



7 tips for developing Business Continuity plans that work



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Why you need a Business Continuity (BC) plan

Keeping your business up and running during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, requires a business continuity (BC) plan. BC plans identify the business processes that are essential to keeping your business operating and providing value while delivering a blueprint for your response.

Yet today, many organizations lack advanced planning. Mercer's "Business Responses to the Covid-19 Outbreak Survey¹" found that **51%** of organizations have no BC plan. Even fewer organizations were ready for the COVID-19 pandemic. Gartner² found that just **12%** of respondents to a recent survey believe their businesses were highly prepared for the effects of the corona virus. Similarly, a McKinsey study that looked at 1,000 companies found that **10 percent** of these companies fared significantly better than the rest because they were prepared.³



¹ <https://solutionsreview.com/backup-disaster-recovery/51-of-organizations-have-no-business-continuity-plan-to-combat-coronavirus/>

² <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-03-10-gartner-business-continuity-survey-shows-just-twelve-percent-of-organizations-are-highly-prepared-for-coronavirus>

³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/bubbles-pop-downturns-stop>

The negative business impact of this lack of preparation has been astronomical. A Management Trends⁴ study found that **93%** of businesses feel the pandemic will harm their business and **86%** are expecting revenue to decline significantly due to the outbreak.

Luckily, businesses are waking up to the need for better planning for future phases of the pandemic. **Fifty one percent** of respondents to the Management Trends survey are now focusing on business continuity planning to manage potential threats from a second or third wave of coronavirus.

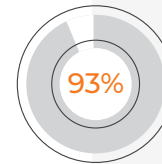
This eBook is designed to help you plan for the next phases of the current pandemic. The same principles can apply to any unforeseen crises that may arise in the future. It will explore:

**WHY YOU NEED
FLEXIBILITY IN BC
PLANNING**

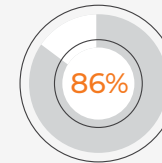
**BEST PRACTICES
FOR DEVELOPING
AN AGILE BC PLAN**

**WHY ORGANIZATIONS
TODAY ARE CHALLENGED
TO MANAGE THE PROCESSES
THAT SUPPORT THEIR PLAN**

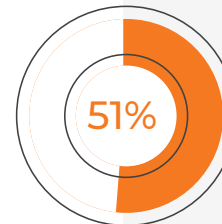
**THE ROLE OF
TECHNOLOGY
IN BUSINESS
CONTINUITY**



Businesses feel pandemic will harm their business



Businesses expecting revenue to decline



Businesses who are now focusing on business continuity planning

⁴ <https://managementevents.com/news/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-businesses/>

The case for flexibility in BC planning

Not only does the coronavirus pandemic highlight the need for BC planning in general, it underscores the need to have BC plans that can respond with agility to new conditions. While most BC plans address events that have happened historically, with the current pandemic, businesses have encountered “unknown unknowns” that most never imaged. These include:

REMOTE WORK

Most organizations had not considered the need for widespread remote work. A study by AvidXchange found that only 37% of organizations with a BC plan have the necessary technology to enable employees to work from home as part of their strategy⁵. Organizations are challenged to ensure:

- Enough laptops and VPN lines
- Adequate cybersecurity for remote workers, including secure endpoints, two-factor authentication, user credential management, and secure decommissioning of workers who leave the company while ensuring managers have continued access to their data
- Effective communications channels, including collaboration and teleconferencing
- Remote worker productivity

CUSTOMER BC ISSUES

Most BC planning is internally focused. It prepares organizations to maintain their own operations. The COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented in that many organizations and their customers are experiencing disruptions simultaneously. Organizations need to find ways to keep serving customers under these new conditions.

STAFF SHORTAGES

Many organizations have fewer workers due to illness, quarantine or layoffs due to the current economic downturn. They need to find new ways to cross train employee on the fly to perform new tasks when workers can't go down the hall for instruction from a colleague or manager.

⁵ http://automate.avidxchange.com/rs/598-WVB-246/images/Critical_Gaps_in_Business_Continuity_Plan.pdf

7 best practices for creating a Business Continuity plan

Setting up a business continuity plan that can address both well understood and unforeseen crises requires thoughtful and thorough planning. The following are best practices for implementing such an agile BC plan.



