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Your soup-to-nuts planning essentials
pandemic recovery.

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Using a pandemic recovery planning template

Paul Kirvan, Independent IT consultant/auditor

By Paul Kirvan, CISA, CISSP, FBCI, CBCP

Pandemic Plans differ slightly from traditional disaster recovery and business continuity plans in that they focus more on people and somewhat less on technology. Each type of plan provides a structured approach for responding to situations that threaten an organization's ability to sustain operations. Considering the health threat to employees from by a pandemic, a carefully designed pandemic recovery plan can help the firm remain viable, even with a reduction of staff.

In this guide on using a pandemic template, you'll learn what you need in a pandemic plan for your business and what to put on your pandemic planning checklist.

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A GUIDE TO PANDEMIC PLANNING FOR BUSINESSES

🌐 How to build a pandemic plan

When building a pandemic plan, the principal concern is availability of staff. Employees who contract the virus may not be able to perform their daily activities for a few weeks to possibly a few months. Begin the process by completing a risk assessment that identifies critical company operations, and the systems and the staff needed to support them. Next, prioritize the business functions in terms of the most critical to the organization's survival. In collaboration with your human resources department, identify the employees who are deemed most critical to supporting critical business functions.

Given the potential lead time to respond to an outbreak (e.g., three to five days incubation period before the disease presents itself), the number of employees initially infected may be low, but could increase quickly.

Pandemic planning template

Pandemic plans are a combination of 1) preventive measures, e.g., hand cleaning stations throughout the building, availability of face masks, and 2) active response measures, e.g., replacing absent employees with healthy staff who can perform the same functions. An important strategy for achieving the latter goal is to cross-train employees in multiple functions within their business units. In addition, access to detailed step-by-step procedures for recovering disrupted systems and networks can help backup staff recover and resume normal operations.

The goal of these processes is to minimize any negative impacts to company operations attributed to loss of staff through illness. A comprehensive pandemic plan includes primary

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and alternate supplier contacts; sources of medical supplies; contact information for all employees as well as stakeholders, customers, and key supply chain vendors. Finally, it includes a logical sequence of action steps that ensures employee health is protected and critical operations are maintained.

🌐Pandemic planning questions to consider

The following are some additional issues to consider. Some are more effectively handled at a higher level, such as state departments of health, while others ought to be part of your own pandemic readiness program.

1. At what point would you consider quarantines? For example, if someone comes to work exhibiting flu symptoms, he/she should be sent to a local hospital emergency room for observation and testing. If an appropriate health facility is not readily available or nearby, it may be necessary to isolate the person in a separate room away from other employees until transportation can be arranged. Regular review of messages from the CDC and local authorities should be maintained to determine the status of the disease and its spread. If the spread seems to be increasing, e.g., several employees have called in sick or have tested positive, it may be time to activate a "reduced staff business model" and send most employees home, other than those designated for reduced operations support. Ideally, company leadership should have such a discussion well in advance of an actual outbreak to decide how/when to shut down operations. Closing the doors is the last activity to do.
2. At what point would you release antiviral stockpiles? Large companies may stockpile vaccines if they can afford it, have sufficient space and can actually obtain doses. Most other companies are not likely to stockpile vaccines. Err on the side of caution in stockpile situations. Release stockpiled doses of the vaccine as soon as the first verified case is reported.
3. How big should stockpiles be? Assuming that only a single dose of the vaccine is needed, stockpile one (1) dose for each employee per location.
4. How quickly can you get to them? If they are stored on site, distribution can be almost immediate. If not, use of an overnight delivery service is advised. If on site storage of vaccine is not available, the time to get doses could be anywhere from the same day to a week or less.

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- Identify what management perceives as the most critical business activities.
- Identify what management perceives as the most critical IT assets, e.g., call center, server farms, Internet access.
- Determine the maximum outage time management can accept if the identified business processes and IT assets are unavailable.
- Correlate the employee data to the critical business processes and technology assets.
- Identify situations where a single person is responsible for a critical function, and identify possible backups.
- Identify the operational procedures currently used to respond to critical outages.
- Determine when these procedures were last tested to validate their appropriateness.
- Identify emergency response team(s) for all business functions and the technology infrastructure; determine their level of training with regard to critical processes and systems, especially in emergencies.
- Identify opportunities for cross-training of staff potential to prevent gaps in coverage.
- Identify vendor emergency response capabilities; if they have pandemic response plans and when they were tested; impact of a pandemic on contract obligations; presence of service level agreements (SLA's).
- Compile results from all analyses into a gap analysis that identifies potential staffing issues associated with critical business functions and technology assets, with recommendations as to how to achieve the required level of preparedness, and estimated investment required.
- Have management review the report and agree on recommended actions.
- Prepare pandemic recovery plan(s) to address critical business functions, facilities and technology assets.
- Conduct tests of plans, employee backups and system recovery assets to validate their operation and effectiveness.
- Update pandemic plan documentation to reflect changes.
- Schedule next review/audit of pandemic recovery capabilities.

🌐Pandemic planning best practices

Keep in mind the following best practices for your business:

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12. Schedule follow-up tests.

Considering the investments businesses make in their IT infrastructures, all businesses should also invest sufficient time and resources to protect those investments from unplanned and potentially destructive events.

About this author: Paul F. Kirvan, FBCI, CBCP, CISSP, has more than 20 years experience in business continuity management as a consultant, author and educator. He is also secretary of the Business Continuity Institute USA Chapter.
