



Value of the Business Continuity Consultant

Business Continuity Management (BC or BCM) (sometimes and still termed Disaster Recovery) is a full business discipline to itself. Consider work process such as; accounting, information systems programming, welding, assembly line, sales, and corporate management, each have distinct responsibilities within each job description. So why assign business continuity responsibility as a part time, as possible, read up on it and write a plan position? The end result of a well-developed plan becomes a program benefiting the business in financial and tangible ways.

Getting to a poor, good or excellent result starts with the executive layer of management. Here is where the bar is set and they must back their team to the finish and beyond. Here is where the choice of identifying the right words for the policy statement, establishing ownership of the first project, creating start-up funding and demonstrating commitment begins and eventually will hold final ownership. Creating a business continuity program and writing a series of action plans just to satisfy audit or legal requirements misses the real value of business continuity planning.

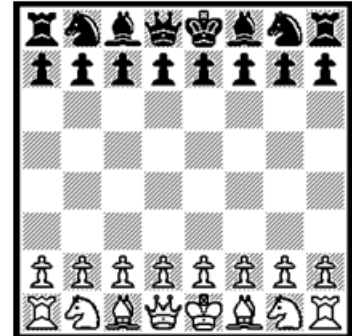
Business continuity began with the growth in early data processing and the realization of the need to protect the new “computer systems.” The people running these systems identified the need to protect information that historically would have been all on paper and now was in bits and bytes. So the idea of backing the information up on tape and removable disk began. Since the fear was catastrophic failure the term “disaster recovery” was derived. As the environment grew so did the need for second sites and documented disaster recovery plans and early technical guides. Those professionals developed the skills that have been honed and now found in today’s business continuity planning professionals.

In the early concept stages finding advice may be as easy as an internet search or a trade magazine. Too often the complexity of the work is downplayed in this material and especially in advertisements. Business continuity planning is plagued by advertisements for “easy to follow templates, software tools, books, classes where in two days to two weeks you become a certified expert. This is read as, “Well if all we need is a book or piece of software why assign a full time person or department?” “If it is so easy why even have a person go to class?” “We can buy a book and fill in the blanks and we have a plan.” Read on and why you need the right people, with the right background, the right experience, will be seen. If your program is lacking or non-existent and is operating as a full time cost center the plan and program need to be evaluated.



Are You Playing Business Continuity Like a Game of Chess?

Business continuity management is like a game of chess. Many claim to know how each piece moves, but only the best and most skilled can really play the game! Consider the business is the playing board and the planning disciplines the pieces. Sixty four squares to shuffle on and millions of move combinations. So many moves they have never been calculated but the good players continue to be focused, learn, exercise their skills and get better.



If you are reading this then it is reasonable that you have an interest in improving your business or as a consultant looking for a better way to help your clients and to improve your understanding of Business Continuity Management. It is possible that you are also trying to maintain a program, obtain funding or justify technology and process improvements. If so then you must consider the following:

There are pieces, moves, and strategies in a game of chess. Like the game, Business Continuity Management has pieces and moves these equate to those in the game; Project Management, Hazard and Threat Analysis, Business Impact Analysis, Risk Analysis, Strategies, Plan Development and Implementation, Exercise and Test, Maintenance and Education. Each piece or discipline on the surface and individually may be touched and manipulated and appear reasonable or simple to control. In reality each may be difficult to understand, use unfamiliar language, have rules or laws to comply with, and must work with the other pieces to reach a successful end. The business continuity process must be able to tie all the pieces together in a manner that truly benefits the inner workings and total business through cost effective means with process improvement, will enable the business to sustain through damaging times. This effort requires an expert.

The road to winning the business continuity preparedness game involves finding the best chess players. Skilled people who know the language of business continuity, understand the real complexity of program, able to work in all parts of a business, these are the right ones for the program. To add new moves to your business continuity game, find your experts.

Instant Expert or Expert

Be wary of instant experts! I like to describe the instant expert as a person who claims to have all the answers without the background and has not had time in the trenches. Certification can be obtained by paying for one, taking a test, filling out an application. Look for industry recognized time in the business, references, area recognition by their peers as well as certifications.

