

# SURVIVING A DISASTER

## Business Continuity Planning (BCP)

In some ways, there is little mystery to the concept of *business continuity planning* (BCP). At the most basic level, it is exactly what it sounds like – a plan for getting your business back up and running in the event of an unforeseen disaster, natural or human error. However, as straightforward as developing such a plan may seem, many companies neglect the area together, which can be a potentially fatal business decision.

Business continuity planning (BCP) is the process of assessing contingencies, such as natural or man-made disasters or breakdowns that threaten a business' ongoing operations and assets, and creating and implementing a preventive plan. You can enable a rapid and efficient return to normal business operations by developing a plan of what measures you will take before, during and after the event.

BCP affects every functional area within a company. To effectively plan, you will need to have an understanding of both the current infrastructures and the potential impact and range of damage that could occur.

Alternatively, a disaster recover plan (DRP) focuses more on the information technology (IT) issues of restoring critical computer systems, communications systems, applications, and services in the event of disaster (*including equipment failures, theft or employee sabotage*). Although DRPs are important, an overall BCP is even more critical. IT clarifies the what, who, how and when. IT components focus on preserving data integrity and accessibility, equipment and system functionality, communications and network security.

One key way to prevent a major lost of data, due to a disaster, is by backing up your data and applications. Backing up information is a practical and necessary precaution to protect one's data from being lost forever.

There are several realistic methods for backing up data. The best backup method for your data depends upon many factors, including: the importance of the data, the amount of data to be backed up, and the funds available for backup. Here are some of the most commonly used backup solutions.

- **Flash memory**, also known as *memory sticks, flash drives, or thumb drives*, is a suitable solution for data backup when the backup amount is somewhat small. Flash memory drives are easy to plug into any PC with a USB port. These drives offer unlimited rewrite capabilities and are available in capacities ranging anywhere from 64 MB to 4 GB. Flash memory data durability is estimated to be roughly 10 years. Another advantage of flash memory is that data stored on flash drives is not susceptible to damage caused by magnets.
- **DVD backup** is a practical alternative for home users and small businesses. DVD technologies include DVD-RW, DVD+RW, DVD-R, DVD+R, DVD-RAM, as well as dual layer DVD technologies. Single-layer DVDs can hold up to 4.7 GB of data and dual-layer DVDs can hold up to 8.5 GB. DVD technology is a suitable option for storing backup data medium amounts of backup data.

- **Hard drives** - *As the prices of hard drives are dropping each year, individuals and businesses are turning to hard drives as a backup option. Copying and retrieving data from separate hard drives is very easy. The primary disadvantages are cost and the worry that a malware attack which affects the primary hard drives could also affect the backup hard drives.*
- **Tape Backup** - *Combined with their decreased accessibility and the advances made in the availability of such storage devices as the CD-R, the CD-RW, and the DVD-R, tape backups have become less popular and practically obsolete for home computer users. However, tape backup is still the primary backup method used in business environments. Tape backups are available in numerous capacities such as 4mm helical for low-end systems, 8mm helical scan technology for mid-range systems, and AIT, DLT and LTO for high-end systems. Compared to several other media solutions, tape drives typically provide the highest storage capacities at the lowest cost. One drawback to keep in mind, however, is the write speed of these drives, which is comparatively low.*
- **Online storage** *is one of the newest methods of storing your files, of course backup data also. Online storage solutions enable people to upload their data to a reliable server located in a secure environment. Another advantage of storing files online is that users can access these files from any location as long as they have a computer with Internet access.*

In most cases, one solution is better than others, but keep in mind, some type of solution is needed in order to protect and preserve the integrity of your data.

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