

# 18-Point Checklist for Business Continuity Planning



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## In this e-guide:

**Developing a business continuity (BC) strategy doesn't need to be a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. This expert guide presents an 11 step plan to ensure continuity throughout any disruption, as well as 7 mistakes to avoid in the planning process.**

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# Business continuity planning steps to keep your organization running

**Paul Kirvan**, Independent IT consultant/auditor

<http://searchdisasterrecovery.techtarget.com/tip/Business-continuity-planning-steps-to-keep-your-organization-running>

When creating your business continuity planning steps, you have several options: build them from scratch, using available books, templates and other reference materials; hire a consultant to build your plan; buy specialized software to help you create the plan; or take an existing plan and repurpose it for your organization's needs.

Your plan should be consistent with -- or at least include components of -- one or more established business continuity (BC) standards, such as:

- [International Organization for Standardization 22301:2012](#);
- [National Fire Protection Association 1600:2016](#);
- [Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council BC Handbook](#);
- [Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Rule 4370](#); and
- country-specific standards.

That will make it easier for you to pass a future audit and scrutiny from existing and potential customers.

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## A checklist for your business continuity planning

Regardless of how you create a plan, the following 11 business continuity planning steps can help keep your organization running in the event of a disruption.

**Evidence of senior management approval.** Don't try to develop business continuity planning steps without [senior management awareness](#) and approval of your actions. You'll need a budget to prepare the plan, as well as senior management to authorize the funding.

**Emergency action steps to take in an incident.** Some experts may say it's better to have a separate incident management plan to describe how to initially respond to an event, but consider having a section at the front of your BC plan with your incident response procedures. Include your emergency teams -- incident response team, emergency management team, technology team, damage assessment team -- plus contact lists of first responders, key customers and stakeholders; primary and alternate assembly areas to meet following an evacuation; and emergency phone numbers.

**Types of incidents that could launch the BC plan.** From your risk assessments (RAs) and [business impact analyses](#) (BIAs) -- which should be completed before starting a BC plan -- identify internal and external situations that could be serious enough to launch a BC plan. Remember that

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not all events may warrant the launching of your BC plan, which is why you have incident response and damage assessment teams.

**Lists of key business processes to protect.** This list is developed from the results of your RA and BIA activities. These activities can identify the business processes that must be recovered and returned to normal operation as quickly as possible. Your business continuity planning steps will hopefully address these processes right away, while other procedures will be addressed later.

**Lists of critical technologies to protect.** BIA activities will identify your most critical business processes and the technologies needed to support them. Be sure you have [technology disaster recovery plans](#) to address the mission-critical systems, data and databases, and technology resources needed by each process, as these will help restore operations.

**Lists of recovery time objectives and recovery point objectives.** As identified from your BIA, list the recovery time (elapsed time before a disrupted process needs to be operational again) and recovery point objectives (point in time to which data must be recovered), as these help identify and prioritize recovery activities.

**Lists of key vendors, stakeholders, regulators and other third parties.** These lists will help ensure you can contact other key players quickly. The entities to contact are identified in your BIAs.

**Step-by-step procedures for various activities.** These provide the proper sequence of actions and can include damage assessment; initial response

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activities; disaster declaration criteria; [calling trees](#), or how to access a notification system; building evacuation; staff relocation to an alternate work site; responding to specific kinds of incidents, such as power outages, water damage, floods or severe weather; recovering and restarting business operations; and returning to the original (or new) work location and resuming business operations.

**Procedures for obtaining emergency funds.** This can include a list of banks and other financial institutions, plus instructions for obtaining cash. Only authorized people should have this data. Company credit cards can be used for emergency purchases, but make sure these are used by authorized persons, and have specific dollar limits. Blank company checks and personal credit cards may also be used for purchases, but all users should be preauthorized, and there should be a reimbursement plan in place.

**Lists of vital records the company needs to operate.** While many of these special documents, such as personnel records, articles of incorporation and legal documents, are in electronic form, many companies still have lots of paper documents on site. These should be stored in a fire-proof cabinet and also scanned and stored electronically.

**References to other activities.** Include references in your business continuity planning steps, where appropriate, that indicate your intent to perform the following: [awareness and training activities](#); BC plan exercising; periodic reviews and audits of the BC plan and related documents; periodic updating of BIAs, RAs, BC strategies and data backup procedures; and processes for the continuous improvement of the overall BC program.



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All of these items, when completed, can make for a rather lengthy BC plan document. Consider creating one- or two-page playbooks that extract the most important business continuity planning steps -- contact lists, emergency numbers, incident procedures and evacuation sites -- and consolidate that data into an easy-to-use document. It may be useful to laminate these worksheets for ease of use and protection from the elements. Laminated, wallet-sized cards with critical BC plan contact data may also be useful in an emergency.

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# Seven business continuity strategy planning mistakes

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<http://searchdisasterrecovery.techtarget.com/tip/Seven-business-continuity-strategy-planning-mistakes>

Developing a business continuity strategy is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. Organizations must gather and validate massive amounts of data and develop and validate procedures to keep data available and protected at all times.

Employees must be trained on the business continuity plan, as well as their roles and responsibilities when a disruptive incident occurs. Senior management must be aware of the plan and be involved with its development.

The following list of common mistakes, if addressed early enough, can improve your chances of developing an [actionable business continuity strategy](#).

**Lack of senior management support.** When you consider how much goes into a standards-compliant business continuity plan, a lack of senior management support could result in an inability to start the planning process. And without a budget and funding approved by senior management, your project could be a nonstarter.



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**Failure to comply with standards.** Not only do [standards provide an excellent framework](#) for building a business continuity strategy, they can also help increase your chances of passing a future audit or an evaluation by an existing or prospective customer.

**Not performing a business impact analysis and risk analysis.** A [business impact analysis \(BIA\) identifies](#) the most important business processes; the technologies, data and staff needed to perform those processes; recovery time objectives; priorities when recovering critical processes and systems; and vital records and other required documentation.

The [risk assessment \(RA\) helps identify](#) internal and external threat situations and operational vulnerabilities that could cause disruptions to the critical processes identified in the BIA.

**Failure to define strategies for response, recovery, restoration and resumption of business activities.** These are developed from BIA and RA results and describe how the company will prevent incidents from happening, respond to them if they do occur, mitigate the severity of an incident and resume business operations as quickly as possible.

**Not defining incident response and damage assessment activities.** When an event occurs, a fast, organized response can help protect human life, minimize damage and reduce incident times. It's important to identify and properly train employees who will serve on incident response, emergency and [damage assessment teams](#) so they can perform their duties quickly and efficiently.

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**Not exercising plans on a regular basis.** BC exercises help ensure that data contained in the plan is accurate and up-to-date, and that emergency procedures are correct and in the proper sequence. Once [BC plans are exercised](#), an after-action report identifies what worked and what didn't work, and recommends changes to improve the business continuity strategy.

**Not maintaining and reviewing plans regularly.** BC plans are only useful to an organization if [they are up-to-date](#), procedurally accurate and periodically reviewed for content and other relevant metrics. Assuming plans are also audited, it's essential to design them using the frameworks contained in BC standards to ensure that plan controls are consistent.

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