Business Continuity Planning

and its *relevance* in today's

MODERN ECONOMY

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As Chief Executive Officer, General Manager, Chief Financial Officer, or risk manager, business continuity is amongst your responsibilities as an executive.

Without continuity, the company simply does not exist. The trouble, however is in the way we carry out our day to day duties as corporate executives in the Middle East.

For us its about product development, marketing, strategy, finance, operations, or whatever keeps us busy during the day.

Its about this opportunity or that opportunity. Top line, bottom line, budgets. Its about this year, last year, next year, and five years.

What if, however, in a split of a second or over the course of a few hours, all of the above came to a sudden hault all at once? What would we do next? By sudden hault we mean everything from a catastrophic fire at your main production facility, an accident befalling your chief executive or management team, your IT infrastructure crashing or being destroyed in a fire, or a sudden default on a major contract which leaves you penniless?

If you are thinking what we are thinking, then now is the time to act!

Business continuity planning or BCP as commonly referred to by the experts can be defined as the creation and validation of a practiced logistical plan for how an organization will recover and restore partially or completely interrupted critical (urgent) functions within a predetermined time after a disaster or extended disruption. The logistical plan is called a business continuity plan.

In plain language, BCP is working out how to stay in business in the event of disaster. Incidents include local incidents like building fires, regional incidents like earthquakes, or national incidents like pandemic illnesses.
In other words, if disaster strikes, how will you pick up the pieces fast enough to stay in business?

Can an organization establish an internal crisis recovery plan? Probably, but establishing the framework early on is first critical and for that the use of a risk management consultant is crucial.

CIC (www.cicglobalrisks.com), a company specialized in insurance advisory and enterprise risk management solutions, is one such consultancy firm in the GCC who has been advising both the public and private sector for over twenty five years on matters of risk.

According to CIC, the cycle portrayed below summarizes in four simple steps the business continuity cycle:

Step 1….. Know your business
What does your organization do? Who are its customers, Who are its suppliers?

Step 2…… Assess the Risks
What are your company's key dependencies? (IT Infrastructure, Specific Suppliers, Specific Contracts or Clients, Its Management team and succession, Current Supply Chain?)
Step 3…… Formulate the plan

Here's where it gets tricky. After identifying as many risks to your business, its time to map them all out and assess their effects on the business. For example:

Failure of IT infrastructure:

Step 1

Can we operate without our IT systems and customer data? If yes, for how long? How long do we need to get our systems online again? Is our Data backed up in a fail safe location? Has a mobile location been identified to create a make shift operation until full communications are restored?
Courtesy wallsal.gov.uk

Step 2

How do we aim to being online within 3 hours of our IT infrastructure failing? 6 hours? What resources need to be invested?

Step 3

Put the plan in place

Step 4……. Test your Plans

Designing business continuity plans for one risk exposure at a time is fantastic, but you need to test those plans. What if more than one key risk exposure affects the business all in one go? Test multiple scenarios to determine the adequacy of the plans formulated.

Once perfected, start the entire business continuity plan again once every three or six months! Every business will evolve on a day to day basis, and so will the risks effecting the business.

New risks must continue to be identified. Old risks must be re-evaluated and reassessed.

It's as easy 1,2,3,4…..!