1. Establish your crisis management team

Identify and assemble the key people in your organization who should be involved in BC planning and crisis management. In addition to IT, this team should include risk owners, BC plan owners and process owners who are subject matter experts within critical departments and lines of business in your organization. The crisis management team imbues your BC planning effort with a strong understanding of the business by lending relevant perspective across their areas of expertise.



2. Define critical business processes to determine where to focus your BC efforts

Every organization relies on processes to produce goods or services and maintain internal operations. To ensure business continuity, you need to define which of your processes are essential to your continued viability as a business and prioritize their continued operation in your BC plan. For example, invoicing processes may be essential but those for ordering business cards are not.

Be sure to consider both internal processes, such as IT, payroll, and HR, and external processes used to deliver value to and interact with customers.

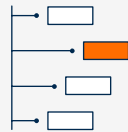
Defining these core processes requires two types of analysis: Formal business impact analysis (BIA) and informal analysis. The BIA analysis process is designed to identify core processes as well as the resources, SLAs, and equipment you'll need to perform them efficiently. Many templates are available from software vendors or consultants to simplify the formal BIA process.

But a formalized process won't surface all of the most important core processes and resources for your business on its own. You must supplement templates with the deep subject matter expertise of your crisis management team. For example, including core members of your sales operations team in the BC planning process helps the crisis management team understand what your sales team needs to accomplish from an operational perspective. These SMEs can also create on-the-fly solutions to maintain critical operations.

The objective of this business process identification is to:



IDENTIFY your key business functions and the level of impact not having these functions would have on the business.



DEFINE the worst-case scenario for your business irrespective of the situation and prioritize what must go back into place and in what order.

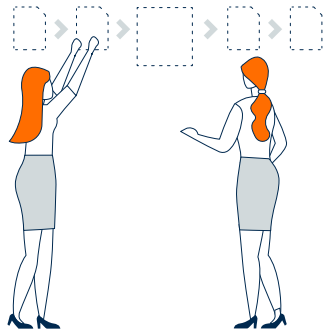


UNDERSTAND your recovery time objectives/ recovery point objectives (RTO/RPO).



PRIORITIZE processes that support your company's key goals and objectives.

RTO designates the amount of time that can pass before an event seriously disrupts the normal flow of business operations. RPO specifies how much data you can afford to lose during network downtime.



3. Map out your core business processes

Next, you should document your critical business process. Mapping enables you to clearly see the required steps, handoffs, accompanying documents, as well as necessary hardware and software required to complete them. Business process mapping should also take into account appropriate standards, regulations, legislation and best practices. This documentation will make it easier for employees to continue functioning if they are forced to change the way they perform a given process in the wake of a crisis, or if employees must quickly learn a new process to fill in for sick, quarantined or laid-off workers.

HOW TO ENSURE YOUR EMPLOYEES STAY ENGAGED



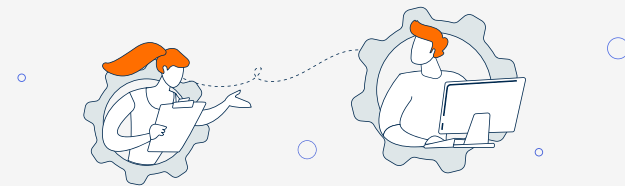
While BC plans usually focus on processes and supporting technology needed to get your critical business processes back up and running, it's also important to consider the human factor. Your employees are critical to the way your company runs and how business processes are shaped.

BC plans should consider the fact that employees face unique emotional challenges in working from home totally separated from customers and co-workers. It's important to prioritize ways to ensure that workers feel supported and connected in a remote environment. For example, you may want to leverage online collaboration tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams to enable people to virtually see each other and share experiences and tips about working from home.



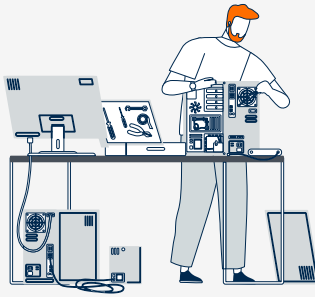
4. Identify your most likely business risks and include controls in your processes

Planning your response to some of your most likely crisis situations in advance will help you streamline these efforts during a time of crisis. This means it's important to identify your most likely risks including natural disasters, such as fires, tornados, floods and earthquakes, as well as key organizational and regulatory risks, such as anything associated with SOC compliance or ISO certification. As you map out your processes, include controls to mitigate these risks.



