



Optimizing BCP and DR Strategy for 2021 and Beyond

Importance of BCP and DR strategies

We are living in a hyperconnected world where smart technologies have taken over the way we work and play. Humans and smart intelligent systems are in unison and technologies are at the forefront of the convergence of the physical and digital.

In this journey towards a strengthened digital ecosystem, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the strengths and weaknesses of business continuity plans and disaster recovery structures of organizations. With remote working becoming the norm and the business network collaborating on virtual, the need to solidify an effective method to continue business uninterrupted is integral. Crises like the current pandemic and in fact, any disruption to business

where man-made or natural, has the potential to exponentially impact the brand, customer experience, revenue and the overall business.

Hence, in such a scenario, constructing business continuity plans (BCP) and disaster recovery (DR) architecture, keeping cloud computing at the forefront is critical, and will turn out to be a milestone, leading the way for organizational success.

Defining the 'new normal' in a digital economy

The new normal in layman terms has emerged as being a new way of life that encompasses a one eighty-degree flip in how we go out about our life at home, work and interactions with others.

From a CIO perspective, the new normal is all about keeping the organization ready for anything and everything. It is about taking cognizance of the fact that in today's dynamic environment- natural, social, geo-political, organizations must keep themselves up and ready, and agile enough to adapt and acclimatize to unprecedented situations, without any or with minimal impact to business.

The new normal has also highlighted the novel ways of operations. Just a couple of years ago, working from home was impossible in certain industries. However, the current times have shown how adaption, adoption and reshape are the need of the hour. At present, for most of the companies, the significant percent of the employee base is working from home, meaning certain kinds of collaboration tools are place that allow connectivity tailored to the current situation. But once the pandemic fades,

companies will see at least 30 percent of workers operating from site. This would perhaps call for a slight revamp in communications infrastructure to enable both the groups to connect seamlessly and maintain productivity. Thus, collaboration and communications strategy must be established in such a powerful way that allows from seamless communication and collaboration round the clock, wherever you are.

Importantly, the new normal is all about keeping employees' health an unwavering focus. DR is simply not limited to material but in fact encompasses employee welfare too. An organization can only be as good as their employees; therefore, it is exceptionally important to ensure business operates in a manner that keeps the safety and health of employees at the forefront of every decision and action. Business must continue and to enable it to be always on, it's imperative that people-priorities remains top of the mind at all times.

Emerging risks, threats and disasters: A snapshot

Risk management has become indispensable to successful business delivery. With appropriate risk assessment and solutions in place, businesses to a great extent can ensure they continue to perform to the best of their abilities.

One of the biggest risks that business may face is unavailability of resources during critical times. This call for deep planning and going granular ensures the right set of skilled and trained back-ups are in place, to avoid any unnecessary

hiccups during any crisis.

From a more technical side, IT tools for connectivity must remain activated through and through. For example VPNs and remote connectivity options must remain secure and glitch free at all times to ensure business is not adversely affected, and there is round the clock connectivity.

Another important risk that has emerged from the current scenario pertains to psychological threat. With a significant portion of employees working from home for an extended time period, with no clear view of when return to office would take place, has led to a disruption in the mental wellbeing of employees. The isolation has taken a toll on the overall mental and physical health of employees. This has made companies rethink ways that they can incorporate wellbeing as a part of their culture to keep employees motivated and health. One of primary ways that organizations are encompassing is having a greater element of connectivity and engagements, and with the help of HR and Learning divisions, hand-holding employees to strike the right balance between work and home.

Identifying business parameters that must be safeguarded

Once organizations define the new normal and possible risks that are foreseen, they must also equally identify assets and services that must be effectively managed to minimize or nullify the impact of these threats.

The BCP and DR plan are one of the

primary assets that must be reshaped, and they definitely should encompass safety and health of people. It is the people who are the first enablers that make the business; therefore, the foremost priority for any organization must be ensuring that they have the infrastructure to protect their employees through continuous engagement, flexible policies, upskilling opportunities, etc.

Technology is another important component that must be safeguarded. Every organization must understand they the future is all about a distributed workforce that has a mix of both on-ground and remote employees. This implies that organizations must invest in technologies – both software and hardware that empower employees with advanced connectivity, security and access. These could include VPN, laptops and peripherals, CRM software, cyber-security processes, etc. that make for simplified and productive business delivery, enabling work from anywhere seamlessly, effectively, securely and ergonomically.

