Business continuity plan template guide

Follow the guidance below to help you complete the plan template.

1. Know your business
2. Assess the risks
3. Formulate the plan
4. Test the plan

In the plan template, complete the information on the front page and in the introduction section.

- Download the business continuity plan template (Word 117KB)
- Download the business continuity plan template (PDF 33KB)

Front cover

Add your logo, company name and the date the plan was last amended.

Distribution list

List who has a copy of the plan and where each copy is held. This will ensure that when you update the plan you know who will need a copy.

'Any suggested changes' statement

Add in the name of the person who is responsible for updating the plan.

References

List any other plans, legislation, policy or guidance that may be relevant to your business continuity plan e.g. fire evacuation plan

Aims and objectives

A generic aim and objective have been inserted here which can be amended if appropriate.

The guidance below will help you fill in the rest of the plan template.

1. Know your business

In order to develop a business continuity plan you need to have a thorough understanding of your business. This involves knowing the critical functions of your business, the effect of those functions being disrupted and the priority for recovery of those functions. This process is known as a business impact analysis.

To complete a business impact analysis for each critical function follow the guidance below:

Critical function

You need to consider what the critical functions / activities are fir your business – without which it would cease to operate?

Examples of critical functions, using a small manufacturing company as an example are:

- Staff wages
- Call Centre
- IT department
- Sales

- Goods In
- Distribution
- Manufacture

NB. You will need to complete a business impact analysis for each of your critical functions / teams. The plan template has 2 blank business impact analysis tables in it. For additional critical functions you will need to 'copy and paste' the table into the plan again.

Affect on service

You should consider the importance if the function on the survival of your business (percentage of income or work load, how critical the function is to other functions, etc) and how quickly each function must be re-established.

For each of the time spans, identify what the effect of the loss of the critical function would be.

For example , the disruption to the goods In function could also have the following affect:

First 24 hours

- Lack of stock causing orders not completed on time
- Storage space for part processed goods causing concern

24 hours – 48 hours

- Cut manufacturing hours due to lack of stock
- Company reputation damaged

Up to one week

- Financial implications due to missed deadlines
- Need to outsource work to maintain market share

Up to 2 weeks

- Loss of customers to competitors
- Temporary or permanent reduction in staff numbers

Resources required for recovery: This section will help you identify what resources you need and when you will need them. When completing this section you need to consider the affects of loss of function / service, per time span, as detailed in the section above.

Number of staff

You will probably not need all of your staff to be present immediately after an emergency.

For each time span, detail how many staff you would need.

For example if you had a problem with a key supplier and no stock was available, you may not need your fork lift truck drivers, stock controllers, quality checkers, etc. to all working to full capacity within the first 24 hours.

Relocation

Could this function be carried out by your staff anywhere else?

For example, working from home, in another branch office, mutual aid with another organisation, etc.

Resources required

For each time span, list what resource are required e.g.

- Computers (hardware and software)
- Vehicles
- Machinery
- Communication equipment (landlines / mobiles)

Data Required: List what data is essential to the delivery of the service / critical function. e.g.

- Customer contact details
- Supplier contact details
- Service / maintenance contacts and contract numbers
- Insurance details
- Costing
- Work in progress

The completed business impact analysis will assist you to prioritise what or service you need to reinstate first during an emergency.

Using your business impact analysis, complete the critical function priority list in the plan template.

2. Assess the risks

Risk is a statement of the chance of something happening that will impact on your business objectives. Risk is normally considered in terms of likelihood of a hazard affecting your business. By assessing your risks you will be able to prioritise your risk reduction activities.

There are many hazards that may disrupt your business, these include:

- Flooding
- IT failure / loss of data
- Utility failure
- Fire or explosion
- Transport accident
- Extreme weather
- Loss of premises
- Staffing issues

These hazards will affect different businesses, and the critical functions within them, to varying degrees.

The hazard analysis table lists the hazards to your business, the impact of each hazard, any mitigation in place or possible and the risk matrix score.

Hazard

In this column list the hazards faced by your organisation

Hazard Impact

- List the physical disruption that may be caused

- List the financial implications of this disruption
- List people affected by the disruption (staff, clients, partners)

e.g. Flooding

- Loss of access and utilities (electricity, phones, etc.)
- Water damage to equipment and stock
- Cost of damage and or fines pollution
- Teams working on the ground floor
- Customer and suppliers

Mitigation in place

List what you currently do that prevents or reduces the likelihood and or the impact of the hazard on your business?

e.g. Flooding

- Monitor Flood Warnings issued by Environment Agency
- Insurance to cover damage to equipment and premises
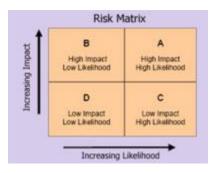
Mitigation possible

List what additional actions can be taken to prevent or reduce the likelihood or the impact of the hazard on your business

e.g. Flooding

- ·elocate premises to higher ground
- Floodgates / sandbags stored ready for use

Risk score matrix

The risk matrix, shown below, helps you to identify the higher priority risks for your business. When considering the score you should think about any mitigation currently in place.

