

Business Continuity Plan: To Dos

The key to your successful navigation of a crisis will be your people and your main goal is to get them the instructions, training and tools to be able to do the job when that unfortunate time comes.²¹

To Dos

- ♦ Focus on keeping your law firm running, not just the computers!²²
- ♦ Focus on practical issues and whether your BCP will ultimately be workable.²³
- ♦ Write your BCP as “guidelines” rather than excessive detail²⁴ - keep the plan simple and understandable.
- ♦ Your BCP should set forth a schedule of who does what.²⁵
- ♦ **Communicate your BCP to all staff!** There is no point in having a BCP, if all staff are unaware of the procedures and steps to take in an emergency.
- ♦ Identify staff who will play key roles in the disaster recovery. Ensure that you appoint backup staff in case these key staff are unavailable.²⁶
 - * *Some people react better than others in a crisis situation, identify them.*
- ♦ Run fire drills.
- ♦ Send selected staff for training in handling disasters/crisis.
- ♦ Have dry runs and tests with staff on your BCP. Give your staff a chance to learn the skills that they will need and to practice enough to be comfortable.²⁷
- ♦ Keep your BCP updated. Although it would seem a challenging feat depending on the size of your firm and number of staff, it is important that you review and revise your BCP at least once a year. Otherwise, it may be useless when you need it most.²⁸
- ♦ Establish a rally point a safe distance away from your office so you can confirm that everyone is accounted for.
 - * *Your staff are your firm's most precious resource!*²⁹
- ♦ Create a disaster recovery file that includes photocopies of important materials, printouts of client information, tech support telephone numbers, serial numbers of all hardware and office equipment, and other pertinent information.
 - * *A physical file makes it more convenient to drop in new or updated information when you buy new software or hire a new employee, instead of putting it aside with good intentions.*
 - * *Include a printout of the office calendar and update it regularly. Make at least two (2) copies of both the plan and the file. Store one in the office, and one offsite.*³⁰
- ♦ Identify alternative manual procedures to perform critical functions normally handled by computers.³¹
- ♦ Restore your backups and see what really happens.
- ♦ Prepare a list for emergency preparedness – flashlights, water, food, blankets, toilet facilities.
- ♦ Have a written succession plan! A clear plan for succession can help the firm survive, and can smoothen the transition, should a primary ‘rainmaker’ or managing partner dies.³²

Your law firm can, and even may, survive a disaster without a BCP, but having one clearly will increase your chances of success.³³ The biggest of impact of a “accident/disaster” would be on your firm’s cash flow: billable hours will be lost, staff morale may be affected thus affecting productivity, the longer your firm’s recovery time, the more likely your clients are to take their business elsewhere.

²¹ Dennis Kennedy, ‘Ten Tips for Dealing with Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Issues’, Law Practice Today, October 2005, pg. 2 <<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mgt10053.html>> (cited henceforth as Dennis Kennedy)

²² Dutch & Oppelt, pg. 1

²³ Dutch & Oppelt, pg. 1

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Wells H. Anderson, ‘Learning to Crawl: Relocation Coping Strategies’, GP Solo, December 2006, pg. 1 <<http://www.abanet.org/genpractice/magazine/2006/dec/learningtocrawl.html>>

²⁶ Dennis Kennedy, pg. 1

²⁷ Dennis Kennedy, pg. 2

²⁸ Ed Poll, ‘Notifying the People Around You’, GP Solo, December 2006, pg. 1 <<http://www.abanet.org/genpractice/magazine/2006/dec/notifyingthepeople.html>>

²⁹ Bruce Dorner, pg. 2

³⁰ Rose & Calloway, pg. 2

³¹ Dutch & Oppelt, pg. 1

³² Edward Poll, ‘Disaster Planning After the Apocalypse’, Law Practice Today, October 2005, pg. 1 <<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mtt10051.html>>

³³ Rose & Calloway, pg. 1