



Regional Business Preparedness Campaign

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You have a plan, but will it work?

By Troy Neville

This is the second year for the South Central PA Regional Business Preparedness Campaign. Last year we focused on some of the basic issues business leaders needed to consider in creating a resilient business through business continuity (BC) planning.

The 2011 Campaign ended with a one-day Business Continuity Conference in Harrisburg on November 2nd. Based on very positive feedback, and our continued commitment to improving business preparedness and resiliency in South Central PA, we are continuing the Campaign in 2012! After a disaster-filled 2011, hopefully even more businesses in the region will have developing or enhancing BC plans as a high priority.

Since we spent all of 2011 on developing a BC plan, the first issue in 2012 will focus on the importance of testing the BC



plan before a disaster or disruption occurs.

Many organizations spend a lot of time creating the BC plan, but once the plan is printed and distributed, the plan is considered complete. However, BC planning is a never ending process; the creation of the plan is simply the end of one step in a continual process. The next step—a required step—is to make sure the plan will actually work!

Two of the goals for creating a BC plan is to reduce risks and liabilities, but an untested plan can actually increase both. The mere existence of a plan can

create a false sense of security. Unless the plan is tested and proven to mitigate the identified risks, there is no way of knowing if risks will actually be decreased. Also, testing a BC plan is considered a best practice, the failure to test the plan may not reduce liabilities. In fact, the failure to follow a written plan can actually increase liability.

In this issue, Ginnie Stouffer and Bob Mellinger provide valuable insights that will hopefully encourage you to put testing your BC plan higher up on your to-do list.

Did you miss any of the Regional Business Preparedness Campaign 2011 newsletters? They can be downloaded from:

www.millersville.edu/cdre/business-continuity/index.php

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How prepared are South Central PA businesses?

Millersville University's Center for Disaster Research and Education is conducting research to assess the current level of business preparedness in the South Central PA region.

We would appreciate your taking a few minutes to complete our confidential online survey. The survey is anonymous and secure. The aggregate results of the survey will be published in September.

The survey can be reached at: www.millersville.edu/cdre/business-continuity/index.php.

Testing what you think you have and finding out what you really have

By Ginnie Stouffer

How many times have you thought you had something only to find out you didn't when you needed it? Sometimes not having what you thought you had is not really that important. Sometimes not having what you thought you had is disappointing. Sometimes not having what you thought you had is disastrous! If you haven't tested your plan and you have to execute that plan in a real event, the outcome could cost your company extra recovery time, additional revenue loss and may result in a change in your job status.

Testing plans for validation of your Emergency/Incident Management Plan or your Disaster Recovery Plan or your Business Continuity Plan is part of the process of preparation. Have you tested yet? Many don't. They say they are planning to test. They commit to their management they will test. But when they look at the magnitude of the whole plan or program, it becomes overwhelming, seems impossible and definitely there isn't enough time in a day or week to fit it into an already constrained schedule. Some 'tuck' in their concern with the blanket of "how can I find the time to test?" Or, my management knows how busy I am so they don't really expect me to come through on my commitment to test." So year after year passes and you don't test the plan to confirm it actually works.

Is this vaguely familiar to you?

We can justify anything if we put enough thought into designing the justification response statement. But there could be a

day of plan reckoning in your future. When a disaster comes to your door, it won't call beforehand and make a reservation! If you have not taken the time to test your plan and you are confronted with a company disaster, the only thing you will have time to do is entertain a fleeting thought of hope that your plan will work. You will have lost the opportunity to really know for certain that everything will work as planned. The time of response will be at hand. It will be too late to test.

It is so easy to test a call list for a department or the whole company when there is no emotion of the moment that launches the call. In a single site disaster, your people may not know that something has happened, unlike a weather or area disaster in which your employees will know about the event from TV, radio or maybe an alert on their handheld. Single site disasters (which are the most common type of disaster) become a huge issue if at time of disaster a key person is not answering his/her cell phone because the battery died. You try the home number; you try the company cell phone; the only other way you have to reach the employee is their personal cell number. Do you have their names and personal cell phone number or the name and phone number of someone you can contact to reach your key person? Are you sure that you can reach all of your people in the event of a disaster where you have to call them?

