Transition Partners

Today's Business Continuity Planning...

...A major step forward from Disaster Recovery and focused on real potentials and realistic recovery strategies

The Changing Scope of Business Continuity

We all know we should have Disaster Recovery Plans and many of us think we do, but how many of you have complete plans that include consideration of your operations, your suppliers and your customers?

For years, many in the business community have considered *Disaster Recovery* synonymous with Business Continuity Planning. BCP has been seen by many executives as a technical issue, one centered on the restoration of computer services and other production infrastructure and facilities.

In truth, most all of the major business trends of the last 10 years or more have worked to reduce the effectiveness of such "traditional" plans. As connectivity and online process support has become the focus of IT support services, simple restoration of these services has become less meaningful.

Today the restoration of connectivity and the support of worldwide customer and supply chains have become the driving imperative.

While many companies have technical disaster management plans designed to recover their technical infrastructure, few plans cover more than these very basic elements. Many needed participants remain unengaged.

Tight integration of computer services with functional operations and customers has created recovery interdependency. All constituent parties now must participate in the recovery process if the business model is to continue to operate.

Increasing Business Integration Drives Restoration Inter-dependencies.

Online business support demands and, in fact, presupposes, continued availability and connectivity of customers, computers, business units and business partners.

Few organizations focus on business process and customer connectivity issues. Management coordination, supply chain and customer integration issues are largely ignored. Recovery is seen by many as an IT, not a business, priority.

Inevitably, when disasters do occur, infrastructures recover, but business processes lag far behind. Integrated plans typically are not available to communicate with customers, suppliers, investors and capital markets. Frustrations rise while service levels and productivity fall.

Even though infrastructure is available, significant service level disruptions occur. Management must scramble to coordinate service recovery and restore customer and investor confidence.

Damage control becomes the order of the day.
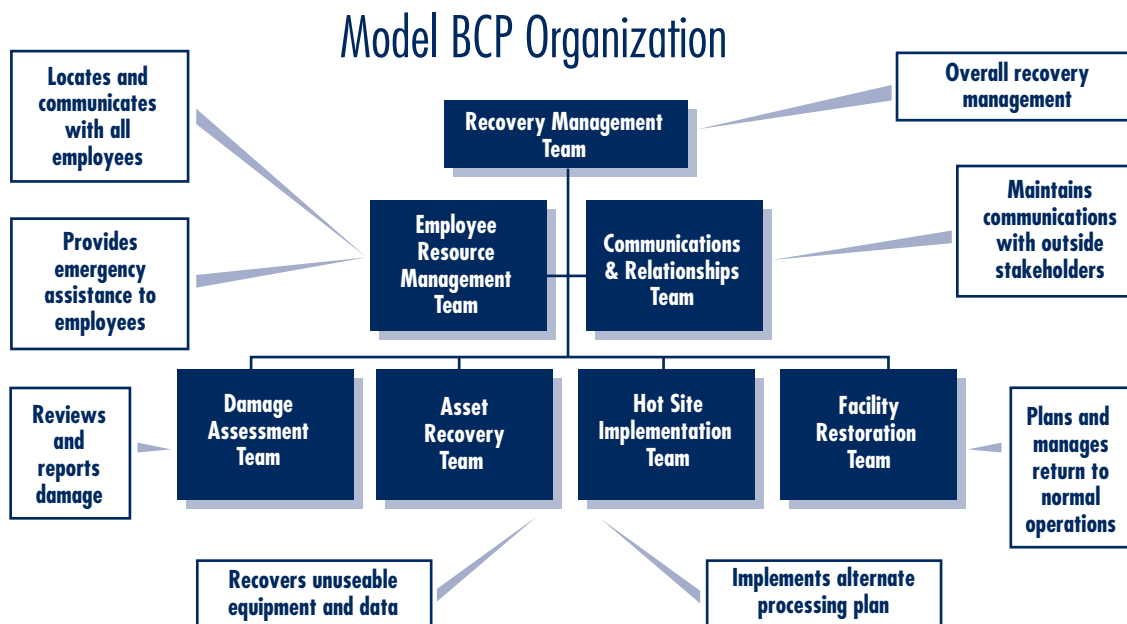
Business Continuity Today

Planning for business continuity transcends both disaster and business recovery planning.

Business Continuity Planning includes all the elements of prevention and business resumption. It includes planning and activities needed for all critical computer and network operations, plant office and distribution infrastructure, as well as all other critical business processes. It requires involvement from the entire organization, the organizations' suppliers, customers and business partners.

Reality-Based Planning

Any plan, to be successful, should be developed by those who will execute it; and it should be based on realistic expectations and situations. Both of these concepts are no less true in Business Continuity Planning. All constituents of the plan should be represented on the planning team; plans should be based on likely threats and outcomes; recovery objectives should be realistic and achievable; and specific plans should be based on recovery strategies that respond to those realistic outcomes and objectives.

A typical BCP organization is represented in the chart below. It contains all elements required to develop the plan, manage any incident, and communicate with all constituents of your company.

