



## **Top Tips for Business Continuity in Manufacturing Companies**

Some of our most interesting clients have been manufacturing companies. Whilst fascinating for us on a personal level, learning about the manufacturing process for all manner of goods, it is also interesting in a professional capacity, with new techniques and approaches developed to best meet the challenges of working in such an environment. I would just like to highlight a couple of points that I have observed.

### **Programme Management**

Good programme management needs to be led from the top. Without an Executive lead driving the programme as the 'Executive Sponsor', there will be limited success for your Business Continuity programme. Additionally, you need to ensure that the management of the project is driven by someone who understands not just the operational aspect of the manufacturing process, but someone who also has a good grasp of the 'back office' functions. If you are proceeding with certification to, for example, ISO22301, then make sure you chose someone with an understanding of managing and maintaining management systems.

### **Critical Activities**

I think that the most important lesson that I have learned here is that the manufacturing companies that I have worked with have been heavily focused, naturally, on making things. They have, usually, taken steps to build resilience into the manufacturing operation with, for example, duplication of plant where it is sensible to have duplication. However, they tend not to think of other critical activities: taking orders, customer services, distribution and paying staff & suppliers to name just a few! You must think carefully, and consider all the activities that contribute to your business.

### **Business Impact Analysis (BIA)**

An office-based business may want to list workstations, fax machines, photocopiers, particular types of stationery and printers, and all other office equipment, and this will certainly be the case for the back office/support functions for a manufacturing business. However, for the manufacturing operations, it may not be a good use of your time to list all the equipment on your manufacturing line and you may need to approach the BIA slightly differently.

The reason that I suggest this is that your Operational Managers will probably have extensive experience with their process, and will have taken steps to identify where there are weaknesses in the manufacturing process. Stoppages are often encountered, but these are usually seen as operational disruptions, and not as incidents that would merit an invocation of a business continuity plan. Your Managers may well have taken steps to duplicate particular processes or to ensure supply stocks are maintained. The businesses that I have worked with have previously considered,



for example, the prohibitive cost of generators to supply the power that they would need in the event of a power cut, and decided against this on a cost-benefit basis. Where they have failed to consider resilience is in their back office functions!

Thus, rather than focussing heavily on the manufacturing process, listing every piece of equipment in the BIA, make use of existing information, such as asset register, focus on what is critical, eg tooling and supplies, so that consideration can be given to the duplication of tooling (often not previously considered) and the resilience of the supply chain, particularly if you have to have quality assurance for any new suppliers, and then go and do that full office BIA that is required for Sales, Purchasing and Customer Services!

## **Staff Issues**

Planning could be complex, particularly if you have some elements of your business operating on different shifts and different pay structures. Ensure that you consider the 24-hour operation, and consider the potential impact on your staff. If you are sending some home, but expect others to assist with salvage and recovery, consider how you will ensure equal recompense.

## **Training and Exercising**

This is your opportunity to train your staff and check your plan. However, this can also be used as an opportunity to promote closer working. Many of the companies that I have worked with have quite different cultures on the factory floor and in the offices, and do not fully understand how the other operates, and what is needed to operate by way of information and assets; this is your opportunity to confront any 'them and us' differences, and to demonstrate how critical each function is to the smooth running of your company

## **Summary**

These are just a few pointers for implementing Business Continuity in a manufacturing company; there are more, but you can't expect me to reveal all here! However, in summary,

- Choose your business continuity manager with care;
- Think beyond the manufacturing activities;
- Focus on what is critical;
- Don't get bogged down in the detail; there is a difference between operational disruptions and a crisis;
- Plan for working with all staff fairly; and
- Involve all departments in training and exercising.