Business continuity plan

for _____ (business name)

Plan owner (can invoke)	Deputy	Version and date	Next review

How this plan works

Every section answers one question. Fill them in order: the answers to the first two decide what goes in the rest. Never write passwords into this document: record where they are kept and who can reach them. Keep printed copies of the plan and the first-hour card (page 2) where you can reach them without the office.

#	Question	Section
1	How long can each activity stop? The impact clock: score the damage at five points in time, find the point the damage becomes unacceptable, and set a recovery target inside it.	BIA
2	What does it depend on? People, place, IT and data, suppliers. Anything with no deputy or alternative is a single point of failure.	Dependencies
3	What will we do instead? A workaround for each critical activity that works without the thing you have lost, written before you need it.	Plan
4	Who decides, and who is told? Who can invoke the plan, the triggers, the contact tree and the first-hour card.	Contacts and First hours
5	How do we know it works? A restore you have timed, a contact tree you have rung, a tabletop you have run. Dates, not intentions.	Recovery and Testings

Short on time? The afternoon path

When	Step	Do this	You end with
Hour 1	The clock	List the 5 to 8 activities that bring in money or keep a promise. Score each at 4 hours, 1 day, 3 days, 1 week and 2 weeks.	MTPD and a recovery target for each (the workbook works them out)
Hour 2	The chain	For the activities with the shortest clocks, write down what each needs: people, place, IT and data, suppliers.	Your single points of failure, flagged
Hour 3	The workarounds and the tree	One or two sentences per critical activity on what you will do instead. Build the contact tree. Collect suppliers' emergency numbers.	A plan people can follow
Hour 4	The card and the date	Agree who can invoke and when. Print the first-hour card and put copies where you can reach them without the office. Book the first test.	A one-page card and a test in the diary

An afternoon gives you a plan people can follow. It does not prove that anything can be recovered in time: that comes from the first restore test and the first tabletop exercise, which belong in the next 90 days.

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

First-hour card

Print this page. Keep one copy at home with the plan owner and one with the deputy, and a photo on both phones.

Plan owner (can invoke)	Mobile	Deputy	Mobile

Invoke the plan if

- Any critical activity is likely to stay down longer than its recovery time objective (RTO).
- We cannot use the office, or cannot reach it, for the rest of the working day.
- A P1 incident (on our incident report template's priority matrix) has lasted an hour with no fix in sight.
- A cyber attack is suspected: files locked, accounts taken over, a ransom demand.
- A key person or supplier is suddenly unavailable and a critical activity depends on them.

#	Do this	How
1	Make people safe	If anyone is at risk, ring 999 first. Account for everyone before anything else.
2	Decide whether to invoke	The plan owner checks the triggers. If the owner has not answered within 15 minutes, the deputy makes the call.
3	Name what has stopped	Which activities on the BIA list are affected, and what is the first RTO that will run out?
4	Start the contact tree	Send the agreed message. Each caller rings their list; whoever is last on a branch rings the caller back.
5	Start the workarounds	For each affected activity, the named person starts the workaround on the Plan tab.
6	Tell clients and suppliers	Use the prepared message. Say what is affected, what to do instead, and when the next update is.
7	Start a log	Time, decision, who decided, what it cost. It runs the recovery and supports any insurance claim.
8	Check the legal duties	If personal data is unavailable, lost or exposed, run the breach decision on the incident report page now: the ICO's 72-hour clock starts when you become aware.

Number	For
999	Danger to people, fire, crime in progress
105	Power cut (England, Scotland and Wales); in Northern Ireland, NIE Networks on 03457 643 643
0345 988 1188	Floodline (England, Scotland and Wales)
0300 123 2040	Report Fraud: cyber attack or fraud (England, Wales, Northern Ireland). In Scotland: Police Scotland, 101
0303 123 1113	ICO personal data breach advice line
	Our IT support (out of hours)
	Our insurer's incident or claims line

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

1. How long can each activity stop? (business impact analysis)

List the activities that bring in money or keep a promise. Score the worst consequence at each point in time: 0 None, 1 Minor, 2 Noticeable, 3 Serious, 4 Severe. The MTPD (maximum tolerable period of disruption) is the first point that scores 4. Set the RTO (recovery time objective) below it, because invoking and recovering both take time. The Excel version does the arithmetic.

Activity	4 h	1 day	3 days	1 wk	2 wks	MTPD	Our RTO

Score	Means
0	None: Nobody outside the team would notice.
1	Minor: Internal inconvenience; catch-up work, no client impact.
2	Noticeable: Clients notice; complaints, small costs, work piling up.
3	Serious: Contract or service-level breaches, real money lost, clients threatening to leave.
4	Severe: Clients lost, a legal or regulatory breach, harm to people, or damage the business may not recover from.

2. What does each critical activity depend on?

People, place, IT and data, suppliers. If there is no deputy or alternative, write NONE: that is a single point of failure, and closing it is usually the most valuable action in the plan.