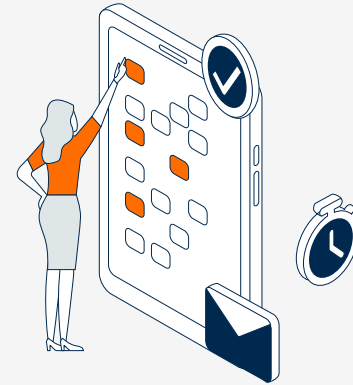
5. Communicate the plan with stakeholders and get buy-in

Once you've developed your BC plan, secure buy in from the top down and across the organization to improve awareness as well as establish the plan's relevance and importance. During a crisis, it's vital to communicate with your board and executives to make them aware of your progress toward achieving your RTO/RPO goals.



6. Regularly practice the plan

To ensure your BC plan operates correctly, perform trial runs on a regular (quarterly or annual) basis. Go through each contingency plan you developed for each critical business process to make sure your employees can follow the plan correctly and that your plan is effective. For example, if critical desktop hardware must operate consistently, pull the spare devices you have on hand and test them regularly to be confident everything is working. Such testing ensures that if there is a problem with the primary hardware, you can resolve it quickly.



7. Continually update the plan

Business continuity planning is a process that never ends. Your BC plan must be continually reviewed and modified as conditions evolve. Take an iterative approach to revising your plan on an ongoing basis to keep it up-to-date and able to respond to changing requirements.

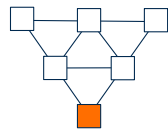
Challenges in managing business processes to support a BC plan

Mapping business processes is a key part of your business continuity strategy. Yet organizations face numerous challenges when creating this documentation and ensuring it gets into the right hands when needed. These include:

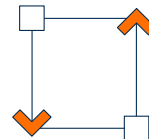
1. The considerable time and effort necessary to build, document, test and revise processes and BC controls.
2. The inability of plans to incorporate every possible crisis that can arise. At the same time, if an organization attempts to be comprehensive, the plan can quickly become unwieldy.
3. Process documentation and updating. Often, business continuity plans exist on a company intranet, or even in binders that sit in someone's office, which makes them difficult to follow and quickly out of date.
4. Communicating plans that exist in hard copy to the people who need them, when they need them, with the most up-to-date information, especially when workforces go remote.
5. The fact that fallible humans must follow the processes and procedures in the BC plan. Organizations need to ensure that workers are clear on the steps they need to execute, as well as how and when to escalate decision making in the process.
6. Lack of updates to BC plans on a regular cadence, which potentially leaves plans so out of date people won't follow them. It can be difficult to remember to update the documents and do testing on a quarterly or annual basis.

The role of technology in Business Continuity

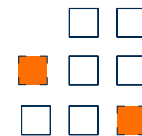
Digital process management and automation software is designed to help improve the way people work. It makes it easier for organizations to map out their critical business processes, identify and manage organizational risks, revise processes as necessary, communicate processes to those who must implement them, automate manual processes, as well as optimize and revise processes as necessary. You can improve your business continuity execution by standardizing on a technology platform that provides easy-to-use tools for visual process management and for rapidly automating processes.



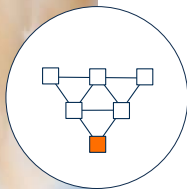
**PROCESS
MANAGEMENT**



**PROCESS
AUTOMATION**



**PROCESS
OPTIMIZATION**



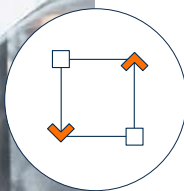
Process Management

A digital process management solution enables you to collaborate with stakeholders to identify processes that are critical for business continuity. Once you've determined your most critical internal and external processes, you can then use the tool to define and map the requisite steps, handoffs, stakeholders, SLAs, and technologies in an easy-to-understand and accessible format. This mapping can also include control measures to mitigate identified risks to those processes.