The instant expert has the answers before the question is asked and the research started. There is no cookie cutter solution. Mitigations may be many, strategies varied, time requirements from



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zero to best effort, and all with a price to be paid in exchange for resilience and continuity for the business.

Without criticizing or disparaging vendors services a business must know what they need before they select a contingency solution or planning support product. It makes sense to know what you need before you buy it. An independent non-partisan assessment is one way to gather informed information for a good decision.

Who is an “expert? Being qualified to build, work, and maintain a sustainable and effective BCM program comes from more than attending a class, joining an organization, or reading white papers. Certainly classroom knowledge and learning from others is necessary. Actually doing BIA’s, hazard/threat analysis’, creating and implementing plans, and working through several crisis situations for example is the best way a person gains experience with the nuances, issues and circumstances of a BCM project and program. BCM is not too complex to learn in a classroom but successful and financially beneficial planning takes the addition of experience. Points not generally considered are passion, commitment to the disciplines and the ability to work outside a cubicle at all levels of a business.

Consider these job descriptions for a disaster recovery or business continuity planner. One a game loser and one a game master!

The Game Loser

Look at the mistakes in this typical job posting with the term Disaster Recovery included as responsibility. The listing is really looking for an IT and Network specialist. Aside from two words “disaster recovery” the last sentence of the first paragraph there is no requirement for a background in IT disaster recovery. The requirements section has no indication that the person has any experience in the planning and execution of a disaster recovery plan. Wrong Focus and asks for a technical person not a Business Continuity or Disaster Recovery qualified person.

Disaster Recovery Administrator - 3rd shift

Job Description

We are seeking a **Disaster Recovery** Administrator to work with customers and internal departments to implement replication, perform application failover and failback between data centers, implement, troubleshoot, and managed DNS and Akamai services, resolve escalated issues, and answer questions pertaining to the Host-Based Replication, Managed DNS, and Akamai Services at Rackspace Managed Hosting. A **Disaster Recovery** Administrator is expected to take the initiative on issues and probe deeper into problems to fix root causes to prevent recurrence. Also advises on potential pitfalls that a customer may experience using their existing or planning methods and also be able to suggest alternatives that will better serve the requirements of their solution.

Responsibilities:

- Resolve escalated customer issues or escalates further as appropriate.
- Basic troubleshooting of replication failures using vendor documentation, knowledgebase, or support services.
- Perform application failover and/or failback upon customer request.



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- Organize regular audits of replication configurations to ensure quality of service.
- Configuration and management of managed DNS and CDN services.
- Exercises judgment in the decision-making process in order to provide consistent FANATICAL customer service.
- Perform On-Call duties as necessary.

Job Requirements

The ideal candidate will have the following:

- Basic knowledge of data replication technology, DNS theory and implementation and an understanding of content delivery networks.
- Installation and configuration of replication for customer servers.
- Basic job scheduling for application consistency checkpoints.
- Understanding of replication and failover/failback processes.
- Terminology (Consistency checkpoints, differential resynchronization, file system vs. application replication methods, copy on write snapshots, CDP rollback.)
- Configure DNS based on customer guidance to include load balancing, failover, and global directional DNS.
- Configure and implement Akamai Application Performance products.
- Provide technical advice and direction to customers and internal personnel.
- Basic analytical and problem solving skills.
- Basic time management and organizational skills.
- Able to work well under pressure and under stressful situations.
- Good verbal and written communication skills. Ability to successfully work and promote inclusiveness in small groups.
- Bachelor*s or equivalent experience degree in CIS.
- Approximately 0-18 months of customer service experience in an Information Technology or FANATICAL customer service environment.
- At least 0-18 months of Window/Linux professional system administration experience.
- 1-2 years' experience with EMC/Legato Replistor, Symantec/Veritas Volume Replicator, Network Appliance ReplicatorX, Double-Take, CA XOSoft WANSyncHA, CommVault Continuous Data Replicator, Backbone NetVault Replicator, InMage DR Scout, EMC SRDF/Mirrorview, EMC Replication Manager, and/or other backup/replication/data protection software.
- Demonstrated ability to consistently provide FANATICAL support.
- 1-2 years' experience with DNS providers such as Neustar UltraDNS products.
- 1-2 years' experience with CDN Networks (Akamai or Limelight).