By determining the likelihood of the hazard occurring (either high or low), then determining the impact that hazard has on your business, it is possible to rate the risk as A, B, C or D.

For example:

The likelihood of a chemical spill at your business: LOW (B or D)
The impact a chemical spill would have on your business: HIGH (A or B)
The Risk Matrix Score would be: B

When completed, the hazard analysis table shows you which are the highest risks to your business. You can now make an informed decision as to whether to accept or treat the risk.

Accept – You may decide that you are happy to 'live with' the risk as the cost of implementing any risk reduction strategies may outweigh the benefits.

Treat – You want to treat the risk i.e. take steps to reduce the impact or reduce the likelihood ('possible mitigation') because the risk is too great for your business.

It is not possible to mitigate against all risks, this is why a plan is required.

3. Formulate the plan – to respond to an emergency

Having completed the business impact analysis and hazard analysis table, you now need to develop a generic checklist of actions that may be appropriate when an emergency occurs. The checklist in the plan template is designed for you to adapt to suit your business. You may wish to add text into the plan to outline any arrangements you already have in place.

The checklist can be used during an emergency to ensure that no major tasks are forgotten.

Start a log of actions taken

It is essential to keep a log of the actions you have taken and the decisions you have made. Include a time with each entry.

This information will be vital if you have to defend in court any actions you have taken.

A blank copy of a log sheet is located at the end of the Plan Template for use during an emergency.

Liaise with the emergency services

If the emergency services are involved in the Incident you will need to appoint someone from your organisation to act as a liaison officer. This person needs to pass information between the emergency services response and your internal response team.

Identify any damage

As soon as possible, and only if safe to do so an assessment must be made as to the extent of the damage caused by the emergency.

Consider and document the following:

- Injury to staff, contractors, public
- Damage to building
- Damage to plant / equipment / vehicles
- Damage to stock
- Damage to reputation

Identify functions disrupted

Document which functions or areas have been disrupted and the extent of the disruption.

Convene your business recovery team

You need to pre-identify who, within your organisation, will make up the team that will manage the response and recovery of the emergency.

If the emergency is such that you need to call the team together you need to do so as soon as possible.

Hint – in the contact sheet at the back of the plan template identify and list the members of your response and recovery team.

Provide information to staff

It is essential to keep your staff informed regarding the emergency and the response actions being taken.

Staff may be concerned about

- Colleagues who may be injured
- What is expected of them today
- Should they turn up for work tomorrow
- Will there be a job for them if the building has gone up in smoke, etc.

Consider issuing a help-line number for staff to call in or, depending on the scale and type of emergency, tannoy announcement, e-mail, intranet, poster in reception area / canteen, local radio or phone calls to all staff.

Remember – providing information quickly will stop rumours!

Decide on course of action

Decide what you need to do and produce an action plan. Use the critical function priority list and the business impact analysis to assist you.

Communicate decision to staff and business partners

Let staff and business partners know what you have decided to do.

Provide public information to maintain reputation and business

Appoint a member of staff to act as your media representative. This person should be trained in media response techniques and be able to answer questions regarding the emergency and the business in general.

Your media representative should work in collaboration with the emergency services media officer if possible.

A holding statement could be pre-prepared for your business so you just have to 'fill in the blanks' at the time.

Arrange a debrief

After every emergency it is important to hold a debrief so that you can learn from it.

Disseminate the lessons learnt to all concerned.

Review business continuity plan

Following an emergency you should review and amend your plan as necessary.

Key contact list

The list should be adapted to be relevant for your business. Consider including details of key employees, utilities, insurance company, suppliers, customers, key holder, Security Company, partner organisations, members of your response team, etc.

In line with the Data Protection Act, you need to make sure you have permission to hold personal information such as home contact numbers for your staff.

The final page of the plan template is a sample log sheet for you to use during an emergency.

4. Test the plan

It is important that, once your plan is written, you test the procedures you have put in place.

Before a plan can be tested, staff need to be familiar with the content of the plan and their role in the response and recovery. This can be done by reading through the plan together and discussing how you would apply it to a fictional scenario.

When you are confident that your staff understand the plan and their part in it, you should test the plan by acting out a scenario.

The business continuity management process is a circular process; it is vital the planning does not end once the plan is written. It should be reviewed and tested to ensure it remains up to date and effective.