

Business Continuity Planning Won't Wait for a Good Economy

Introduction

Your enterprise relies on the continuous availability of business-critical applications, servers and data. A major interruption could have dire short and long-term consequences for your business. Disaster recovery and business continuity planning are on your to-do list, but a weak economy has put IT projects on indefinite hold. Failure, however, is not an option-in any economy. Your information infrastructure must be protected now.

The decision to initiate a business continuity and disaster recovery planning effort may be made by one or more individuals or groups in different roles within your organization. Key drivers for action will depend on the role of the decision maker/recommender. This white paper discusses the primary considerations by role for moving ahead with business continuity and disaster recovery initiatives during a down economy.

Getting Down to Business Continuity

At the highest functional level, the organization consists of the business side and the technical side. Key decision makers on the business side include the CEO, COO, CFO and Business Continuity Team Leader.



Chief Executive Officer

One of the most important goals of the CEO is to maximize confidence among the organization's stakeholders, including investors, customers, business partners, and regulators. Essentially, the CEO's role is that of corporate cheerleader.

Major business disruptions, however, can rapidly undermine the confidence of stakeholders confidence that can take months or years to rebuild. Serious disruptions can also generate liability claims, business losses and enduring damage to the company's brand image. Shareholder value and investor participation may be vulnerable.

Properly implemented business continuity measures enable the CEO to avoid or minimize business disruptions. By removing the threat of disaster, CEOs are better positioned to capitalize on new business opportunities and sustain existing relationships. Established business continuity plans are a common prerequisite when submitting bids to Fortune 500 companies or government entities. And the absence of a disaster recovery plan may sway a business partner to change suppliers.

Furthermore, business continuity solutions allow the CEO and the organization to maintain a competitive advantage by anticipating and quickly responding and adapting to changes in market requirements and accelerating project completion. Business disruptions can divert the focus away from key initiatives, wasting valuable resources and delaying opportunities.



Chief Operating Officer

The COO handles day-to-day, cross-functional issues, creating and maintaining the proper flow and links between different tasks, operations, and departments. The key role of the COO is to keep operations moving smoothly and on schedule.

A disaster of even modest proportions can interrupt operations, put everything on hold and create organizational chaos or worse, paralysis. Production, billing, and customer service/support all come to a standstill. For companies doing business on the Internet, the impact can be felt within minutes. Even a short disruption can have a big effect on revenues and profitability. The fallout can last for days, weeks, even months, as departments struggle to regain a state of normalcy.

Effective business continuity measures facilitate the COO's goal of keeping operations running smoothly and on schedule. Through business continuity planning, which includes risk assessment and impact analysis, the COO can achieve defined service level requirements for critical business processes, such as 24x7x365 access to e-Commerce applications. Higher service levels enable organizations to maintain their customer satisfaction levels and retain customers. Proper disaster recovery implementation can additionally help ensure existing and future regulatory compliance.

Business continuity solutions can maximize confidence in automated recovery of business processes and related IT systems, freeing the COO to focus on strategic goals, such as continuous process improvement (e.g., Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, and Theory of Constraints) and other initiatives.

A well-executed disaster recovery solution can minimize the operational impact associated with business disruptions so that even if a disruption does occur, operations can get back to normal with fewer staff involved, less impact, and in less time; automatically with little or no human intervention.

Chief Financial Officer

The CFO works to provide financial support for the organization's business objectives, manage financial risks and carry out financial planning. Business disruption may be among the largest financial unknowns the CFO must deal with, posing significant tangible and intangible risk.

A major disruption could shake investor confidence, driving down share value. Loans tied to share value could be called in or re-rated at higher interest rates, impacting profit. Costly shareholder suits might be triggered, entangling the CFO and staff in time-consuming litigation.

At the operational level, delays in customer accounting, accounts receivable and invoicing could impact cash flow, necessitating delays in initiatives designed to deliver competitive advantage and/or business process improvements. The overall losses could take multiple quarters to regain.

A business continuity solution can mitigate many of the economic unknowns for the CFO, such as loss of revenue, loss of cash flow, reduced productivity, and unplanned expenses associated with recovery (e.g., cost of re-creation and recovery of lost data).

A fully deployed business continuity solution can ensure the confidence of investors, financial markets and regulatory entities, strengthening share value. Business continuity is a prerequisite for achieving regulatory compliance and avoiding fines and penalties.

