8x8, Inc.

eGuide: Surviving the Business Equivalent of the Zombie Apocalypse

Developing a Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan

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Answering a few basic questions and making sure everyone communicates can minimize interruptions and get your business back to normal faster.

Developing a Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan

As the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) points out, even if zombies don't start popping up on every street corner, people (and businesses) who are prepared have a better chance at surviving regular, garden-variety disasters such as floods, earthquakes, power-outages and storms.

So if you've decided that this is the year that you quit living in fear of what could happen to your business in the event of an outage or disaster, where do you start? The first order of business is to develop a business continuity or disaster recovery plan.

Begin by assessing the impact to your business if you were to experience unexpected downtime. Identify what you need to do to keep your business running. What are the things you need to protect? What's the risk and how can you mitigate and manage that risk?

- **Envision likely scenarios for disaster and downtime.** Make a list of the kinds of interruptions that might strike your region. Almost every business needs to think about power and communications outages, since one cut telecom fiber connection or damaged power line can happen almost anywhere, and that's all it takes to create downtime. Floods, storms, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes are some of the larger threats that loom over different regions of the country. Which are most likely in your area, and what kinds of damages and outages are typical?

- **Assess possible business impacts.** Determine the critical functions to keep your business running. Start by developing an inventory of your crucial business functions—sales, data storage, voice and data communications—and try to estimate the impact on your business if those functions were down for an hour, a day, or more than a week.

- **Conduct a risk assessment.** Qualify and quantify the impact of potential threats. Prioritize what's most important for your business. Look at ways of mitigating or managing that risk, including reviewing your insurance policies on a regular basis.

Planning Considerations

Use your assessment to begin formulating a strategy and developing a comprehensive written plan. Here are some of the basic components to include in your plan:

1. **Employee safety and preparedness.** How will you ensure physical safety? This is the number one priority, and starts with having an evacuation plan. Many employees have disaster kits at home, but forget that they might not be at home when they need the basics, such as flashlights, extra food and water, batteries, and first aid supplies. And even perfect home-based planning for the Zombie Apocalypse won't help if roads are impassible and home is miles away. Periodically remind employees that it's

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery—What's the Difference?

The terms **business continuity** and **disaster recovery** are often used interchangeably, but these words mean slightly different things.

Business continuity means ensuring that you can continue operating—perhaps on a smaller scale or with fewer products and services—in the event of any interruption, not necessarily one as big or dramatic as the word "disaster" implies.

Disaster recovery usually means the process of re-assembling your workforce and re-building your infrastructure—IT as well as physical assets such as buildings—and "getting back to normal."

Obviously, these are highly interrelated functions, and every business needs to be ready to handle both simultaneously.

Keep Your Business in Business with 8x8 Cloud Communications

8x8's flexible, cloud-based solutions can help keep your business running.

- **Virtual Office Mobile App.** 8x8's mobile app for iPhone, iPad, iPod or Android phone lets you make and receive calls, check messages, and manage call forwarding. The app works over your cellular or Wi-Fi connection.

- **Virtual Meetings.** Meet with coworkers and customers using our 8x8 Virtual Meeting web conferencing feature available with Virtual Office Pro.

- **Log in anywhere.** You can use any computer with Internet access to log in to your 8x8 extension and update call forwarding rules, make and take calls, and check messages.

- **Manage your account remotely.** With 8x8's web-based Account Manager, you can make real-time updates to your business phone system. Record new greetings and prompts to let customers know office hours have changed, or forward extensions to cell phones so your employees can work from home or another remote location.

a good idea to keep a kit in the car, and make sure you have similar items stashed on office premises—preferably in a secure, waterproof storage container.

2. **Business Operations.** How will you continue operating? What equipment do you need? Who is authorized to make decisions? How will you access critical customer records? Some businesses have plans to relocate to nearby areas and set up temporary offices, which is fine if the disaster is localized; just make sure that everyone knows where to reassemble. But if the disaster is the size of Hurricane Sandy, that might be impractical. Think about what aspects of your business could be backed up elsewhere, perhaps hosted remotely in the Cloud. If you keep your company's critical data in hosted servers off site, then your employees can still access it even if they can't get to the office. And you won't have to worry about it being destroyed if your office is literally under water. Much of today's business communications—web conferences, phone calls, conference calls, online faxing and chat—can continue with hosted VoIP phone service such as that offered by 8x8.

3. **Staffing and Workplace Contingencies.** Who can keep working and where? Identify critical personnel. What if that person is injured or can't get to the site? Who can act as backup? Is there an alternative office location? Ensure they have the tools needed to operate in an emergency. You also need to identify in advance who can work from home, and give them the tools and support they need to do it.

   Communications. How will you communicate to employees, customers and the media? In addition to needing to be in touch with employees, many

stranded workers will be desperate to reach emergency services, check in with relatives, and handle business emergencies. And almost all businesses need a way to continue communicating with their customers. That's where cloud-based communications—such as 8x8's Virtual Office business phone service, web conferencing tools and mobile apps—offer an advantage over local phone service. 8x8 's cloud-based, fully-redundant service helps keep your business running. 8x8 uses two redundant data centers with unique failover capability designed to seamlessly transfer control to the unaffected center within 30 seconds. So if something happens to one data center, your 8x8 communications will continue to work.

And this doesn't just apply to the office. Because 8x8 is "in the cloud", this means that if your workers have Internet connectivity and power, their laptops, smartphones, tablets, iPods, and virtually any landline can become a virtual workplace. Better yet, even if your team is dispersed by the disaster, 8x8 can help you deliver a customer experience so normal that your customers never need know you've been affected.

4. **Recovery**. How will you recover? Who is assigned to handle cleanup? And if passwords or authorizations are required, do the right people know them? Are there alternates who also have the codes, the authority and the information they need to deal with the interruption or disaster? If something happens that you didn't plan for, what are some last-minute resources you can access? Companies such as 8x8, for example, can activate new phone service or special toll-free numbers in 15 minutes or less. See http://www.8x8.com/Resources/Learn/HintsandTips/DisasterPlanning.aspx for tips on how businesses can prepare their 8x8 communications system to weather disruptions.

5. **Practice your plan and review regularly.** How do you know your plan will work? Test early and often. For example, occasionally pick a day when people will try to do their jobs from home, and send out reminders from time to time so that everyone knows where to go, what to do, and whom to look to for leadership. Also, conduct evacuation drills. Invariably, you'll find things you can do better, and you might even get insight about improving day-to-day operations, too.

Of course, no one can guarantee that everything will go precisely as your disaster plan describes, but there is a consensus among business continuity experts that those who have answered basic questions and put a plan in place are much less likely to suffer the huge losses and even business closures that are often the unfortunate outcome of a disaster. Or to put it more simply, a little planning today keeps the zombies at bay.

More information about building a business continuity and disaster recovery plan can be found at www.sba.gov and www.ready.gov.

To learn more about 8x8, call 1-866-879-8647 or visit www.8x8.com

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