In just 11 months, ContinuitySA helped a construction industry leader develop and implement a Business Continuity Management (BCM) plan to meet its strategic goals.

The client is a leading supplier of building materials across southern Africa, with production and distribution centres across South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The client has always taken a visionary approach to risk identification and management, including the establishment of disaster recovery plans to deal with materialising risks. The company’s Risk and Compliance Committee sought an upgrade to existing BCM plans, including the introduction of crisis communications. The tender was won by ContinuitySA, Africa’s premier provider of Business Continuity and Resilience services.

The company was clear that corporate governance had a concrete business benefits beyond simple compliance with JSE regulations. Strong, ethical governance not only minimises the impact of any disaster, it strengthens the company’s social licence to operate, builds trust with shareholders and stakeholders, and protects its reputation.

ContinuitySA won selection on the basis of a proven track record and an impressive team. Originally intended to take 18 months, the implementation team (comprising the client’s personnel and specialists from ContinuitySA) decided to fast-track the project because of its importance, particularly in respect of preventing reputational damage. With the compressed timeframe, the client had limited human resources to devote to the project, so ContinuitySA’s team gladly took up the slack.
It was also decided to expand the crisis communication portion to include comprehensive crisis management.

Including the head office, factory sites and sales and marketing offices, the implementation team visited multiple sites across South Africa and several more in other African countries.

The key project deliverables were to develop a BCM policy and procedure, perform a business impact analysis and risk assessment, and identify and select options for a business continuity strategy.

It was then necessary to develop a BCM plan structure and plan, validate it with each business unit, and then embed business continuity through training and awareness campaigns.

In order to achieve these deliverables, the team had to visit each site twice. The first visit focused on the business impact analysis and strategy identification; at the second, the finalised BCM and crisis management plan were walked through and training given.

In total, the team generated business impact analyses, and BCM and crisis management plans for nearly 20 geographically separated locations, with another for the sales and marketing operations. All these individual analyses and plans were consolidated at the group level for the client, with more than 200 of the client’s staff members reached during the project.

The project came in on time and under budget owing to several success factors.

Commitment from the top leadership at the client was essential, as was the time invested in reaching consensus about the optimal approach and methodology. Key areas were regular monthly project status and progress meetings to ensure good communication and a commitment to continuous improvement. The client’s BCM Team demonstrated their enthusiasm for the project, providing the necessary time and attention when on site. As a result, the timeline was shortened by seven months despite the increased scope.

Now that the BCM and crisis management plans are in place and validated, the client and ContinuitySA can move into subsequent phases: readiness reviews for each business unit and then disaster simulations to test the plans’ efficacy.

People, circumstances and risks change all the time, so business continuity plans must be constantly refined and tested.