

Small business: A good plan shields from storm clouds

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Hawthorne. "It's now become a competitive disadvantage not to have a business continuity plan."

In fact, many customers are requiring that the businesses they work with have business continuity planning in place, Berman says.

So how do you ensure you're adequately prepared?

Well, the first step is creating a written continuity plan.

"Your business continuity plan should be centered around planning for the result of an incident, not the specific incident itself," explains Tom Abruzzo of Merrick-based TAMP Systems, which provides consulting and software for disaster recovery or business continuity planning.

It's impossible to plan for every possible mishap, but rather you can plan for the outcome of a disaster/incident (i.e. your facility is inaccessible and / or technology is inoperable), he says.

Preparing for the worst isn't always easy for a small business, considering that there are more than 200 incidences that can cause a disaster.

While it's impossible to plan for each and every one, your business' ability to respond to a disruption may mean the difference between its success and failure, experts say.

"Business continuity is no longer an option," says Alan Berman, executive director for DRI International, a business continuity planning education and certification organization in



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"What happens if there's no power, or you can't get to your data," says Dorian Cougias of Network Frontiers, an information technology consulting firm in [Lafayette, Calif.](#), and co-author of "The Backup Book: Disaster Recovery from Desktop to Data Center."

Backing up your data is only as good as your ability to restore it, Cougias says, noting that businesses should test their ability to restore critical data to a spare computer before incidents occur.

"Half of the people can't even find their original install discs," he notes.

That's why running regular tests of your plan is important, says Gregory R. Tellone, an executive vice chair of the Contingency Planning Exchange and owner of American Business Continuity Centers, which operates two disaster recovery hot sites in Woodbury and Chappaqua.

The centers provide data backup or replication, as well as fully equipped offices where companies can work if their own building or technology is inaccessible. It has about 250 subscribers, Tellone says.

Mark Gallagher, network systems manager of Gemini Fund Services Llc in Hauppauge, is one of them. Gemini, which provides back office services for mutual funds, pays for five seats at the center each month.

"Every quarter, we do a test as if we had an issue and couldn't process or work in our Hauppauge office," he says. As part of these tests, they send people to the Woodbury site to work and process funds.

You can never be too prepared, notes Robert Tracy, vice president of security services for Summit Security Services in [Uniondale](#). The security firm, which has worked with TAMP, has a continuity plan and a foul weather plan.

Its planning came in handy in January, when the company lost electrical power for more than 12 hours to its 24-hour command center in [New York City](#) due to outside street grid work.

Thanks to its contingency planning, Summit, which was given a day's notice, was able to seamlessly switch phone lines and move key personnel to its [Uniondale](#) facility so operations weren't disrupted.

"Preparing can offset a lot of problems," Tracy says.

[< back to article](#)