**Onward and Upward: The Future of Business Continuity Planning**

Aidan Scharf

Algonquin College, Police & Public Safety Institute

For: ASIS Chapter 140

October 31, 2022

**Introduction**

The discipline of business continuity planning (BCP) is arguably still in its infancy, since corporate knowledge and appreciation of BCP has yet to become mainstream. Only half of global enterprises claim to have a business continuity plan (Mercer, 2020). This is problematic, as organizations that lack BCP are generally more vulnerable to hazards that can disrupt their operations, products, and services (Hiles, 2011). These disruptions can result in financial and reputational loss, so organizations of all sizes and industries should implement comprehensive BCP’s to protect themselves against these risks. I believe this change will occur in the coming decades, as today’s emergency management and business continuity students gradually begin to occupy leadership positions and start positively influencing organizations. I think they will also prioritize contingency planning for technological disruptions, and expand on traditional BCP measures by considering emergency management principles, as I will discuss in this paper.

**Changing Corporate Culture**

There is often a consensus among company executives that BCP is not worth the time and resources that it is duly owed. Indeed, their focus is generally to drive up quarterly earnings, not voluntarily improve an organization’s long-term security posture (Barnes, 2011). As more organizations suffer catastrophic crises that land them on front-page news though, I think incentives for establishing robust resiliency measures will become more apparent to senior management. Instead of inheriting the “it can’t happen to us” mentality that plagues so many organizations, I envision new leadership groups altering their attitudes in favour of BCP. They will take steps to benefit their organizations by investing more into resources and programs that foster confident and competent risk management programs. Specifically, I think more positions will be created for people with backgrounds and educations in emergency and risk management. These subject matter experts will bring fresh perspectives to the table, so to speak, and provide further insights into how organizations can mitigate losses due to disruptions. This is a strategic investment to increase risk management capabilities of any organization, even ones with high risk tolerances.

**Implementing Awareness and Training**

Business continuity is not simply a matter of meeting compliance benchmarks. From my perspective, it implicates whole organizations from top to bottom, and simply *having* a BCP does not guarantee a successful outcome in the event of a crisis. With this being said, I foresee organizations spending more time and resources on BCP awareness and training for all employees—not just senior management (Hiles, 2011). This should range from running awareness campaigns to full-scale simulation exercises. The scopes and contexts for these can be grounded in accurate assumptions based on the results of business impact analyses. The advantage of investing in such awareness and training is that when employees are familiar their roles within continuity plans, they will execute them effectively when the need arises (Roper, Fischer, & Grau, 2005). As a result of adopting this methodology, senior managers will find that their teams will work efficiently through crises, which then ensures that crises will be resolved as quickly as possible with minimal loss to the organization.

**Implementing Emergency Management Fundamentals in Business Continuity Planning**

The broadening of Canada’s hazard landscape makes it so that organizations are more vulnerable than ever to disruptions—a trend that will only continue in the future. Research indicates that natural hazards will increase in frequency and impact in the coming decades (Abbott & Samson, 2017; Coppola, 2015). These forces of nature pose a significant risk to workplaces and the physical infrastructures upon which companies rely. Planning for emergencies that could directly impact an organization’s assets or personnel would require a mix of emergency management techniques to be utilized along with business crisis management practices (Jacobsen, 2011). I anticipate many organizations investigating emergency management cycles and taking necessary steps to prevent, prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disruptions to their sites. Each of these pillars is crucial to enhancing the operational resiliency of an organization (Coppola, 2015; Jacobsen, 2011). It will benefit organizations to be proactive in considering emergency management as part of their business continuity planning, no matter what hazards they face.

**Implementing Contingencies for Technological Disruptions**

Given the increasing interconnectedness of our critical infrastructures, industry professionals agree that technological disruptions will become more common in the future (Baggett & Simpkins, 2018). Being that organizations are becoming more reliant on information technology systems, the future of business continuity will need to pay particular attention to these technological hazards. A sustained disruption of internet service can paralyze an organization, as was seen during the Rogers telecommunication outage of 2022. In anticipation for events of similar magnitude, I believe that organizations will take correct steps towards building operational resiliency through BCP. They should start by creating robust plans that outline key steps for stakeholders to take during disruptions, similar to what would take place under an incident management system. Organizations will also need to develop service recovery plans, as well as public relations plans, which can be readily implemented in case of a technological failure. Contingency measures for alternate service delivery methods should be taken into consideration in the future to minimize down-time as well. Perhaps most critically, I think more businesses will need to incorporate measures to protect the confidentiality, integrity, availability of data held in their information systems, in order to minimize financial and reputational loss. This could be as simple as having on-site backups of mission-critical information (Smith & Shields 2011).

**Conclusion**

As hazards increase in both scope and complexity, organizations must adapt if they hope to withstand them. More people will be entering the workforce with intimate knowledge of emergency and hazard risk management disciplines, and they will begin to influence organizational attitudes towards business continuity for the better. By changing the ways that BCP is perceived and implemented in boardrooms, taking a whole-of-staff approach through robust awareness and training, incorporating emergency management techniques, and preparing for technological disruptions, these industry professionals will ultimately help organizations to become more resilient thanks to better business continuity planning.

**References**

Abbott, P. L., & Samson, C. (2017). *Natural disasters* (4th Canadian ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Baggett, R. K., & Simpkins, B. K. (2018). *Homeland security & critical infrastructure protection* (2nd ed.). Praeger Security International.

Barnes, P., Hiles, A., Johnson, A., & Bird, L. (2011). Case studies. In A. Hiles (Ed.), *The definitive handbook of business continuity management* (3rd ed., pp. 481–619). John Wiley & Sons.

Hiles, A. (2011). Awareness and training*.* In A. Hiles (Ed.), *The definitive handbook of business continuity management* (3rd ed., pp. 411–419). John Wiley & Sons.

Jacobsen, G. (2011). Crisis management, emergency management, BCM, DR: What’s the difference and how do they fit together?In A. Hiles (Ed.), *The definitive handbook of business continuity management* (3rd ed., pp. 97–107). John Wiley & Sons.

Mercer. (2020). *Business* *responses* *to* *the* *COVID-19* *pandemic*: *Survey* *findings*. <https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/global/gl-2020-mercer-covid-19-global-survey-coronavirus-impact-to-global-market.pdf>

Roper, C., Fischer, L, and Grau, J. (2005). Security education, awareness and training (1st ed.). Elsevier.

Smith, M., & Shields, P. (2011). Strategies for continuity and availability for information and communications technology (ICT). In A. Hiles (Ed.), *The definitive handbook of business continuity management* (3rd ed., pp. 210–247). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.