

Continuity Plan

Are You Ready for the Next Disruption?



Business disruption can come from anywhere. Global economic crises, national emergencies, natural disasters or even a run-of-the-mill data outage are just a few of the many emergencies that can derail business for anywhere from an hour to months at a time.

Is your company ready for the next emergency?

Consider the following markers as you plan for future disruption.

Business

Our core competencies are clearly defined and communicated: Keeping your core competencies functional in the event of disruption is key to business continuity, but too many companies lose sight of those central functions. Define and communicate your core competencies clearly so that disruptions don't distract you from the most important things.

We communicate regularly with our customers and listen carefully to what they need and want from us: Knowing what your customers want will help you clearly and confidently define what functions are most critical to keep operating in the event of an emergency.

Management communicates openly with teams, departments and functions to know what they need and what systems they rely on: Critical to continuing to operate during disruption is open communication. Companies with a culture of open, clear communication will have an easier path to developing a strong continuity plan.

Operations

Our sales team has multiple options for staying connected to clients beyond personal cell phones: In the midst of a widespread disruption, your sales team may end up working from a variety of locations. Mobile phones may not be enough to meet customer needs. A truly flexible sales team will be able to connect the way customers want from any location—from the office to home to an airport or hotel.

We have a plan for continued accounting operations in the event of disruption: Ensuring that your accounting department can continue normal operations may be just as important as keeping your sales people connected to customers. Not only will you need to continue receiving revenue, but you will need a system to continue interacting with and paying vendors.

We have plans to work with our suppliers in the event of an emergency: Often overlooked in the continuity planning process is how to communicate with suppliers in the event of an emergency. In the case of large-scale business disruption, the entire supply chain can feel the effects. Make sure to include your suppliers in your plan.

Technology

We have an accurate view of our technology, including legacy systems: Legacy systems are often so embedded that they become part of the background. Your employees and customers may be more dependent on systems such as fax machines and onsite file storage than you realize. If you can't ensure continuity with these systems, it may be time to look at upgrading, replacing or eliminating them.

We are using our reporting capabilities to capture deep business insights: If you have reporting capabilities in your existing systems, it's time to dig into those reports to discover how your employees and customers are using your systems. Once you have that information, you can make sure you're developing your continuity plans around the systems and functions that make the most sense.

Each department or business function knows what systems it depends on and has a way to keep operating if systems go down.

Continuity Planning

We have a written continuity plan that addresses a variety of disruptions and spells out a plan for each critical business function: If you already have a written plan, you are a step ahead of most businesses!

Our continuity planning process has a champion, sponsor or owner: The best continuity plans have a champion or owner who is passionate about the process and sees it as a strategic necessity. Find someone in the company who can own or sponsor the continuity plan.

We review and test our continuity plan regularly—quarterly, semi-annually or annually: The frequency of your review and testing process will depend largely on your business. The key is to have a plan for regular review and testing.

How ready is your business?

✓ 1 to 5 checkmarks

You are just starting your business continuity planning process. That's great—you're taking steps to prepare yourself for the future of business. If you need help evaluating your communications, contact us to learn more about how Allstream® can help position your company to weather the next disruption.

✓ 6 to 9 checkmarks

You are well on your way to being prepared, but chances are good that you've found some challenges and obstacles to continuity at this point. Take a step back, survey some of your key stakeholders, and reassess which systems need further evaluation.

✓ 10 to 12 checkmarks

You are probably more prepared for an emergency than most businesses—congratulations! Make sure you are regularly reviewing and testing your plan and your technology to stay prepared for whatever comes next.

What's next?

1. Survey your people.

Whether you have a written plan already or you're just starting out, it's good to regularly survey your departments, roles and functions to make sure they have the resources and plan they need to keep operating during disruption.

2. Assess your systems.

If your systems are unsupported, aging or obsolete, it may be time to retire them. If your communication system is no longer able to support your operations in times of crisis, Allstream can help.

3. Review and test your plan.

Set up a schedule to regularly review and test your continuity plan—and then follow through with it!

Wherever you are in your continuity planning process, it's vital that you stay connected. Allstream has the cloud communication solutions you need to make sure you can work anytime, anywhere—even in times of disruption. For more information, contact us.



Download our e-book *“Working Through Disruption: How Your Communication System is the Key to Surviving an Emergency.”*

Visit allstream.com to learn more.

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About Allstream

Allstream is a leader in business communications throughout North America. Founded over 170 years ago in parallel with Canada's first transcontinental railroad, Allstream continually re-invented itself to remain a leading provider of business communication services. Allstream's offerings include a range of innovative, highly scalable managed services including voice and collaboration, connectivity and managed IT services for enterprise customers. We combine scalable solutions with exceptional customer service to deliver the latest technology, and we're positioned to help our customers accelerate into the future.

Your **trusted** business communications partner

Voice and Collaboration | Connectivity | Managed IT

