures, and arrangements established to engage the normal endeavors of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to respond to the whole spectrum of emergency needs. This may also termed Life Safety Management.

Hazard

Hazard the word, or term, defined by several sources, has a common statement being the exposure to danger or harm. Hazards may be a condition that tends to create or increase the possibility of loss —used especially in insurance law. Hazards are the unknown and unpredictable phenomenon that causes an event to result one way rather than another. Consider a hazard as being in the proximity of a government building such as Federal Reserve Bank or place of frequent public protests. Hazards when identified in advance may not be the end of a business and may be used as a lever to accomplish desired change.

Threat

A threat is something that is a source of danger; "earthquakes are a constant threat in Japan", hurricanes are seasonal threats in the Gulf States. Threats may be natural or manmade. In the situation of political situations, disgruntled employee for example there may be a declaration of an intention or a determination to inflict harm on another describing the threat. Placing the company in known flood plain is the combination of a natural and manmade threat.



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Risk

One definition of risk is similar to hazard and is often used interchangeably, however, when used for the purpose of providing the foundation of cost managed and effective Business Continuity Management the definition is one that focuses on the establishment of financial effect of hazards and threats on the business. That definition of Risk is the danger or probability (vulnerability) of a business to particular hazard or threat which if un-addressed may lead to loss of life and or financial loss. The financial loss may be tangible. Tangible being the ability to calculate the precise amount of money lost or intangible where initially the loss may be customer confidence and while there may not be an immediate loss of money the loss may appear after the initial incident to the business. In this book risk is looked at after the business has identified the value of each business unit including technology and manufacturing systems. To perform a Risk Analysis prior to understanding these values the risk analysis will only provide an estimate of possible loss.

Exercise

Exercise is more than running on a treadmill. Exercise is what you do with people. You exercise their actions and ability to follow the procedures they created and the directions provided.

Test

Testing is when you combine hardware, applications, data, network, etcetera, with people and follow a plan to restore an environment in a desired time frame. Testing is often over choreographed and finds no unknown problems. A test is 100% successful if errors, omissions, problems of any type are identified and set for resolution.