This detailed process documentation describes up-to-date processes and is available anytime, anywhere-- not stored in a binder, locked away in an office. Your organization can now give frontline process workers the instructions they need to be successful, even if the BC plan requires them to perform process steps from a remote location and/or in different ways or using different technologies than they would normally. Documented process maps also make it easier to cross train workers when fewer workers are available due to sickness, quarantines or layoffs.

When an unexpected crisis occurs, organizations may need to rapidly change their BC processes to address unforeseen conditions. Your organization can assign control measures to specific personnel who can take responsibility for maintaining an up-to-date BC plan. Visual business process mapping capabilities make it easy for these personnel to redefine how core process steps should be performed in response to changing conditions. For example, say your organization normally approves and pays vendor invoices by getting wet signatures from a manager on a piece of paper and having accounts payable cut a physical check. With process mapping software, you could easily map out a new process that captures electronic signatures and makes payments online.

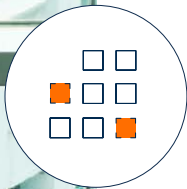
Digital process automation also handles all communications to risk owners, process owners, BC plan managers regarding changes to any process controls. Now you can get process updates into the hands of the stakeholders who need them quickly and easily.



Process Automation

When companies are forced to downsize headcount to save costs during a crisis, manual, inefficient processes can cripple their ability to survive. Automation enables you to do the same amount of work with fewer resources. As a result, a Business Continuity plan should include automating critical processes.

Not only should you map out the vital processes that comprise your Business Continuity plan, you can also streamline these processes with automation and improve their efficiency. Once a process is mapped out, business process automation tools enable you to identify areas that could be automated. You can put in time estimates for each step to prioritize where to apply automation in the process to maximize efficiency. This allows you to take the most time-consuming manual processes and reduce the human touch so fewer people can handle the same volume of requests.



Process Optimization

A business continuity plan is a living document. It needs to be continually revised based on changing business conditions, or on post-mortems with process participants. Digital process management and automation tools help your organization optimize business processes based on feedback from analytics and from your employees.

These tools incorporate data analytics technology to monitor automated workflows and report back on specific points of failure or areas that can be streamlined to maximize process efficiency. For example, if the workflow requires an approval step, it might route a document to a manager's desk for approval. If data analytics reveals that nine times out of 10, this approval step takes two-to-three days longer than it should, you could then build an escalation into the workflow such that if the document sits in the manager's queue for 12 hours, it is escalated to someone else for review.

In addition, a key part of regular process management is constantly looking at the outputs of the process and evaluating whether it is performing as required. A digital process management tool enables you to build feedback components into every process to permit people to provide insights into improvement opportunities they see in the process on an ongoing basis.

After an event, you can also perform a more formalized postmortem process using these tools. People can gather around and look at standard processes that were part of the BC plan and evaluate how they performed and then earmark processes for change.

Prepare now for the future

Keeping your business processes operating in times of crisis takes a business continuity plan--and in the wake of an unexpected crisis, such as the coronavirus pandemic, the ability to quickly adjust that plan to new conditions on the fly while keeping stakeholders informed.

Digital process management and automation software makes it easier to create your BC plan, share it and keep it up to date. It also gives you the additional benefits of greater automation to streamline your processes so that you can operate with fewer employees and the ability to continually optimize your plan based on data and user feedback.

Learn how digital process management and automation can help your organization better respond to the current crisis and to any new phases or unexpected events that will inevitably arise in the future – visit nintex.com



About Nintex

The Nintex Process Platform is designed for Ops, IT and business leaders to help their organizations successfully manage, automate and optimize enterprise-wide business processes. Today, more than 8,000 organizations in 90 countries leverage the process management and automation capabilities of the Nintex platform to improve the way people work.

Nintex is the fastest way to build applications, offers the lowest total cost of ownership, and has high customer satisfaction with a net promoter score of 75.

As the leader in Digital Process Automation for Wide Deployments, cited in The Forrester Wave™ Q1 2019, we offer a complete, powerful and easy-to-use set of process capabilities in our platform including: *Nintex Promapp®*, *Nintex Forms & Mobile Apps*, *Nintex Workflow*, *Nintex RPA*, *Nintex Drawloop*, *Nintex DocGen®*, *Nintex Sign™ powered by Adobe Sign*, and *Nintex Analytics*.

Put The Power of Process™ to work in your organization.
Sign up for a demo today at nintex.com/request-demo