From a skill development and people perspective, creating an innovations mindset will be a game-changer. Therefore, companies that desire to step into the future and create a sustained ecosystem of success but definitely focus on training, developing and upskilling their workforce. The knowledge economy must therefore be strengthened. BCP and DR plans are nothing new. However the pandemic has put the focus on integrating the micros and macros of business. Organizations must begin craft out a holistic structure that is both equally granular and scalable.

Therefore, now more than ever before, involvement of top management

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is absolutely key in terms of laying out processes, investment, testing, mock-ups and drills. Business impact assessment plays a critical role in creating a comprehensive and effective BCP and DR models. Such assessments can help map every service that is attached to client- internal/ external (downtime, outage, etc.), and allows business to gain valuable insights into impact and even suggestions for alternatives, such as hybrid infrastructure through private cloud, enabling business continuity.

Another way that can empower businesses is through continuous audits by their own set of clients. In doing so, clients remain fully aware of the preparedness of their partner and their capacity to deliver even in tough times. This helps instill much higher brand trust and loyalty.

To begin with, in this digital era, where business is no longer confined to the office premise, BCP and DR must be extended to envelope a people perspective, covering people availability, health & safety, seamless WFH connectivity, and more. New roles across IT, HR and Learning will definitely come up that will be specifically focus on viewing business and crafting strategies, more from a future-perspective. These couple of parameters will change the way BCP and DR models were traditionally crafted, and will indeed lead to the creation of a more sustainable and adaptable business structure.

The role of data led technology

A key challenge when it comes to reducing impact of disasters lies in the very fact that COVID-19 will never be the only isolated incident and in fact that might be many more, perhaps with greater virility. With BCP and DR management, organizations are expected to be completely prepared with an appropriate crisis response and this becomes especially complex when the nature of incident is unknown. One way to mitigate such a predicament is through vastly leveraging AI/ML capabilities to recognize patterns and even predict what a future crisis may entail.



Organizations, therefore have realized that proactive measures built on the foundation of automation technologies can go a long way in empowering organizations to strengthen their standards of operations. This includes accomplishing certifications like ISO that help to not only communicate their brand as being trustworthy and reliable but also strong enough to circumvent crisis and deliver uninterrupted business.

Another angle that must be explored is 'human efficacy'. Many a crisis or risky situation is created entirely due to human error and negligence. With data of such instances in hand, organizations can the gap and impart relevant trainings and learning to help instill the right culture of safety and performance, that not only reduces human errors but also creates a transformational shift of mindset from reactive to proactive and intuitive, keeping the business and people safe and protected.

DR as a Service

One in three companies declared a disaster in the past 5 years with power, hardware failure and network outages being the top 3 reasons. Experiencing the complexity of business continuity and disaster recovery orchestration, organizations have come to realize that an effective option, in terms of operations and cost lies within DR as a service. A DR strategy includes the four pillars of IT resilience: Hybrid cloud, Networks, Data continuity, and Security and Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) address these and offer businesses a host of unmatched advantages.

Earlier, DR was meant for only a few critical processes and applications. However, now DR encompasses the entire stream of people, processes

and applications. This mindset change speaks a lot and calls for higher degree of expertise in crafting an effective DR strategy. Therefore, with DRaaS, organizations can seamlessly continue focusing on core competency while outsourcing the continuity and disaster recovery orchestration to subject matter experts. Additionally, and very importantly, DRaaS clubs DR with automation DR drills, which enables it to offer right kind of visibility and governance.

Costs have also become a key differentiator in organizations choosing DRaaS over traditional methods. Escalating costs of infrastructure is prompting businesses to look for DR in cloud. Besides an excellent storage capacity, DR in cloud offers fast speed to recovery and its flexibility and agility drastically reduces the upfront and operational costs. From just looking at low-cost DR, businesses have matured to ask for effective DR. For smaller organizations DRaaS is the way to go due to specific benefits on scalability, pay-per-use, capacity optimization, and cost savings on capital. Hence, DRaaS has earned lot of currency among the customers.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has exposed constraints and weaknesses of the traditional BCP and DR strategies of various organizations. There is no better time than now to think out-of-the-box. Disaster Recovery as a Service is fast emerging as the one stop solution for businesses looking to internalize BCP and DR for greater and sustained success. A digital revolution, no less, DRaaS is all set to become a game-changer, empowering organizations with unparalleled benefits of data-led disaster recovery management and business transformation.