

Telecommuting: A Smart Business Continuity Strategy

Be Ready for Critical Emergencies with a Telecommute Business Continuity Plan

Readiness Pays Off

As wireless communication and high speed broadband technology become more universal, telecommuting is growing as an attractive business continuity strategy. Consider the productivity that was gained over the past few years when snow storms and hurricanes kept people out of the office, but not offline. In many cases, workers were able to do their jobs uninterrupted even though they could not come into the office.

A few years ago, the threat of the H1N1 flu epidemic threatened workforce attendance and productivity. Businesses who allowed workers to work from home avoided productivity loss. With little or no investment in technology, businesses are including telecommuting in their business continuity plan.

Streamlining the Process

Not long ago, business continuity plans included the lease of emergency office space and the rental of office furniture. In the event of an office fire, temporary space was a requirement in order to sustain business operations for long enough to permanently relocate or repair damage. In the event of a gas leak or a power outage, productivity was lost when workers were off line or sent home. Today, the logical first step for each of these scenarios is to have workers telecommute.

Most companies find that telecommuting technology is readily available and affordable. There are only a few basic technologies required to set up a home office: broadband Internet, a working telephone and a laptop computer. Enterprises that have VPN access and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phones, can

[More >>>](#)



With little or no investment in technology, businesses are including telecommuting in their business continuity plan.



leverage their existing investment to provide a more seamless work-at-home experience. Finally, with a telecommuting policy in place, companies will find it very easy to implement telecommuting as a business continuity strategy.

The goal of using telecommuting as a business continuity strategy is to reduce the impact of downtime. The way to do this is by creating an efficient plan and communicating the details. Take the time to assess workflows and determine what tasks can be done remotely. Document and communicate the plan to everyone that will be involved. Effective documentation and communications will expedite the implementation process and minimize downtime.

Creating the telecommuting plan can be fairly simple. Approach your plan from the perspective of losing access to your office for an extended period of time. Identify key functions that need to be performed and who will carry out those functions.

Consider this when creating your telecommute continuity plan:

- Develop and document processes and procedures that will need to be implemented in order to accomplish tasks when not in the office.
- Identify how remote workers will report in “online.”
- Consider multiple forms of communication. In the event of an emergency, one or more communication methods may not be available. You may need to use an alternative to get the message through.
- Make sure each person who may be asked to telecommute has the necessary tools (Internet connection, working phone, laptop PC, VPN, IP Phone).
- Work with your IT department to support remote workers. Include expectations for help desk support.
- Take time to determine how teams will collaborate while out of the office. Meetings may need to take place via conference call. Establish collaboration tools such as conference bridges and WebEx accounts that can be used to conduct meetings remotely.
- Consider asking people to work offsite occasionally to make sure their telecommuting environment is functioning properly.

While there are some considerations to think carefully about, there are many benefits to including telecommuting in your business continuity plan. The investment is minimal and it includes technologies commonly available. Employees can remain safe in the event of a crisis. Multiple remote locations provide a natural location diversity plan. Telecommuting reduces reliance on transportation infrastructure and time wasted on commuting. It can also speed up the recovery of business operations. Snow days can become productive work time instead of wasted travel time.

Telecommuting technology is readily available and relatively easy to implement as part of a business continuity plan. **The critical business requirement is the creation and communication of a well thought out plan.** Consider the risks you are trying to avoid and how telecommuting can mitigate those risks. Finally, test the plan on a regular schedule when there is no emergency, to prove its effectiveness and cement the knowledge of the employees participating.

Keep your business running with a telecommute business continuity plan. Get free consultations from our Telecommute Specialist at 877-CT-RIDES (287-4337) or by emailing info@TelecommuteCT.com. You can learn more at www.TelecommuteCT.com.

Author Drew Kaliszewski, Director, Partner Consulting, is a Telecommute program consultant and field expert