Building an Effective Backup and Disaster Recovery Plan
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Disaster can strike at any time, and it can take many forms. You might find yourself facing a deliberate act of terrorism or a cyber attack on your network. Or you might find your staff displaced due to fire or extreme weather resulting in a power outage.

Two things will help keep your business thriving, despite what the world might throw at it.

1. Being prepared.
2. Responding quickly.

You can’t always avoid a disaster, but you can prepare. Being proactive about the possibility of a disaster will help your business bounce back after disruption. It might even help you to avoid disruption altogether. Your precautions might not only mitigate the impact of a disaster, but prevent it entirely.

According to a [study by Ponemon Institute](https://www.ponemon.org) in which 6,000 IT practitioners were surveyed, 86% of companies experienced one more instances of system downtime in the previous 12 months. On average, $366,363 is the average cost of downtime per year for a business.

Once disaster has struck, your only choice is to respond. The speed and competence with which you do this relies heavily on your disaster recovery plan.

If the lights have gone out and you’re reading this on what remains of your battery power, it might be too late. Otherwise, start building your plan now.
What to Consider in Your Backup and Disaster Recovery Planning

The objective of your disaster recovery plan is to minimize the disruption of operations. If, like many other businesses, your operation relies on IT, your plan will pay particular attention to reducing downtime and avoiding data loss. Any company using IT to track orders and communicate with clients should ensure that their disaster recovery plan has a strong IT element covering the recovery of data, assets, and facilities.

Your plan needs to be documented - normally in written form – and it should be comprehensive enough to cover every functional department in your company. In the event of a disaster taking place, stress is likely to be high, so having a clear, understandable plan of action will smooth the way to recovery.

Address clearly what the plan is for, who is responsible for leading the recovery and what specific procedures those individuals will follow.

Seek Help

The plan needs to be detailed and comprehensive, so get advice from senior staff with experience. It’s a good idea to have representatives from all functional departments involved in the development of the plan. They will have the expertise to know what aspects of their departments are critical and what must be protected and recovered above all else.

If they are to be in charge of aspects of a potential recovery, note that you must clearly define the procedures and expectations for each role.
Co-ordinating a disaster recovery may sound daunting, but building an adequate plan takes effort too. Seeking help from a business analyst and specialist IT firm can make this process go much more smoothly and identify critical issues that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

**Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment looks into the potential consequences of various disaster scenarios. Our team can show you where you are vulnerable and implement solutions to address these issues before they become problems. This is also the time to identify your critical files and information, and to evaluate their safety in the event of a disaster. On examining your current system, you might find that an automated, cloud backup service will be a key part of providing a backup solution in the event of business disruption.

Installing or updating anti-virus and anti-malware software might also be a solution to protect the integrity of your network and sensitive or critical data. In terms of protecting the network, our services include monitoring your network and training staff.

Don’t ignore the possibility of intentional cyber attacks, either from inside or outside your organization. Being prepared means looking at worst-case scenarios, even if they seem unlikely.

**Establish Priorities**

Identify what is essential to keep your business in motion. What are the operations that you cannot do business without? Identify key personnel and consider your information flow, processing systems, and historical records.
Then, set out what needs to come back online first for minimal disruption and to ensure the continued success of your business.

Working out how to get things back online comes in the next step.

**Recovery Strategies**

Now is the time to plan how you will recover your data and physical assets after a disaster. This might mean accessing cloud storage to retrieve critical, backup files from their safe location. It might also involve physically transferring to another building, in which case, being able to access your critical data using the cloud would be an effective way to maintain business operations.

Essential documents should be accessible through your disaster recovery plan. These might include master contact lists, supplier details, notification checklists, insurance policies and more.

**Testing the Plan**

Developing your disaster recovery plan and organizing backup systems is a great start for protecting your business, but it’s not the end of your journey. The plan should be tested regularly, at least once a year.

Test your backup facilities and procedures too. An outsourced IT agency can monitor your backup systems and fix errors before the devices and files are needed in an emergency situation. IT experts are adept at identifying areas that would benefit from modification. They will be aware of issues such as inevitable media decay, the benefits of automating...
backups, and the need to store those backups in more than one location to spread the risk of data loss.

Perform your first dry runs of your disaster recovery plan out of business hours to avoid disrupting usual business operation unnecessarily. Test your checklists and perform simulation tests to see where there might be gaps in your planning.

Finally, do a full interruption test during usual operation hours. This will give you confidence that your plan will work and that you and your staff are prepared for any eventuality that threatens downtime or the loss of your data.

**Techneto's Help**

Loss of data can bring even the biggest business to its knees. Many firms never recover from the effects of disaster hitting their environment and networks. Ensuring that your business has adequate backup systems in place, alongside a thoughtful and well-documented disaster recovery plan, will go a long way toward making sure that your business survives any threat. At Techneto, we can provide security for your staff and continuity for your customers. Give us a call to learn more about our backup and disaster recovery services.