



Weatherproofing Business Continuity Plans

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Establishing confidence across a business that the plans and procedures will be effective and that invocation of the response arrangements will work is one of the most challenging aspects of Business Continuity. The uncertainty reflects the unknown; when and where the problem will take place, what the conditions will be, who will be available and what is lost or impacted are all elements of an imponderable equation.

No matter how many times you exercise or train the next invocation could always be the big one. To help assess and improve the probability of success LINK Associates have developed an interactive programme which reviews the practicalities of plans against foreseeable events.

The approach puts people at the heart of the response processes and works with individuals and teams to raise awareness and to review the critical areas for invocation and implementation of the recovery process.

By customizing the approach to meet the maturity of the system the maximum benefits can be achieved. Two consultants with differing experiences and backgrounds work systematically to review the existing arrangements and to assess the likelihood of a successful invocation.

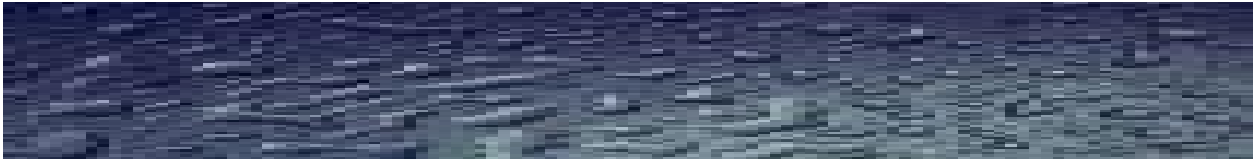
The experience they bring allows the review to examine the adaptability of the plan to changing circumstances. By recognizing the impacts of various events

the ability of managers to implement their procedures can be reviewed. The ability of key personnel to access decision makers and or to be empowered to make and implement decisions is at the heart of the assessment. Weatherproofing is a means of ensuring these individuals have an opportunity to discuss with an independent person their understanding of the processes. By listening to key individuals the consultants assess the feedback across the business reviewing the interaction, dependencies and demands.

As the information is analysed and cross checked against a paper trail and facilities inspection the picture builds allowing a judgment to be made of:

- Common understanding of the processes across the business areas and from top to bottom in the organisation
- Areas of conflict or failure modes which could prevent successful invocation and response.
- Consistency between business areas
- Adaptability of the arrangements to different scenarios

This is a new approach it is not an audit and it does not seek to address compliance with policy or standards; the system is designed to facilitate the practical implementation of procedures. By listening and talking through with individuals the issues, opportunities and procedures the expectations are managed. This is not a challenge to the line management but an interactive tool which delivers participation in the process and understanding to key people in the organisation.



Using question sets which are tailored to your organisation, the approach examines how during an invocation the organisation responds and to what extent it can adapt to variations in demands and risk.

The way people as individuals and teams interact, will influence the outcome of an invocation. Few will ever experience a real high pressure Business Plan invocation, their involvement would normally be limited to short training workshops, reading the plan and participating in an exercise.

By using independent consultants to walk through the procedures and systems the organisation benefits from:

- Improved communication across the business of its business continuity arrangements
- Participation by line management in the process of review and ownership in a non-threatening, open environment.
- recognition of dependencies
- early knowledge of potential resource limitations

Weatherproofing examines the interactions between procedures and the normal business environment, looking for inconsistencies and experience in particular the interfaces between plans and detailed recovery arrangements. The lessons learned allowing a realistic assessment of ability to recover within the desired time frame.

By working with people the consultants dovetail the issues associated with

handling the technical response alongside the human factors issues.

Imagine the invocation of a DR site, the plans called for interaction of IT with the businesses with coordination of this under the direct control of the BCM team. Whilst the plan had been well rehearsed

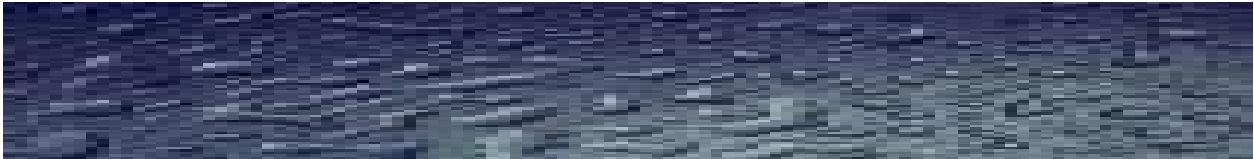
and "live" tests had been conducted a review would have identified that expectations across the business were not consistent and could lead to a series of problems. Ranging from senior management expectations over the handling of the main operational site during the invocation, through to internal communications needs for good information management.

Areas will be identified as the systematic review is conducted, many of which can be addressed simply and effectively during the review.

Depending on the initial findings the weatherproofing processes has additional tools available which allow a functional analysis to be conducted. These tools include adaptation of risk management techniques such as Hazard and Operability studies into a business continuity environment.

Where invocation issues are identified these can be examined in some detail by checking against a component analysis. By considering variational affects on critical processes the capacity of the arrangements to adapt to changing circumstances can be assessed.

For example resource limitations will affect the recovery times and often access to key personnel has not been correctly managed within the plans. The



specifics of this can be identified and solutions put in place.

The Demands on facilities during an invocation are often well above expectations and will significantly impact on recovery time objectives. By weatherproofing the plans decisions on priorities can be agreed and common understanding of the need for solutions established.

The need for concurrent action often has a major implications for the training of personnel and the availability of key decision makers. Often these learning points can be lost in scenario testing either because of inadequacies in the scenario or difficulties in observing multiple teams.

Weatherproofing offers an opportunity to capture lessons which would normally require multiple scenarios to be run, adaptability is an important element of successful business continuity planning and it is often achieved as a result of the human factors issues not the facilities and procedures.

To implement weatherproofing, or to receive more details on applying hazard and operability studies to business continuity, contact:

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