

Revolutionary Approach on how to improve Business Continuity Management within the University

Alexandre Medarov¹, Linden Vazey²

¹University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, a.medarov@auckland.ac.nz

² University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, l.vazey@auckland.ac.nz

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 12 months, The University of Auckland has undertaken a project to develop and implement business continuity management. The lessons learned throughout this process prove that BCM is still a misunderstood subject, and the value it can provide is difficult to measure or quantify until you experience a major operational disruption. Our goal is to increase resilience in order to get back to business as quickly as possible. To be prepared for any event, we develop resources, agree incident management roles and responsibilities and provide opportunities to practice using scenario exercises.

The challenge: to develop the right Business Continuity Management solution appropriate to the University environment, while simultaneously facilitating learning with stakeholders on what BCM is, and what it is not.

IT'S NOT DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT

The concepts are actually quite simple and well defined in documents such as the BCI Good Practice Guidelines [1]. The difficult part is gaining support from senior management so that the project team is authorised to engage and involve faculties and service divisions. Getting faculties and service divisions to participate as early as possible reaps rewards - people own the world that they help to create.

IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE EXPENSIVE

To be effective, BCM should be tailored to the needs of the organisation. The University of Auckland has a requirement to operate in very lean, effective way due to the low ratio of academic to general staff. Our project team of three people has facilitated workshops, collected and organised information and used it to create resources that link each operational team to a strategic incident management structure.

INTERNAL EXPERTISE TRUMPS THIRD PARTY EXPERTISE

Few external parties can understand a University by seeing it from the outside. Those of us on the inside have a unique appreciation of what is most important, including our priorities for recovery. Third parties are great for facilitating exercises and providing recommendations for improvement, and can provide added value once the University has defined its scope, priorities and resources.

CAPTURE BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS BEFORE GOING TO YOUR IT DEPARTMENT

Our dependence on information technology has led to increased pressure on the IT department to ensure they can assure availability and recover after an event. IT Disaster recovery planning is important, and must be informed by business requirements. Once the business has defined priorities for recovery, they can discuss a recovery point objective (RPO). This point could be a compromise between how quickly the business wants a system recovered (Maximum Tolerable Outage), and how long the IT department may take to recover it (Recovery Time Objective). Manual processes and flexible learning tools are a great way to bridge the gap between what the business wants and what suppliers can provide. They also keep the cost of BCM low – the quicker your recovery, the higher your cost.

ONCE YOU FINISH THE PROJECT TO CREATE BCM, YOU'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN...

Creating the information is the first milestone of an ongoing process of maintaining resources and improving our capability and resilience. The natural home of BCM is within Risk Management, with BCM as the mitigation strategy for the risk of a major operational disruption. To maintain and improve BCM a programme is needed with defined processes for 'business as usual' activities. Over time, these activities become embedded into the organisation's culture.

BCM processes include:

- Reviewing risks and impacts as part of the semestral review
- Regular review of policy, plans and resources
- Scheduling and coordinating test exercises
- Organising training for those with roles in incident management, emergency management or recovery
- Conducting audits against policy and providing recommendations

The time and costs associated with creating these resources is wasted unless the information is maintained, practiced and improved over time. The value of implementing BCM is not in the plans, but in the development process. As awareness is raised and people are trained to respond recover and restore, the likelihood of recovering after a major operational disruption increases.

REFERENCES

1. Lyndon Bird, "The Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines 2010" (The Business Continuity Institute, 2010).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Attribution 4.0 International