DOES YOUR BCP REFLECT REAL PEOPLE WITH REAL NEEDS?

HUMAN CONCERNS OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY

BY TED BROWN

Historically, Disaster Recovery plans have focused on technology (hot site) and data (back up and off-site storage). Very little attention was given to the people component. The assumption was made that the required people would simply go to the internal or external hot site. This article, with an expanded online version, addresses some of the human concerns of disaster recovery.

Who Are the People, and Where Are They From?

For this example, assume we are dealing with a critical end user department of 100 employees: an order entry, customer service or call center.

Let's examine the profile of these 100 employees. Most are women. Many are single parents. Many use public transportation for their commute. Most bring their lunch. Most have other commitments that don't allow for overnight stays, much overtime or schedule changes. Some have special needs family members: children, a

spouse, or parents. Most consider this a job, not a career.

What are the complications for our business recovery plan? The work group recovery center is almost certainly not near the primary work location. It shouldn't be, in order to protect from a regional disaster and to have it located on a different power grid, etc. So how do these people get to the recovery center?

Do we contract for bus service from the normal work location vicinity to the recovery center? Can a charter bus service respond within hours of a disaster? Will these employees accept the double commute? Will we ask them to come earlier? Not likely, because of the profile already described. Can we accept a 6-hour workday in light of the double commute)? Do we use temporary help to supplement our employees?

Have we recognized (and planned for) a regional disaster, when many of the 100 will not come? It could be because of the impact to their homes, an inability to travel, or something as simple as school closings – the kids are home and need childcare.

These are all issues that must be dealt with in our plans. Perhaps our plan needs to treat each one of these 100 employees as a critical resource with dependencies on transportation, etc. If this is a 24x7 operation, it is even more complicated.

The Alternate Facility: Is It Really Ready?

If we've solved all of these problems and figured out how to get 100 employees to our alternate site, what about the facility itself? Consider some critical people issues which you may have ASSUMED the hot site vendor already considered.

If we can get those 100 people to drive to the center, is there enough parking for 100 cars? Is there a cafeteria that will hold 100 people? Are there coffee pots? Are there rest room facilities for 100 people? The author recently visited a hot site with 100 seats and only 4 ladies room stalls – not enough for our example workforce. Imagine the congestion at lunchtime, even with staggered lunch hours! Are the climate controls sufficient for 100 people?

What provisions have been made for children? We must assume if there is ANY kind of regional disaster, the ONLY way many employees will report to work is if there are provisions for children.

What about medical treatment needs? Are there sufficient supervisors' offices? Are the workstations equipped with headsets? What will the noise level be? Too many work group recovery facilities consist of workstations on tables with inadequate partitioning.

> "The typical call center workforce is staffed by employees with personal, transportation and facility needs. Are you ready?"

The DR Test: Real Tests for Real People

Let's assume we solve the transportation and facility issues. The next challenge is how do we uncover more exposures, i.e., how do we test? Is it likely our organization will take 100 people to an alternate site to test? Probably not.

This is a great situation for the use of a tabletop test. You will need:

- Directions to the recovery center
- A COMPLETE floor plan of the recovery center (work stations, cafeteria, entrances, exits, rest rooms, etc.)
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of all 100 people (privacy issues?)
- Transportation plans: how each employee will get to the center (car, public transportation, recovery bus).

Then, on some pre-planned Saturday, get as many supervisors as possible to the recovery site and conduct your exercise. Good luck!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ted Brown, CBCP, President & CEO of KETCHConsulting, with 36 years in IT/15 years in BCP is a leading proponent of business continuity. In 2002, Ted was elected, with Rudy Giuliana, to the CPM Hall of Fame, which recognizes leading contributors to BCP. For more information, contact the author at tedbrown@ketchconsulting.com or visit ketchconsulting.com or call (888) KETCHYC

Editor's Note: An expanded version of this article, with more detailed coverage of the subject matter, is available online at www.GUIDE-request.com/HC101.

Photo courtesy of FEMA.