Do you have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or letter agreement? This type of pre-arrangement provides an inexpensive way to use a

business partner's facility (typically after their normal business hours) to recover your environment. In some MOU's or letters of agreement the partner will not allow you to use their network infrastructure. In that case you will need to get access to your network from a wireless connection to the internet. Your partner may have a wireless antenna on their roof and your plan is to get an internet connection through that antenna. You have purchased the wireless providers' air card for the antenna connection so everything will work just fine. Right? Maybe it will work but maybe it won't. You might be able to get a connection with your air card, but not a strong enough connection because of interference in the building structure. Repeated drops of your user's wireless connection will cost the company time and time is money. A test of the internet connection via the wireless card accessing your network and your business applications will validate this prearrangement.

Some of your end users may require a unique printer. Do you have a backup printer and is it at another location? What would you do if that printer is rendered unusable as a result of the disaster? Do you know where you can get a replacement printer and how quickly it can be replaced? What if it will take two weeks to get a replacement? Can your people work without that printer for two weeks?

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Many say they want to test their plans, but never do. Testing is the ultimate measure of whether or not your plan will work—when you need it most.



2011 Regional Business Continuity Conference a great success!

The South Central PA Task Force conducted a Regional Business Continuity Conference in Harrisburg, PA in November 2011. The Conference was FREE for businesses located in the South Central PA region.

Over 120 business leaders from throughout the region and beyond and from companies of all sizes attended several breakout sessions business continuity (BC) planning.

The 2011 sessions were:

- Keys to Effective BC Planning
- Conducting a Business Impact Analysis
- Emergency Response Planning
- Data Backup Best Practices
- BC Plan Development
- BC Plan Testing
- Business Recovery Funding Through Insurance
- Crisis Communications
- Information System Security
- IT Disaster Recovery Planning

We received an overwhelming number of positive comments and are planning to conduct another one-day BC conference in November 2012. Additional details will be available in our June 2012 newsletter. We are in the process of determining the format and breakout session topics.

If there is a specific topic you would like to see at the 2012 conference, email Troy Neville at tneville@ddco.com.



A good Business Continuity Plan can reduce the downtime and impact of an incident on business operations.

About the Regional Business Preparedness Campaign

Regional Business Preparedness Campaign is a collaboration between Millersville University's Center for Disaster Research and Education and the Business, Industry and Infrastructure Subcommittee of the South Central PA Task Force. The goal of the Campaign is to improve business preparedness in the South Central PA region. Additional articles will be published in June and September 2012.

Business Industry and Infrastructure Subcommittee of the South Central PA Task Force

The Business, Industry and Infrastructure Subcommittee of the South Central PA Task Force is made up of members of the business and government community that volunteer to assist the business community in preparing for disasters. Their website is: www.ready4business.org



Millersville University's Center for Disaster Research and Education

Millersville University's Center for Disaster Research and Education provides multi-disciplinary education, research and internship opportunities, including a Master of Science in Emergency Management and a Minor in Environmental Hazards and Emergency Management. Their website is: www.millersville.edu/cdre.



Campaign Coordinator

Troy Neville, ABCP, is the Coordinator for the Regional Business Preparedness Campaign. He is a Graduate Student in Millersville University's Master of Science in Emergency Management Program; a member of the Business, Industry and Infrastructure Subcommittee; and a Consultant with Design Data Corporation in Lancaster. Troy can be reached at tneville@ddco.com.

Training, Testing and Exercising (TT&E)

By Bob Mellinger

Once a business continuity or emergency response plan is created, an organization often feels the job is done and gets a bit complacent. When your plan is complete and placed on the shelf, however, the job is far from over. It's like fire drills... you don't plan one and never test the escape routes. We've all done fire drills and learned from them, and no one disputes the need to continue to do fire drills on a regular basis. We have to develop the same attitude about testing business continuity plans.

Why test the plan? There's the obvious reason, of course – to make sure it works. But TT&E also gives you an opportunity to evaluate the skills of everyone involved and to improve their skills, to make sure that all contingencies have been covered, to satisfy any policies or legal requirements, and to help keep the plan updated.

