

# Planning for organisational resilience



**Jeremy Capell**, GM: advisory services at ContinuitySA

**D**isasters can happen at any time, they can take a wide range of forms, and, by their very nature, they are unexpected. Companies today have to be concerned about a large number of eventualities, from security breaches to power failures to various types of natural disasters. The trouble is that such concerns seldom translate into effective plans for combating a disaster, and many organisations don't actually know whether they will have the capacity to not only recover from calamity, but also be able to continue operating during an incident.

There are two parts to planning for such events, says Jeremy Capell, GM: advisory services at ContinuitySA. The first is risk management, which involves identifying various threats and basing mitigation strategies on the likelihood of these occurring.

"The other is that of business continuity, which focuses not on potential disasters, but on handling the impact thereof. This means that instead of planning scenarios around specific

challenges, it is about looking at the critical business enablers and how to keep these operational," he says.

"We like to refer to the total strategy as organisational resilience. Risk management is the first part, which is focused on attempting to prevent a disaster from taking place. The next level is contingency planning, which is about withstanding a disaster by – for example – having two separate contact centres, so that if one is disrupted, you can failover to the second one without the customer even being aware you have experienced a problem. The third level is business continuity, which focuses on how you handle things once a major disaster has occurred."

Capell says ContinuitySA adopts a programme it refers to as RESCUE. This encompasses Resources, Equipment, Site, Computing, Utilities and External third parties. The last is something organisations don't always think of, but it is crucial – after all, it doesn't help for your business to survive a crisis unscathed if your critical suppliers are put out of action.

"While business as a whole has significantly advanced and improved in its approach to business continuity, there remains a lot more that can still be done. We need to have more collaboration within industries – forums where lessons learned can be shared so that industries don't need to keep reinventing the wheel in this regard.

"Another challenge that still needs to be overcome is that some businesses only view business continuity through the lens of compliance, rather than recognising the real business value it offers. This includes not only the competitive advantage of getting you back to market more quickly in the case of an actual disaster, but also more tangential benefits like reduced insurance premiums and improved investor confidence."

He adds that ContinuitySA is in a unique position in that it is able to provide clients with end-to-end holistic solutions, since the company offers consulting, risk management, business continuity and disaster recovery services.

"Furthermore, we bring practical experiences into the equation as well. Instead of simply theoretical plans, we continuously test with clients in a live environment, running their critical systems under the same conditions that would be experienced during a real disaster.

"Ultimately, we believe in providing our customers with complete peace of mind in relation to business continuity. This, after all, is our core business and we handle it in the kind of professional manner that enables our clients' senior executives to sleep more comfortably at night," concludes Capell. ■

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