13.2.6 Business Continuity Planning Facts

This lesson covers the following topics:

- Business continuity
- Business continuity plan
- Business impact analysis
- Business continuity best practices

Business Continuity

Business continuity is the activity performed by an organization to ensure that critical business functions are available to customers, suppliers, regulators, and other entities that must have access to those functions. Business continuity refers to activities performed daily to maintain service, consistency, and recoverability. This is not something that should be implemented at the time of a disaster.

Business Continuity Plan

A business continuity plan (BCP) identifies appropriate disaster responses that maintain business operations during reduced or restricted infrastructure and resource capabilities. Also, a BCP identifies actions required to restore the business to normal operation. A business continuity plan is designed to ensure that critical business functions (CBF) can be performed when operations are disrupted. Development of a BCP manual to document and track the progress of the BCP would include the following steps:

1. Analysis
2. Solution design
3. Implementation
4. Testing and organization acceptance
5. Maintenance

A business continuity plan:

- Identifies and prioritizes critical functions.
- Calculates recovery timeframes.
- Identifies plans, including resource dependencies and response options, to bring critical functions online within an established timeframe. These plans spell out a clear order of restoration based on company needs and priorities as well as legal responsibilities to customers and shareholders.
- Specifies procedures for the security of unharmed assets.
- Identifies procedures for the salvaging of damaged assets.
- Identifies BCP team members who are responsible for plan implementation.
- Should be tested regularly to verify that the plan still meets recovery objectives.

Business Impact Analysis

A business impact analysis (BIA) focuses on the impact that losses will have on an organization. A BIA:

- Identifies threats that can affect processes/assets.
- Identifies mission-essential functions.
- Identifies critical systems.
- Establishes the maximum downtime (MDT) the corporation can survive without the process/asset.

- Establishes other recovery benchmark values, like:
  - Recovery point objective (RPO)
  - Recovery time objective (RTO)
  - Mean time between failures (MTBF)
  - Mean time to repair (MTTR)

- Estimates tangible (financial loss) and intangible (loss of customer trust) impact on the organization.
  - Life
  - Property
  - Safety
  - Finance
  - Reputation

Senior management may mistakenly view the security program as a cash drain rather than a cost-saving implementation. The BIA should be used to demonstrate the cost savings of the security program.

Business Continuity Best Practices

Keep in mind the following when creating the disaster recovery and business continuity plans:

- A good plan documents all important decisions before the disaster strikes. When a disaster occurs, staff members simply need to follow the documented procedures.
- Disaster response is typically divided into phases:
  - Identify the disaster, ensure the safety of personnel, and begin to implement recovery procedures.
  - Implement short-term recovery mechanisms to bring mission-critical systems online.
  - Stabilize operations by restoring supporting departments and functions.
  - Implement measures to restore all functions to normal. Switch back from temporary measures to normal operating procedures. The order of restoration is defined in the BCP and then carried out in this last phase. A typical restoration order begins with the systems, databases, and applications that are most critical to the continued operation of the business. The order of restoration often varies significantly from one company to another.

- Define processes for implementing, testing, and training team members. Team members should be representatives from all major parts of the corporation.
- After the plan has been created, conduct regular practices and training exercises to test portions of the plan. Revise the plan or training as necessary.
- As a BCP or DRP plan evolves, it is essential to collect and destroy all outdated copies of the plan as a new version of the plan is rolled out.
- Assign responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the BCP and DRP plans.

Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill future key positions within an organization. Succession planning:

- Increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume specific roles as they become available.
- Ensures that the right competencies are recruited into the organization to be nurtured and developed over time to guarantee smooth transitions for future vacancies.
- Contrasts replacement planning, which focuses on identifying specific backup candidates for given positions.