The Game Master

This example is focused on finding the right person with the right skills at the right level. The listing uses the terminology a planner should know, has the expectations to be able to work across a broad sector of the business and technology that can carry the business through the interruptions and critical situations.

Business Continuity/ Disaster Recovery Analyst

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- * Manage and coordinate BJ's Disaster Recovery program including the identification of continuous improvements in processes and technology recovery planning
- * Partner with IT and the **business** to determine what information, processes and system capabilities are critical for recovery and prioritization, including recovery time (RTO) and recovery point (RPO) objectives
- * Manage the development of the end to end technology recovery plans with IT teams, i.e. infrastructure, network, application and security
- * Develop testing strategy and define required test exercises, including scope, required technical and



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business resources, and test objectives

- * Schedule exercises with 3rd party service provider and ensure resource and hardware availability.
- * Coordinate with 3rd party service provider on the IT recovery process, report results from the validation exercises, and identify opportunities for continuous improvements
- * Manage and develop the ongoing process for maintaining hardware availability for critical system recovery at off site location.
- * Schedule, plan and coordinate test exercises to ensure compliance with BJ's policies and procedures
- * Develop communication plan for Senior management, IT and impacted **business** units to review identified deficiencies and plans for improvement
- * Partner with the lines of **business** to develop **Business Continuity**, (BC) strategy, assumptions and recovery procedures against likely interruption scenarios
- * Provide IT and **business** partners with support and direction for data retention and disposal process and procedures, including oversight of the 3rd party vendor

REQUIREMENTS:

- * 3+ years' experience in a **Business Continuity** and/or Disaster Recovery, (BC/DR) role
- * Understanding of BC/DR tools, standards and best practices
- * Solid knowledge of BC/DR and data retention methodologies and frameworks
- * Ability to analyze, understand, formulate and explain the value proposition of security and BC/DR planning initiatives
- * Experience developing BC/DR test plans and scripts
- * Strong project management and vendor relations skills
- * Ability to interact and communicate with IT Infrastructure and Application teams
- * Solid **business** acumen with ability to partner with Senior Management
- * Strong collaboration skills, team player
- * Must possess Certified **Business Continuity** Professional, (CBCP) certification or be willing to obtain certification within the first year of work
- * Flexible, able to work during non-**business** hours and/or available to assist with high level emergencies during holiday or weekend hours, as needed

So which posting would you choose if you wanted a business continuity plan and program that would be a winner?

Time Line

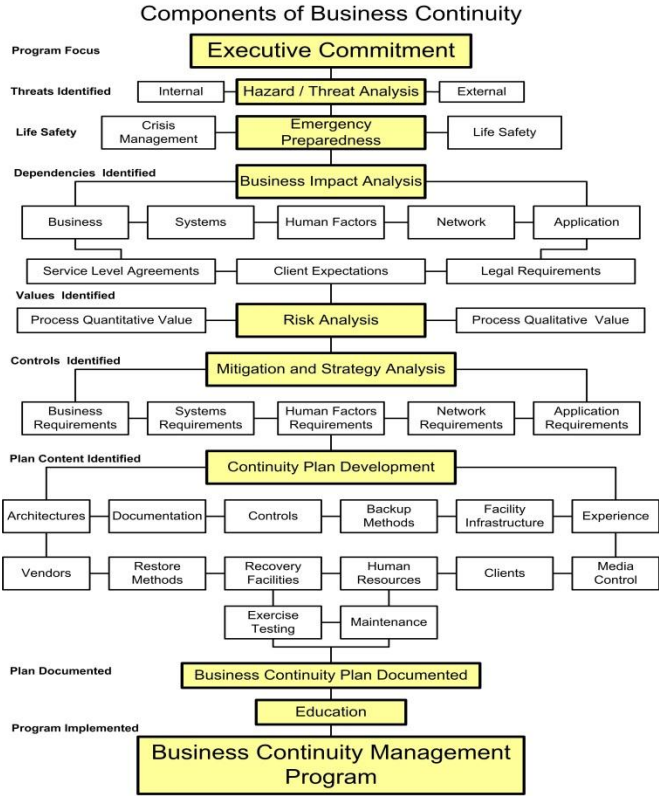
Using an experienced person or persons will shorten the program development time. Any business continuity plan that is not completed in less than 12 months runs the risk of being outdated before it is finished. A business would have to be completely static for an extended time line and for that duration of plan development the business remains exposed to critical to catastrophic loss. A study of a complete mid-sized business continuity plan implementation will approach 1,045 experienced project manager hours. This time can easily be doubled if the person has not conducted a BC project or had multiple assignments.

