

Creating a Business Continuity Plan For Your Small Business

You've spent hours building up your contacts, creating a tailor made business plan and making sure that website is just right. You're up and running but you've still got one more thing on your to-do list before you sit back and get down to business.

Yes, that's right. It's time to create your Business Continuity Plan and you'll find out why right here. Chances are you've set up your company with long term goals in mind. You've created, you believe, a business which will run for years to come, turning over profit and providing you with a means of making a living. You may even have staff who look to you to run a successful organisation for their own day to day living costs.

But imagine, if you can, that one day it simply isn't business as usual. If you have use of a warehouse, what happens if a fire destroys your stock? What if natural disasters knock out your power lines, ruining the food you had set aside for your catering business? Improbable maybe but by no means impossible. If you're based in areas of the world where natural disasters are becoming more prevalent, now is the time to start planning and planning well.

There's no need to panic. A little careful organising and you can have a plan in place to answer all eventualities and get your business back up and running in days, if not hours. Approach the plan logically, by first checking all your paperwork is up to date. Make sure your insurance policies are all in order and that you know who to contact and how in case of an emergency claim. Next make sure absolutely all your files, paper and electronic data are backed up and on some kind of Cloud storage. Have an alternative venue where you can access your data should you lose technology in your office. Talk to your IT staff and find out how safe data is in an emergency.

Next comes the planning part. Make a list of the minimum requirements you would need to keep your business going. Who is absolutely crucial to the operation? Would they know where to go in case of an emergency? What minimum number of staff and stock would you require? Now is the time to get lists made and make sure everyone has access to them in case the worst should happen. Make sure you talk through arrangements with staff, so no one is left in the dark.

When you've got that far, it's time to pinpoint exactly what kind of risks you might be facing and imagine a scenario for each risk. Create a team, each with a designated role, who know exactly what to do in each scenario. It might sound crazy but practice the process, run a drill and feedback on what works and what doesn't. Make any necessary changes and you're all set

Whether it's a hurricane or someone leaving a tap on by accident, preparation is key to keeping your business afloat and back in action again in the quickest time possible. Don't get caught out, get prepared.