The loss of financial controls due to business disruptions can be avoided with a business continuity/disaster recovery plan in place, ensuring that accounting activities such as billing and collection go on.

Virtualization is gaining in popularity, enabling enterprises to optimize their hardware utilization and host multiple, replicated machines. CFOs can exploit their organization's existing investment in installed equipment, maximizing their ROI associated with business continuity and disaster recovery.



Business Continuity Team Leader

The Business Continuity Team Leader is responsible for managing the cross-functional team tasked with implementing an organization-wide business continuity solution. Team members include representatives from both the business side and technical side. On the business side are members from each of the major business units or functions. The Team Leader is also from the business side. On the technical side are system and database administrators, application specialists, storage engineers, security experts, backup technicians, customer support experts and others.

Frequently, it is the role of the Team Leader to overcome the tendency of top management to think of business continuity simply as an insurance policy rather than of process for achieving success enterprise-wide. According to Roberta Witty, research vice president for Gartner, in Gartner Inc.'s "How the Business Continuity Management Professional Can Survive the Worldwide Economic Crisis" April 2, 2009, "The BCM professional must shift from a 'recovery only' mindset to one that focuses on the larger issues of risk management and business resiliency." <http://www.contingencyplanning.com/articles/73120/>

The Team Leader's single goal is to put a comprehensive business continuity plan in place. The challenge is deploying the best solution in the shortest amount of time. Failure to perform adequate due diligence and implement a fail-safe solution could have a catastrophic consequence on the organization should a major disaster occur. But every day that goes by without a solution in place increases the likelihood of an outage.

Successfully deploying a business continuity solution enables automated recovery processes associated with critical business functions and supporting IT systems. Reliance on time consuming manual recovery processes is reduced or eliminated, allowing the organization to exceed Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) and Recovery Point Objectives identified during the impact analysis phase of the initiative. Objectives for testing the business continuity solution can also be met through automation

Talking Technical

On the technical side of the organization are the people whose responsibility is to keep the information infrastructure operating without unplanned downtime

Chief Information Officer (and Technical Staff)

The CIO is responsible for supporting the flow of information throughout the organization, developing and maintaining the technology infrastructure, and leveraging the organization's knowledge resources. No one in the organization is more keenly aware or directly affected by the nightmare scenario of a business disaster.

The CIO and IT team must respond immediately and decisively to a major disruption, diverting resources from routine and strategic tasks. In this crisis mode, labor costs can escalate as productivity plummets. External resources may be sought, further raising expenditures. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking.

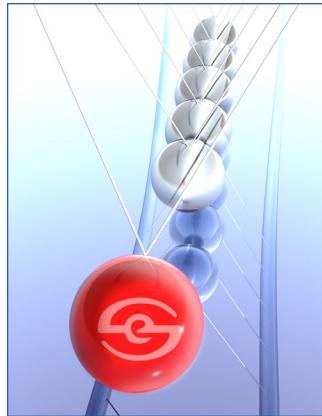
With the right automated business continuity solution in place, the CIO can reduce outage costs. Lower skill level personnel can perform recoveries and key staff is no longer essential to survivability.



The right business continuity solution can also help the CIO meet and exceed business continuity objectives in the Disaster Recovery Plan through improved testing, maintainability and reliability of disaster recovery processes. Automation allows more frequent, less costly testing, producing a higher level of confidence in the business continuity solution.

Solution

Failure is not an option in any economy. SIOS solutions deliver a solid foundation for business continuity and disaster recovery, meeting the cross-platform requirements of Linux, Windows, and virtualization at a very attractive price point. SIOS allows you to:



- Leverage virtualization technology in the data center to lower operational expenses
- Protect data in remote offices by leveraging your organization's existing internal private cloud and storage capacity
- Deploy technology designed to leverage your existing network investments
- Minimize CapEx investments in disaster recovery by replicating mission-critical applications to the cloud
- Manage and control maximum availability of information while minimizing IT expenses

Regardless of your business infrastructure, SIOS has the solution to meet your continuity plan, minimize the impact of outages, and guarantee that your applications and data are up and running even in the event of a catastrophic site loss.

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SIOS Technology Corp. • US/Canada 866.318.0108 • Europe + 44 1494 429382 • Int'l +1 (650) 843-0655
2929 Campus Drive, Suite 250, San Mateo, CA 94403

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