

DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING - PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE -

Disaster Recovery, the process of regaining access to data, hardware, software and personnel to resume critical business operations after a natural or human-induced disaster, is an important component for every information intensive organization. While "Disaster Recovery" is a common and often used term for the recovery planning process, the industry has been moving towards the term "Business Continuity Planning" (BCP) to better represent the nature of the overall mission. While the terms vary over time, they should be considered interchangeable and designed to serve a common goal.

A Business Continuity Plan should generally be a pre-planned procedure that is put into effect well before a disruptive event occurs. The Business Continuity Planning process should begin with the establishment of a special working group or committee charged with a strategic planning initiative. This initiative should establish a well constructed plan which serves as the design guideline for budgeting, process engineering, systems design and project implementation.

The planning process should anticipate interruption of service from any event ranging from man-made to natural events and should consider various scenarios ranging from the loss of the entire site to the loss of a portion of the site or loss of certain utility services. The planning process must take into consideration how long given interruptions might last and the organization's tolerance of such an outage in terms of actual, financial loss and



should represent a well coordinated effort spanning managerial & organizational processes and facilities engineering.

Depending upon the disruption encountered, continuity planning leads to a number of different scenarios with each requiring an engineered solution. The loss of an entire site may require relocation to an alternate DR site with some people working from home or factor temporarily doubling up of personnel.

Alternate, off-site facilities are often implemented as a means for accessing data reliably and quickly. Designing for backup facilities or shared co-location facilities must consider the level of sophistication and the level of business "readiness" required. Sites can be classified as cold, warm or hot sites whereby each site requires an increased level of availability and complexity. Highly available 'hot' sites are often arranged to serve in a redundant capacity with synchronous or asynchronous connectivity and data mirroring resulting in little down time to the organization.

Highly available sites must rely on a well coordinated, multi-disciplined set of engineering documents with redundant electrical and mechanical systems, uninterruptible power supplies, diverse telecommunications facilities and robust electronic security systems designed to operate with a high degree of reliability.

While many options exist in DR or Business Continuity Planning, careful understanding of the engineering choices and the budgetary implications are important driving factors for design. AKF Technologies can assist clients with the discovery phase, budgetary analysis and engineering and design phases.

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