Activity	Type	What it needs	Named person or supplier	Deputy or alternative

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

3. What will we do instead? (workarounds)

One row per critical activity. Write it so someone who has never done it can follow it.

Activity	Workaround	Who starts it	What they need

4. IT recovery: can we get the data back, and in time?

RPO (recovery point objective) is how much recent work you could lose and redo; your backup interval is your worst-case loss. The measured restore time comes from a real test, not a supplier's brochure. Technical restore steps belong in a separate IT disaster recovery plan.

System or data	RPO needed	Copied every	Last restore test	Restore took	RTO needed

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

5. Who decides, and who is told? (contact tree and contacts)

Each caller rings no more than five people. The last person on each branch rings the caller back, so you know the branch is complete. Keep personal numbers only with staff agreement, and store this page securely.

Caller	Rings (up to five)	Rings back to confirm

Supplier or organisation	What for	Emergency number	Account or policy number

Prepared message to clients (fill in the blanks on the day)
We are dealing with [what has happened]. [Service] is affected; [service] is working normally. Until it is fixed, please [what to do instead]. Our next update will be at [time].

6. How do we know it works? (testing)

Test	How	Every	Last done	Next due
Contact tree check	Send the test message; time how long until the last person replies. Fix any number that fails.	3 months		
Restore test	Restore one system or folder from backup, in rotation. Time it and write the time on the Recovery tab.	3 months		
Work-elsewhere drill	Run one critical activity from home or a second site for a morning, using only the plan.	6 months		
Tabletop exercise	Talk a scenario through with the people named in the plan; for a cyber attack, use the NCSC's free Exercise in a Box.	12 months		
Supplier check	Ask each critical supplier how they would keep your service going, and how quickly they restore your data.	12 months		
Plan review	Read the whole plan with the owner; update names, numbers, RTOs; sign it off. Also after any big change.	12 months		

Plan signed off by: _____ Date: _____

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

Worked example: Harbour Lane IT Ltd (fictional)

Harbour Lane IT Ltd is a 22-person managed IT services firm supporting about 140 small-business clients from one office (fictional). This is the plan its managing director wrote in one afternoon, and what it turned up.

Activity	4 h	1 day	3 days	1 wk	2 wks	MTPD	Our RTO
A1 Service desk: answering client calls and tickets	3	4	4	4	4	1 day	2 hours
A2 Remote monitoring and security alerts for clients	2	3	4	4	4	3 days	8 hours
A3 Checking client backups and running restores	1	2	3	4	4	1 week	1 day
A4 Client support portal	1	2	3	4	4	1 week	1 day
A5 Payroll for our 22 staff (monthly)	0	0	1	3	4	2 weeks	3 days
A6 Invoicing and credit control	0	1	1	2	3	Over 2 weeks	1 week
A7 Project installs and upgrades	0	1	2	3	3	Over 2 weeks	1 week
A8 Sales and quotes	0	0	1	1	2	Over 2 weeks	2 weeks

Four activities are critical (Severe within a week). Payroll becomes critical in pay week. The service desk cannot wait even a day, and its two-hour target is only realistic because the phone divert and the shared spreadsheet are set up in advance.

Single points of failure found

Activity	What it needs	Named person or supplier
A1	Office internet line (single fibre)	Internet provider
A2	Engineers with admin rights to the monitoring platform	Lead engineer
A5	Payroll run and approval	Office manager

Data and recovery

System or data	RPO	Copied every	RPO check	Last test	RTO check
Ticketing system data	4 h	24 h	Gap	never	UNTESTED
Shared drive (company files)	24 h	24 h	Met	5 months ago	Proven
Microsoft 365 mailboxes	24 h	24 h	Met	never	UNTESTED
Monitoring platform settings	24 h	24 h	Met	14 months ago	Test out of date
Payroll records	168 h	24 h	Met	2 months ago	Proven
Accounts and invoices	24 h	24 h	Met	8 months ago	Proven

Actions from the afternoon

Action	Owner	Due
Add a 4G/5G backup router so the office keeps internet if the fibre line fails	Ops lead	1 month
Give a second engineer admin rights to the monitoring platform; put the emergency admin login in the company password manager	Ops lead	2 weeks
Write a payroll checklist and have the managing director run one month's payroll with the office manager	Office manager	Next pay run
Export open tickets to the shared drive every morning, until the ticketing supplier confirms how far back it can restore	Service desk lead	This week
Restore a test mailbox and the ticketing data, and time both	Lead engineer	1 month
Pre-set the phone divert to analysts' mobiles and test it on a Friday afternoon	Service desk lead	2 weeks

Full guide, the Excel workbook with live formulas, and the worked example: https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/

© Garrould Limited · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Share for non-commercial use with a link to https://www.itmanagement101.co.uk/business-continuity-plan-template/