



Lowers & Associates Business Continuity Planning Service A Phased Approach to Building Your BCP

The Lowers & Associates (L&A) Business Continuity Planning service follows a four-phase approach:

- Business Impact Analysis
- Risk Assessment
- Business Continuity Plan Preparation
- Business Continuity Plan Testing

Business Impact Analysis (BIA)

The first Phase in the L&A Business Continuity Planning service considers the potential impact of each type of disaster or event. This is critical - how can you properly plan for a disaster if you have little idea of the likely impacts on your business/organization of the different scenarios? The BIA assists in deciding which processes are the most critical to recover in case of a disaster, and involves the assigning of monetary value to the protection of assets involved in specific business processes. The primary goals of the BIA will include:

- Identifying the impact of uncontrolled, non-specific events
- Prioritizing critical functions; and
- Establishing Maximum Tolerable Outages.

Across each affected organizational unit, L&A determines required personnel, processes, and functions by asking such questions as:

- What specialized equipment is required and how is it used?
- How would the group function if they lost access to the core processing system, network(s), or Internet?
- Are there any Single Points of Failure, and how significant are the risks?
- What are the critical outsourced relationships?
- What is the minimum number of staff and space required for a recovery site?
- What special forms or supplies would be required at a recovery site?
- What communication equipment would be required at a recovery site?
- What critical operational or security controls require implementation prior to recovery?
- What cross-training is necessary and what backup functions and roles are needed?

We then identify critical needs, support areas, and priorities within each group – whether Telecommunications Systems, Applications Systems, Buildings/Physical Plant(s), or Physical/Logical Security. Finally, we identify the maximum allowable down-time(s) and identify alternatives available to each function/group.



Risk Assessment

Having determined the impacts, it is now equally important to consider the magnitude of the risks which could result in these impacts. Again, this is a critical activity, as it will determine which scenarios are most likely to occur and which should attract most attention during the planning process – and therefore determine the strength and breadth of coverage for the ultimate BCP. The goals of this phase include:

- ❑ A prioritization of potential business disruptions based on severity and likelihood of occurrence;
- ❑ A gap analysis comparing the organization's current contingency plans, if any, to what is necessary to achieve recovery times; and
- ❑ An analysis of threats, based upon the gaps identified and the impact to the organization/enterprise.

During this Phase, L&A develops a list of potential emergencies/threat scenarios. The scenarios will cover major events such as natural disasters or terrorist threats, and minor events such as a temporary power loss.

For each scenario, we will determine the likelihood and impact of the event - whether to personnel, assets, or functional units - measured in dollar cost whenever possible. Additionally, for each scenario, we will assess the internal and external resources that are required to respond to the situation.

The Risk Assessment report includes the following areas:

- ❑ Executive Summary
- ❑ Summary of Business Operations
- ❑ Risk & Vulnerability Analysis
- ❑ Critical Support Infrastructure
- ❑ Physical Environment
- ❑ Recovery Time Objectives
- ❑ Business Recovery Strategies & Priorities

Business Continuity Plan Preparation

The objective of this Phase is to develop the BCP itself. The Plan will document strategies and procedures to maintain, recover, and resume critical business functions and processes and will include procedures to execute the plan priorities for critical and non-critical functions, services, and processes.

L&A will utilize the information and priorities from the BIA and RA steps to formulate a BCP strategy and document. The BCP strategy will be:

- ❑ Specific with regard to the conditions that would prompt initiation of the plan;
- ❑ Specific with regard to the immediate steps to be taken before, during, and after an incident;
- ❑ Flexible to respond to unanticipated threat scenarios and changing internal conditions;
- ❑ Focused on how to get the organization back up and running;
- ❑ Effective in minimizing service disruptions and financial loss.



The Business Continuity Plan includes the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Business Operations
- BCP Organization
- Plan Activation & Operation
- Preparation & Readiness Checklists
- Emergency Operations
- Facility Restoration & Relocation
- Emergency Communications
- Emergency Forms & Terms
- Incident-Specific Response Checklists

Business Continuity Plan Testing – Table Top Exercises

By definition, a Table Top Exercise is a process in which key staff members with emergency management responsibilities are gathered together informally, without tight time constraints, to examine and discuss simulated emergency situations (e.g., Natural Disaster, Technology/Service Outage, Civil/Employee Unrest, etc.) and attempt to resolve problems based on their emergency plans. Through the Exercises, we are able to clarify the authorities, responsibilities and roles of participating teams in an integrated, comprehensive response to disaster events at various organizational levels.

The objective of the Exercise is to demonstrate the following:

- Procedures for passage of time-sensitive information to decision makers.
- Capabilities of emergency personnel to coordinate comprehensive response activities.
- Preparation and dissemination of timely information to employees, customers, and the public during emergency operations.
- Capability to conduct rapid situational assessment.
- Logistical processes for identifying and tracking assets and resources committed to response operations.
- Ability to prioritize and use available and accessible resources and assets for maximum effectiveness.
- Procedures for requesting assistance from varying levels of management.

The TTE attempts to answer the following:

- Are additional (or different types of) resources necessary?
- Are parts of the BCP in need of revision based on changing business drivers or operations environments?
- Is additional training required?
- Are staffing levels adequate?
- Are the communication and command systems effective and/or vulnerable to overload?
- Can response units communicate with one another?

Through the Lowers & Associates Business Continuity Planning Service, your organization will realize a well thought-out, prioritized set of plans and responses that will keep you prepared for any number of unexpected events - both large and small.