

Knowledge continuity



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Given the increase in the use of knowledge based systems in the world today, business continuity planning has become increasingly important to organizations because it helps them to recover interrupted functions within an organization especially after disasters. Disasters likely to affect the company's knowledge and infrastructure include earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, accidents, disruptions in energy and power, hacking activities and service sector failures. It acts as reference for resuming business after an unexpected disruption of normal activities. Lack of a business continuity plan exposes the company to huge losses in information and knowledge in the event of a disaster.

Knowledge asset protection ensures that critical knowledge can be accessed even in the event of a disaster without curtailing the operations of the business (Beazley, 2003). It ensures relationships with customers and suppliers are continuous through protection of major knowledge asset programs and resources.

According to Doughty (2002), knowledge continuity gives the firm guarantee for continuity in case of exit of staff or other important resources. It becomes difficult for new employees to follow after previous ones if there is no knowledge based system to guide them. Rather than waiting for a disaster to happen so as to take measures of dealing with the disaster, it is important that every business come up with a business continuity plan. The discussion contained in this paper will examine how a company's knowledge base can be protected in the case of a natural disaster.

Natural disasters are those that man has no control over and may include floods, fires, tornadoes, cyclones among others. Due to their unpredictable

nature, there is no way damage can be anticipated or controlled by human beings. For this reason, the importance of a business continuity plan is inevitable. As stated earlier, no company should wait until disaster strikes in order to react to it. Business continuity plans involve preparation of response plans in case of a disaster as well as recovery plans. Designing a business continuity plan therefore is the solution to managing knowledge base in the case of a disaster (Beazley, 2003).

A business continuity plan consists of business impact analysis, readiness procedures and quality assurance techniques. The first thing that a company should do is to come up with a list of the most important resources and knowledge bases or critical aspects that it would like to protect. This is done by ranking organization resources from highest priority to the lowest.

Ranking is usually done depending on the impact that a disaster would have on the business either in terms of loss of revenue or time required for recovery. The business continuity planning committee then comes up with a summary identifying the possible impacts that the disruptions are likely to cause. This is followed by coming up with possible ways of covering for the losses that could be incurred.

Insurance is a good way of indemnifying the business in case of a disaster striking unexpectedly. Companies should try as much as possible to take cover for the most common causes of disasters that they think are likely to occur in the lifetime of the business.

In designing a disaster recovery program or plan, a team should be identified that will coordinate the recovery process after a disaster. This team must include a crisis management team. Another team for response and recovery

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should also be formed. The duties and responsibilities of each must be identified and this helps in coordination during the recovery process. What is important is that after the plan has been designed, training of staff is necessary. Training involves providing employees with details of the plan and making sure that everyone knows their responsibility to take in case of a disaster.

Apart from training, the employees must perform an exercise in order to validate the plan. It is a practical implementation of the training so as to give the employees a practical idea of how to react in a real situation (Doughty, 2002). Quality assurance involves testing the accuracy of the plan to be implemented, its efficiency and relevance. This stage helps the company to identify loopholes in the plan and make necessary amendments and improvements.

The major task comes in when it is time to react to the disruption caused by the disaster. Three steps are normally involved as follows. Response involves arrangement of the teams so as to accomplish the tasks present. It entails the first measures taken immediately after disaster strikes including notification of management and employees; bringing the situation under control; measuring the seriousness of the damage caused and implementation of the available plans.

The next step is communication management which aims at keeping close contact with the media, controlling rumors and assuring all the stakeholders involved. The last stage is the operations management which is essentially coordinating the resources and information to ensure proper flow of activities for efficient response.

The final stage in dealing with a disaster is the recovery and restoration. This involves relocating offices if need be or repairing previous facilities, redeployment of employees and replacing resources so as to return the business operations back to normal. It is at this stage that the need for knowledge base protection is recognized. If the company had a good back-up system then it becomes so much easier to go back to normal operations (Doughty, 2002).

A problem arises when there are no funds to restore the business or vital information, data and resources cannot be traced so that the company can not continue with their major income generating activities leading to huge losses. This is the reason why every firm should come up with business continuity plans in order to be ready for such eventualities that disrupt continuous operations of the business in case of a disaster.

References

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