

Disaster Recovery Planning

Relax... its just a disaster

Why do you need a Business Recovery Plan? In real life numerous events can interrupt the harmonic rhythm of business operations. Your success depends on the information system you use daily. What will you do when something harms it? You can either sit down and contemplate how the entire business crumbles down or lay back and relax as you see how the organization stands up and keeps walking.

Disaster Recovery Planning is about attitude, diligence and determination. **Since you can't avoid the natural course of disasters, the only thing you can do is to minimize their impacts.** Being ready to react and recover in the shortest period of time will assure your business survival and perhaps your competitive advantage. But attitude is not all; you require a conscious analysis and planning. A systematic approach will put you in the right path to a fast and simple reinstallation of operations. Here is a brief guide to design your DRP.

Smile, your competitors weren't ready

1. Initiation

This initial phase consists of two basic activities: convincing management that disaster recovery planning is needed and assembling a team or hiring consulting services to do the job. First of all you will need to prove the need of establishing a Business Continuity / Disaster Recovery Plan. While it is something easy to understand, you will need to identify and provide the real facts that justify the need. You will need to identify the key personnel for keeping business operations running and a good project management methodology will facilitate the co-operation among the team members.

2. Strategy

Determine the events and circumstances that can adversely affect the organization's working rhythm. Take into consideration corporate plans, business plans and operation plans to create a list of systems, networks and key processes critical to achieve the business objectives. Identify threats to each key process and asset, then estimate the costs derived from their unavailability or destruction. Set the restoration criteria, consisting of a maximum allowable downtime statistic or some other time-specific value. A cost-benefit analysis will allow

you to identify optional means for providing the necessary system or network services and soliciting custom bids from vendors. Each key process and asset should be covered to ensure its availability, either by continuity or substitution, should an outage occur. You should evaluate all possible options for reestablishing a key process or asset; internal capability and external providers should be considered.

3. Implementation

In general terms it involves negotiating and contracting with disaster recovery vendors, performing backup procedures and off-site storage. Recovery procedures should provide both a preparatory and a reactive condition. Extensive documentation should be available describing enough details to the recovery team members.

4. Operation

As in any other business strategy, staying updated and avant-garde is the only way to succeed. You must provide the due training to all personnel involved in the recovery operations and keep a periodic review of the plan provisions and target systems to account for changes in hardware and software and periodic plan testing.

