



Relax.
We protect your data.

IGNORANCE ISN'T BLISS – TOP TIPS TO DEFEATING DISASTER

AN IRON MOUNTAIN DIGITAL GUIDE TO SME BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

It doesn't matter what size business you are, a disaster can affect us all – whether it's a naturally occurring incident such as extreme weather conditions, accidental damage such as burst pipes or man-made threats.

As many as eight out of ten businesses go bust within 18 months of experiencing a disaster so it's a risk companies can't afford to ignore.

But, how can you prepare for the worst and make sure you have the plans in place to ensure an early resumption of normal operations following a serious incident?

BE PREPARED

Don't ignore threats to your business or you could be left with nothing. Whilst this is obviously a worst case scenario, even relatively small scale incidents can affect your business so it pays to be prepared.

ESTABLISH A DISASTER CONTINGENCY TEAM

One of the most important steps you can take is to set up a contingency team to manage the response and recovery in the event of an emergency. Preparing for a disaster and dealing with it can't be shouldered by one man alone.

PERSONAL DETAILS AND CONTACTS

In the event of a disaster you'll need to communicate fast with a wide range of contacts. Setting up a key contact list, which includes all relevant details will ensure you can communicate with all stakeholders in the event of an emergency. This not only includes staff, partners and customers but utility companies, insurers, and suppliers.

REVIEW RISKS AND ASSESS THEIR LIKELIHOOD

According to former US secretary of defence, Donald Rumsfeld's now infamous speech, there are known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns.

It simply isn't possible to predict every type of event that could happen to your business but it is important to try to identify as many different disruptions as you can. These can include anything from floods, power cuts, IT failure and data loss, fires and explosions, staff issues or premises out of action. Making a list and assessing the probability of them occurring can help you identify the various different scenarios that you could face if disaster strikes.



EXAMINE AND UNDERSTAND YOUR BUSINESS

Recognising and understanding the critical assets within your business is key to the continuity process. You must be aware of the critical functions within your firm so that you can plan for a fast recovery. This includes your administration, sales, IT, communications finance or manufacturing operations.

Many companies forget that data is one of their most valuable assets – without data there can be no recovery. In the same way that physical assets can be protected through insurance policies, off-site storage and security systems, data can be safeguarded too. Automating the backup process, ensuring it occurs on a daily basis without fail, and storing company data electronically off-site can help to ensure that if you're hit by a disaster, can you access one of your business' most valuable assets and support the fast resumption of your business.

PREPARE A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Your business continuity plan needs to cover every eventuality and how you will respond in the event of a disaster. Putting pen to paper means you will know precisely what actions you need to take to help your business recover and resume normal trading.

Ideally, it should be designed to cover a number of different time spans from the initial disaster to 12 hours, 24 hours, 48 hours and further down the line.

ACTION LIST

It's useful to have a checklist of activities, which you can refer to in the event of an emergency to ensure you don't forget anything in the heat of the moment. This should be based around the priority areas outlined in your business continuity plan.

RESERVE RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

You'll need to consider what resources you need to set aside to deal with a disaster and ensure a fast resumption of normal trading. This should cover the disaster contingency team, staff, as well as alternative premises and equipment such as IT and communications systems.

EXECUTE YOUR PLAN TO MAKE SURE IT WORKS AND REVIEW REGULARLY

It's no good committing your plans to paper without testing to see if they work in practice. Running a test to see how you and your business cope when faced with an imaginary incident will help you to identify weak points and fine tune your response.

Regular reviews are vital. As time moves on, so does your company so ensure you regularly check your plan to ensure it's as up to date as your business.

DISTRIBUTE AND COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN

Communication is key and your staff must know how to respond when faced with an emergency. Make sure that your employees are fully briefed on the plan and are clear on their roles and responsibilities.

For more information, visit
WWW.IRONMOUNTAINDIGITAL.CO.UK