Productivity

Customer Service

Market Position

Profits

Frustration

Model BCP Organization

Locates and communicates with all employees

Overall recovery management

Recovery Management Team

Provides emergency assistance to employees

Employee Resource Management Team

Communications & Relationships Team

Maintains communications with outside stakeholders

Reviews and reports damage

Damage Assessment Team

Asset Recovery Team

Hot Site Implementation Team

Facility Restoration Team

Plans and manages return to normal operations

Recovers unuseable equipment and data
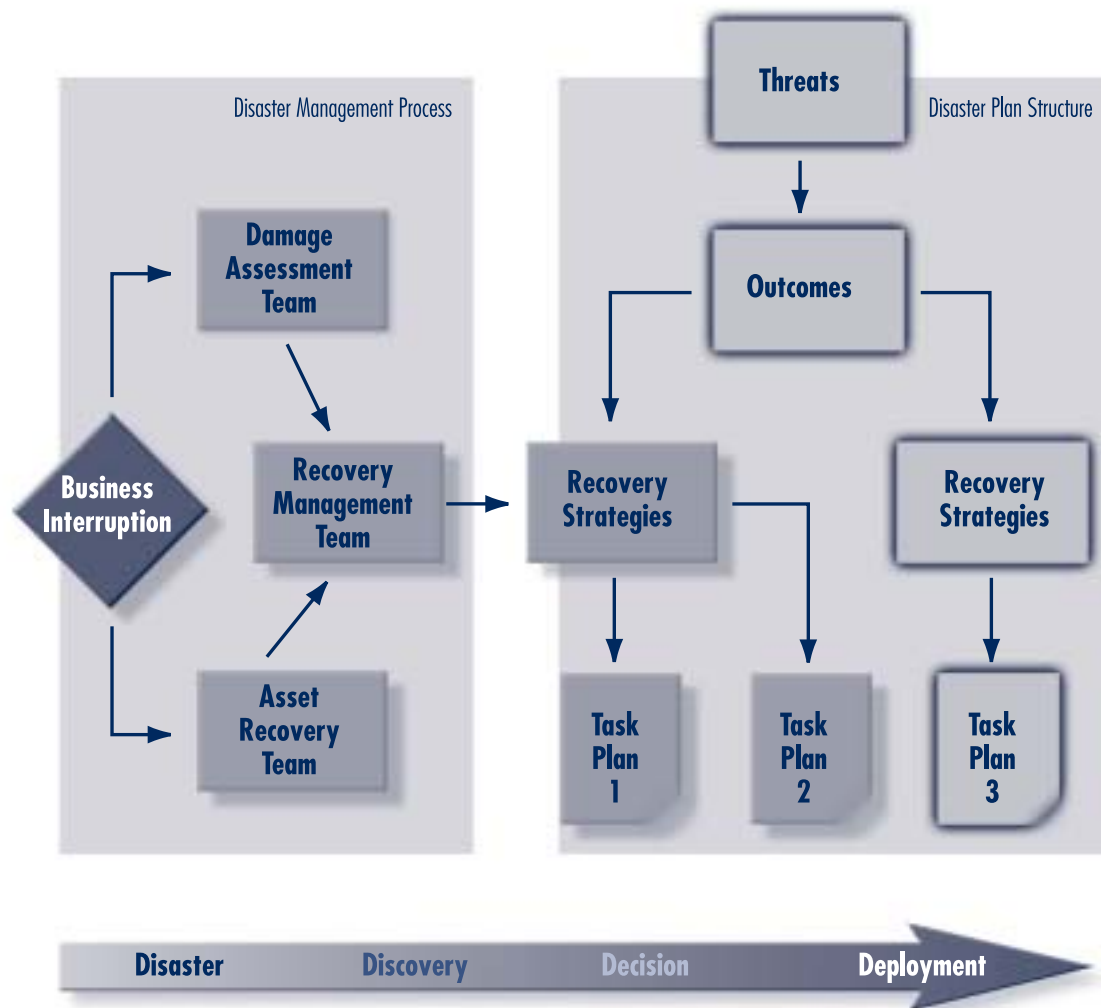
Implements alternate processing plan

The proper development of a workable Business Continuity Plan requires an organization such as the one shown on page 2. It also requires trained, skilled and motivated people to populate the organization, the establishment of realistic objectives and needed policies, the delegation of required authorities, and the clear definition of roles and responsibilities. The tools needed to develop, house, execute and maintain the plan also must be put in place. We also find an experienced, knowledgeable Business Consultant is frequently required to bring skill, anecdotal experience, focus and a sense of urgency to the plan's development process.

How Critical are Real Recovery Strategies?

Realistic recovery strategies are developed based on probable threats to your business operations, and on the probable outcomes to your operations if those threats should materialize. They are the foundation for plan development and the *four D's* of the incident management process: *Disaster, Discovery, Decision and Deployment.*

Business Continuity Process

Disaster Management Process

- Business Interruption
- Damage Assessment Team
- Recovery Management Team
- Asset Recovery Team

Disaster Plan Structure

- Threats
- Outcomes
- Recovery Strategies
- Recovery Strategies
- Task Plan 1
- Task Plan 2
- Task Plan 3

Disaster → Discovery → Decision → Deployment

As incident managers, we will evaluate your situation, then select from an available slate of recovery strategies. This selection of a recovery strategy will then identify all detailed plans that must be executed, and will dictate the deployment of our recovery resources to successfully manage any incident. As planners, we must have already anticipated all the activities required to implement these recovery strategies; then we must have documented, tested and improved those plans.

The aforementioned graphic clearly demonstrates the link between plan development and incident management. Recovery strategies form that link and allow you to develop, test and perfect your recovery practices.

Philip S. Wein is a Managing Director for Transition Partners, recognized for its ability to rapidly solve strategic, management and operational problems in the areas of Information Technology and Business Processes, and to deliver value to clients. The GartnerGroup says: *"Transition Partners prides itself on the experience level of its consultants. The majority are former CIOs or former managers of IT functions. They synergize business management and technology to bring value to its clients."* The New York Times adds: *"For taking on technology trouble-shooting, there's Transition Partners in Reston, VA."*