An organization that has no existing processes to build on may expect the business continuity plan to take as much as 5 times the hours of the project manager. These hours can be reasonable and converted to dollars by applying the corporate burden rate against the estimated hours. Regardless of the cost of development the cost of business loss can exceed development with a single outage.



Getting to Business Continuity Preparedness

The diagram shows the key stages of a program and our planning methodology. At each stage the consideration of cost conscious decisions and business improvement occur.



The diagram is not able to encompass all the work that goes into each piece to the total effort. The business continuity project plan breaks the effort into manageable pieces. The project milestones are mirrored at each department level and roll into the working plan. The consultant not only understands business continuity but is capable of creating a project, building teams, finding the benefits, and conducting and doing the core activities.

The diagram may give the false impression that the process is linear but overlaps, out of sequence, backup and repeat, is the true reality. At times it may appear that for every step forward you must go back two steps. Some re-iteration is unavoidable and some are planned to verify and assess direction and business need. Business continuity is a team and business effort which opens the avenue to conducting several processes at the same time. Overlapping of stages is normal throughout the entire life cycle of the program.



Brief History of Business Continuity

The prevalent and historic focus has been that of disaster recovery which has firm and stable foundations in the data centers of the past and present. Those who first realized the value of information began the process of ensuring that what we have today can be available tomorrow regardless of what happens tonight. The world has, as described in previous chapters, grown up and where the information comes from and who creates it is just as valuable. This has moved the identification of critical data and process out to the actual owners. Not that the people staffing the data center are not important but they are only temporary holders of the keys they may not know which key opens the lock.

Identification of business requirements and economics help to choose the cost effective business operations, information technology and data protection methodologies. Through the Business Impact Analysis (BIA) process recovery time objectives and minimal acceptable information losses are identified. Arising from the evaluation and interrelation mapping will be the opportunity to fine tune business operations and technology recovery solutions. The slower the recovery requirement the less cost to make a recovery, conversely the faster the need the greater the cost of preparedness.

Solutions for both business contingency and information technology must be addressed in a most common denominator fashion. While the intent is to manage cost, it is also the intent not to exclude critical protections. The financial evaluation needs to be made whether to add unique protections to the BCM program or to modify the business process to meet the more common solutions available or already in place.

Business continuity management will contribute to the business bottom line when it is coupled with best business practices, procurement, technology choices, etc. On the level of daily operations BCM will help control problem and change, incident evaluation and escalation, among other issues.

Losses and Causes Statistics

It is possible to manipulate numbers to give you the answer you want. Without listing the many sources and situations that happen each year only a few top items have been selected.

So, What if your business suddenly closed? Is it something you did or failed to do? Is the cause due to something in your control, the weather, neighboring business, your customers, suppliers, or even employees? It can come from severe weather, flood, sabotage, blackouts, or a loss of equipment. Whatever the cause, the failure to plan for situations can seriously cripple your ability to stay open, reopen or remain in business your business after an unexpected interruption.

Statistics show that

- Businesses without a Business Continuity plan have less than 10% survival rate after a disaster (Touche Ross)
- 1 out of 5 companies reported having had a major business disruption within the last five years (Source CSA)



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- Of companies that suffer a significant data loss, 93% are out of business within five years (U.S. Bureau of Labor)
- Of companies experiencing a catastrophe or extended system outage, 2 out of 5 never resume operations; and, of those that do, 1/3 go out of business within two years (Gartner Group)
- In the U.S., 43% of businesses never re-open after a disaster, and 29% (more) close within two years (University of Wisconsin)

So, how does your business avoid becoming a statistic?

Use a skilled profession, a person!