

Why cloud business continuity is critical for your organization

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Business continuity, the ability of a company to continue or quickly restart operations following a systems outage, tends to be a topic overlooked by business leaders. Many see it as a responsibility of their IT teams, and think no more of it. However, this is a dangerous abrogation of responsibility, as any CEO who has suffered through a prolonged systems outage can vouch for.

When IT managers design and operate their IT systems, they need to have input from business managers, a.k.a. their customers, on the required protection level when disaster strikes. Additionally, it is the responsibility of business teams to prepare and test recovery plans, to counter potential events that can severely affect the company's ability to operate. These plans go beyond IT systems, and include, for example, how to communicate if email is not working.

It is important to understand the two very different parts the cloud can play in this planning. The first is awareness among business leaders and owners that any IT system can break, including cloud services. Overall, last year there were many outages of cloud providers – some planned, others not (see [statistics for previous 12 months](#) as monitored by CloudSquare).

The most severe problem for a business with cloud operations will be when outages of their SaaS provider occur. These provide bespoke services for businesses and are therefore not easy to reproduce or replace during the outage. For example, if Salesforce goes down for the day, what would a business do replace its function, especially given all the data that it relies on is stored remotely by Salesforce?

All this means it is critical that the disaster recovery and business continuity planning takes into account all business critical systems that exist in the Cloud, as well as those hosted locally. These services normally include CRM, email, invoicing and accounts, sales services, logistics and trading systems.

The second part the cloud can play in business continuity is when a disaster occurs that hinders internal IT systems. Certain business functions can be set up in cloud infrastructure relatively quickly. However, it is vital to plan for and test the handoff and switchover of those functions to ensure business continuity.

Unfortunately, enabling bespoke applications in the cloud is remains difficult and often cost prohibitive. A good example of business applications where the cloud can help with a disaster are: managed desktop, email and collaboration, file sharing, internal and external web sites.

Overall, the main point is that while cloud services can play an important role in business continuity, business leaders need to take the responsibility of ensuring their operations are fully prepared with tested recovery scenarios.