

# BUSINESS CONTINUITY *planning*

*As of 16th March 2020, the [World Health Organization](#) confirmed the total number of global COVID-19, or coronavirus, cases surpassed 140,000. The Australian Government has announced many new measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 and these measures may continue to impact how we do business over the next few months.*

Estimates as to when the outbreak will subside are unknown at this stage. Meanwhile, the economic toll continues to increase. That could be cancelled business travel, disrupted supply chains, or social distancing, the situation is forcing organisations of every size and description to review their emergency response and business continuity plans.

Besides considering employees working from home, what else should we be thinking about? In this communication, we take a look at some tactics that will help keep your people safe and your business viable.

At the very least have you thought about the following? A little thought and planning now will assist you and your business get back to normal once this pandemic has passed. No matter the size of your business, we all have people, customers and suppliers to think about at a time of disruption.

## **Business Continuity Planning**

Business continuity refers to maintaining business functions or quickly resuming them in the event of a major disruption. A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a plan-of-action a company puts in place that can be relied upon in the event of an emergency, when tension and stakes run high. It outlines the policies, procedures, and instructions an organisation must follow in the face of such disasters, covering items such as business processes, assets, human resources, business partners, and more. Whilst the final product

will be different for every company, a typical BCP might include evacuation plans, communication protocols, contact lists, "how to" guides to remote working, and anything else that would be important for employees in a crisis.

## **Key things to be aware of:**



### **1. People first - look after your key assets**

The health and well-being of your employees is your top concern. It's possible that COVID-19 will sicken some employees and force others into quarantine. Address their immediate needs first, and then begin to think about operations with a remote workforce. It is critical to establish a strategy that enables employees to continue to function without endangering them.

You'll want to verify that you have the tools, technology, capacity, and security measures in place to support a large remote workforce. It may also be necessary to offer greater flexibility to normal working expectations. What happens if all your team need to work from home, have they got access to systems and communication tools necessary to communicate with customers and suppliers moving forward?



## 2. Your BCP Team

A BCP is only as effective as the people who put it into action. Therefore, it's critically important to be specific about who will be directly involved, from the plan's owner to those it affects. Getting these people on board during the planning stages can help with creating a stronger, clearer plan and a consistent message. Appoint at least one Point Person or selected team members to devise a response strategy and coordinate pandemic readiness activities. It may also be necessary to identify backup personnel.



## 3. Communication

When faced with a catastrophe, people and customers want clear, straightforward steps that they can follow and know they've covered all bases. It's best to leave as little to interpretation as possible and considering diverse perspectives will help make the plan as detailed and clear as needs warrant. Create a communications plan that includes providing employees and customers with regular situation updates as well as actions taken. Take care to ground your communications in verifiable news sources, such as links to Australian and New Zealand Government websites and World Health Organization (WHO).



## 4. Review Existing Plans

Before taking any action, pause to review your existing Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plans. If they're sufficiently thorough, they should address a variety of contingencies that could disrupt the firm's businesses, including potential pandemics.



## 5. Prioritise Key Business Functions

Next you'll want to assess your business processes, determine which areas are vulnerable, map dependencies, and estimate the potential losses if those processes go down for a given amount of time—from hours to weeks or more. You can start by identifying the critical products and services your company delivers and the customers or clients they are delivered to. This will help with prioritising those parts of the BCP that pertain to the business's most high-value assets, functions, and relationships. Understanding the financial impact of down time due to COVID-19.