

FRITS J. BOS, PMP

1602 - 145 Hillcrest Ave., Mississauga, ON, L5B 3Z1 | C: (416) 524-7790 | frits@pm4hire.com

A major challenge for business operations is how to prepare for, and cope with, the potential of extreme conditions that inhibit normal operations. While people still think of 9/11 as a disaster and how unlikely that is to be repeated, reality is that there are many other disaster scenarios.

Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery

Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, snow- or ice-storms, fires, all are potential disaster conditions that destroy infrastructure, cause power failures, communications network failures, or even cripple future operations of a site. Hackers may break into computer networks to steal data or install ransomware. Short of isolating an operation, how do you cope with such conditions?



I offer BCP/DR consulting services to your organization.

With over 30 years of project management experience in managing projects, I have never been in a real disaster situation. I have been involved in business continuity planning, and in creating disaster recovery plans, including mirroring data center operations for a large organization. Not every organization can afford to duplicate an operations site, but you can put an organization at risk when you fail to take the potential of disasters into account. I can facilitate the “awfulizing” sessions that paint disaster scenarios and consequences, so that remedial plans can be created. Keep in mind that each business is unique, operating in unique facilities, so that the preparation for dealing with potential disaster conditions must reflect the specifics of your operation.

Business Continuity Planning is at the core of the emergency preparedness planning effort to look proactively at initiatives that can be used to prevent, detect, and correct anomalies that could otherwise lead to disaster. Frankly, I have seen data mirroring to a configuration that was housed in the same computer environment as the primary operation: a disaster would wipe out both at once, so these kinds of issues must be dealt with immediately. It is possible for you to outsource the mirror site to a service company or the cloud, to safeguard a copy of the data, but you also must consider what is involved in resuming operations from that backup site if your primary operations site is destroyed.

The best planning takes place before you do an operations site selection, so you can rate a site against BCP criteria that can help you to rank potential sites. I am sure you would not deliberately locate a datacenter in a flood plain, but what about placing critical infrastructure in a “secure” basement? Flooding is becoming a major concern even for urban areas, when freak rainstorms dump a year’s worth of water in a matter of hours, turning parking garages and datacenters into virtual swimming pools. While parking garages are more vulnerable, data centers also require access for normal operations, and they are generally not designed to act as submarines. This is by no means a full explanation of why BCP should start early, but it helps as an illustration.

Business continuity planning also encompasses business operations: when even a floor in a large office building becomes unusable due to fire, where do you house the people that work there? How can you continue to service customers if your employees cannot perform their duties? We can be prepared for continuity in computer operations only to find that nobody can use those operations because the user operations are no longer functional. Clearly it makes sense to have a plan to accommodate user operations in other facilities that are unaffected by the disaster.

Disaster Management Planning is preparation for how to handle the disaster impact for each operational site. Regardless what business you are in, employee safety comes first, and assets are easily replaced if damaged. Depending on how many operations sites you have there must be a management plan for each site, and everyone in that site must be familiar with what to do in case of an emergency. The best way to look at this is as a “**Site Safety Manual**” that not only defines an emergency evacuation plan, but also information for how to deal with personal emergency conditions and get help quickly to assist employees with medical emergencies.

To deal with hacker attacks, you need a plan for isolating affected computer services to begin a process of minimizing exposure and consequences. In an era of **GDPR** the company can also face severe penalties if customer private data are compromised. This kind of risk is becoming rather common and it is a stretch to consider this a true disaster: it is an oversight not unlike locating a datacenter in a high flood-risk area. We focus on such risk in data center management services.

Disaster Recovery Planning involves the management of resources to restore systems and services that are crippled in a deliberate order of priority. You do not want to make critical decisions in that chaos: you want a plan that you can depend on to guide you through a disaster recovery scenario. You want to prioritize critical services that minimize overall business impact, and you want to have that stakeholders’ debate and agreement documented in advance so that business politics do not unnecessarily complicate an already difficult situation. Perhaps actual operations are not crippled: your site may be compromised by “ransomware” that has encrypted your data (or customer data may have been stolen). The recovery plan must not put data at risk.

The recovery plan must correlate physical locations with physical equipment and logical services that operate using that equipment. We also need to link primary equipment with their backup equipment (and how they are connected for mirroring or periodic backups to know the impact). We need a planning tool that can identify these components so that we can inventory disaster impact by site, area within site, or specific equipment. Then, based on the business priority, we must trigger the required tasks to focus on the affected equipment to restore services.

Low cost introductory offer for commercial engagements

For this **introductory offer** we charge \$850.00 per day for commercial engagements (for out-of-town venues add \$400.00 for travel time, plus reimbursement of transportation and lodging expenses at cost).

Respectfully,

Frits J. Bos, PMP