

The next big thing... business resilience

Michael Halls reports on the next new thing in business continuity planning.

If the words “contingency planning” were so 1990s, even the latest buzzwords “business continuity” and “disaster recovery” now sound outdated.

The phrase on everyone’s lips is “business resilience”.

But it’s not just a cosmetic thing. The biggest business continuity planners of them all – the banks – have always hated the phrase “disaster recovery”. But that isn’t the reason for the change.

The phrase – “business resilience” – make sense in that it’s the next step ahead for the industry. “It’s no longer just talking about the risks but also the opportunities,” says a London consultant.

“Typically business continuity planning is based on the low likelihood of an event happening but with a very high or catastrophic impact on your firm,” says Robin Gaddum, UK practice leader, IBM UK Business Continuity & Recovery Services.

“Business resilience tends to emphasise a more positive approach to disaster mitigation

– and tries to derive commercial advantage from the process. Too long business continuity professionals have been known as the “Abominable No Men” offering reasons to avoid taking risk rather than supporting the measured risk-taking that is at the heart of successful business!”

At its very simplest this means that the more you understand the risks that could happen to your business, the more you also understand the opportunities.

Any internet service provider knows, for example, that there are only so many hours that a system can be down before customers switch providers. Moreover most ISPs know that a certain, if small, level of outage is always likely to happen.

So, given that you know the risks of this happening, and know that your back-up systems will always provide a continuous service, what happens if you market your firm as being the exceptional ISP – totally reliable.

“There are many variants of this. “Remember too,” says Gaddum, “that those organisations that

AND OPPORTUNITIES TOO

In all, business resilience takes business continuity planning one step further. Rather than just focus on the high-profile risks, it look as the whole range of risks. And then tries to work out what opportunities can be derived as well.

For the last 10 years across Europe there has been a wave of mergers and acquisitions. Business resilience analysts say that the big players can always benefit from business continuity studies, “It isn’t so difficult to capitalise on your thorough knowledge of the internal processes that you need to plan for disaster recovery, to make it easier in a take over situation to assimilate the new organisation. And that way leads to earlier, bigger and steadier profits.”



Robin Gaddum, UK practice leader, IBM UK Business Continuity & Recovery Services.

are prepared for a widespread disaster – say those hit by severe weather – are able to look forward to such an event knowing that they are prepared for it, that their competitors will be struggling,

and that they can make more money and seize market share because of it.”

But business resilience also looks at better mitigating some of the

more likely events that disrupt business in a smaller way. “Business continuity is a spectrum of risks,” says Graham Chick, chief executive of Gematech, a telecoms service that offers immediate continuity even if a firm’s switchboard is put out of action. “It would be silly to talk exclusively about terrorism risk or power outages hitting the big City institutions’ telephone lines when the biggest reason continues to be JCBs digging up the roads in the wrong place.”

Robin Gaddum takes this further. “I remember in the mid-1990s we conducted a survey of City finance firms that showed that, over a 10 year period, plumbing – say the pipe burst on the fifth floor – was 30 times more disruptive than terrorism,” says an analyst. “And the survey was conducted during the period of IRA bombings of the City.”

CABOT SQUARE CAPITAL PROTECTS CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS



SteelEye Technology Inc

Cabot Square Capital, a provider of investment capital, has worked with OpenMinds, a leading UK high availability solution provider, to implement SteelEye Technology’s LifeKeeper for Exchange to protect its all-important Exchange server from damaging downtime.

Cabot Square Capital relies on Microsoft Exchange for messaging and communication. Its IT administrators face the classic tasks of ensuring corporate resilience for critical applications and providing disaster recovery protection.

Jay Derrett, associate IT director of Cabot Square Capital (above), said: “As part of Cabot Square Capital’s ongoing reinforcement of its business procedures and infrastructure, our business continuity has been further enhanced in light of the heightened security threat to the UK. Our own strict criteria

for full data replication and availability of IT have been addressed via the successful implementation of SteelEye’s LifeKeeper.”

One advantage of LifeKeeper is its ability to protect using the existing local area network and a ‘Hot Backup’ server, rather than requiring an expensive wide area connection to another site. This enabled Cabot Square Capital to put LifeKeeper through full testing before going to the expense of equipping a disaster recovery site and installing connectivity between the two. SteelEye’s LifeKeeper was able to consistently provide recovery in less than five minutes.

Derrett commented: “We continually test and monitor the LifeKeeper solution, and have yet to find fault in it. This gives Cabot Square Capital a high degree of confidence in our business continuity plan.

“We see protection of our Exchange servers with LifeKeeper as playing a key part in the development of resilience within the company’s infrastructure.”

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