

Case Study



Expect the best... but plan for the worst

Most of our clients have a business continuity / disaster recovery plan. Very few of them however, have a good one, which will work effectively in the 'real world' environment of a disaster.

We know this because we were obliged to put our own plan to the test when our offices caught fire in the middle of the day.

The Problem

At the time, we were part of a Group of companies, working in North London in the second and third floors of an office situated in a busy North London street. 120 people worked at this office, serving hundreds of clients.

As Accountants and Business advisors, we stored huge amounts of business critical information and were a trusted ally on the end of a phone to countless business owners and Directors who relied upon staff across the Group, all day every day.

You might expect that in this case the disaster recovery plan in place was superb; and indeed it was. But as the 8 fire engines pulled up outside and the staff were hastily evacuated from the building the plan was pushed to its limits.

Instantly, we struggled to get the calls diverted quickly enough, and although they were pouring through to a branch office location within an hour, the sheer volume of the calls was hard to resource.

Anticipated areas of risk were well covered; for example the payroll bureau service ran on time that week as though nothing had happened. However the facilities for all staff

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to work from home were not so well provided for, and as the fire damage to the building was extensive, staff were not allowed back in to the building for some time.

The fire has been caused by an electrical fault, and there was no power in the building for 2 months. Staff worked

at makeshift desks, with temporary lighting strung up, powered by a fuel-hungry emergency generator parked outside on the street.

The immediate response to the emergency was good, and thankfully all people were evacuated safely.

However we had not anticipated the duration of the emergency situation, and the longer term effect on the smooth running of the business; not to mention the effect on the stress levels of the staff.

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The Solution

We learned that there are more aspects to a disaster recovery plan than are commonly considered. Online access to documents and data was fairly easy; negotiating daily fuel deliveries to ensure the staff could see to work was another matter altogether.

We know that up to date staff and phone records need to be available on the smartphone of every member of management.

We know that there is more to business continuity than back-up systems.

The Result

Overall, we were proud that our plan worked as well as it did, and our clients congratulated us on the speed of recovery we achieved. However, our hard won knowledge and experience on this means that we can provide meaningful strategic advice to anyone looking to build and test a business continuity / recovery plan.

We have a presentation (including pictures of the aftermath of our emergency) and we can provide practical, detailed advice about which systems and personnel solutions worked well and which ones we subsequently changed. If you're even slightly in doubt as to the robustness of your plan speak to us today and let's review it together.



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If you are looking for a consulting partner who is responsive, intelligent, easy to get along with and exceeds expectations, we'd like to think we are just what you need. We like to think of ourselves as unfailingly polite, friendly and bright people who you'd really like to have working within your own organisation.