To be effective, a plan must be (1) accessible and (2) a dynamic document that constantly evolves to reflect changes in the environment, staffing, regulation, policies and procedures. If you're not going to test the plan regularly to keep it current and ensure its viability, you might as well throw it away after a few months. What happens, for example, when a disruption occurs, and someone goes to the plan to find out whom to contact, only to discover that the person in charge left the company six months ago? Finally, the plan has to be easy to use. Don't make it easier for people to run for the door than to locate the correct procedure in the plan (of course, if the plan is tested and people are trained, this shouldn't be an issue).

Plan accessibility is an important issue. Everyone has to know what and where the plans are, who's in charge of what, processes for different types of disruptions. Notebooks are often used, either placed in strategic locations or provided to each department or manager. There also are software programs that make it possible to access and update the plan via the desktop. Whose desktop has access to the plan? If it's the manager and his computer is down, now what? What happens if the power goes out and the plan is now inaccessible? (You have to plan for disruptions in accessing your plan.) Do you have a way to remotely access the plan? Should you have a Web site you can access from any computer to make sure the information remains accessible? TT&E, when done right, also can surface problems with access to the plan.

A comprehensive TT&E program would encompass a number of components, including:

- Executive briefings for senior management that would familiarize them with the business continuity plan and policy, the emergency response and disaster recovery plan currently in place, and an explanation of their roles.
- Seminars for managers to familiarize them with the plan and explain what is expected of them and their staff to prepare for and respond to a crisis or disaster.
- Literature for all staff to inform them of business continuity news and events.

- Most important, workshops for crisis management and recovery team members, including scenario exercises and role-play sessions. These can take many forms as described below.

There are basically five types of exercises that test your plan and allow you to evaluate its effectiveness. These include the orientation, the drill, the tabletop exercise, the functional exercise, and the full-scale exercise. The primary objective of the testing is to determine whether or not your plan can successfully respond to the crisis and restore one or more business-critical processes in the allotted time. Below are descriptions of these exercises, based on FEMA's definition of each.

- (1) Orientation. An orientation is an informal session that does not include any simulation. It provides a discussion of roles and responsibilities and introduces or reinforces policies, procedures and plans.
- (2) Drill. Think of the fire drill... this is a test of one function only. This is usually done "in the field" and is often evaluated.
- (3) Tabletop. This takes the form of a discussion of a simulated emergency. It's inexpensive, low stress, and has no time limits. This exercise can help you evaluate plans and processes and review any issues with coordination and responsibility.

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Testing gives you an opportunity to evaluate both the procedures in the plan and the skills of the people who will be counted on to execute the plan.



Testing, Training and Exercising (continued)



The primary objective of testing is to determine whether or not your plan can successfully respond to the crisis.

(5) Functional. This is a realistic simulation that takes place in real time and can be quite stressful. Inputs are made via message at points throughout the simulations. All key personnel should be involved in order to get a realistic reading on the plan. It can test one or more emergency management or response functions or the entire plan.

(6) Full-scale. This type of exercise features a specific emergency scenario using real people and equipment. It takes place in real-time and, done correctly, causes high levels of stress. It is

designed to test many/all of the emergency response functions.

A critical result of testing the plan, no matter what method you use, is to incorporate the lessons learned into the plan and making sure all relevant personnel receive the updates. In fact, holding a Monday-morning quarterbacking session after the test is a good way to surface the problems and determine how to incorporate changes into the plan.

Your entire plan should be tested on an annual basis to ensure its viability. But you don't have to test the entire plan at a time; you can test pieces of it over the course of the year to save time and money.

It is a major challenge to keep your plan updated, but that plan is critical to your ability to keep your organization – and, most important, your people – alive. A carefully constructed plan can save lives, prevent total chaos in the face of a crisis or disaster, and quite is a critical tool to guide an organization's recovery and survival.

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Testing what you think... (continued)

A number of questions have been posed in this article for the purpose of sparking your thought process about your own business recovery.

Remember: You can't be sure that you will be able to recover in the needed timeframe for your business if you haven't tested your plan to validate that it will work. And: There is a possibility that you haven't considered all of the key components for your business and you may not be able to recover at all.

The solution to this unknown is simple: Test your plan now. It is a critical part of being prepared.

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