

## **How to Prepare Your Business for the Next Crisis: Lessons Learned from Recent Outages**

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Technology outages and disasters can strike unexpectedly - bringing operations to a halt, exposing vulnerabilities, and impacting revenue. Recent incidents - including technology crises such as the CrowdStrike outage, and natural disasters like Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton - serve as powerful reminders of the importance of preparation. While no business can claim to be 100% prepared for every disruption, the goal is to implement measures that will ensure operational continuity and minimize financial losses during a crisis. Here are five key lessons to help your business stay resilient.

### **Assess Your Vulnerabilities and Dependencies**

Start by conducting a thorough assessment of your systems and operations to identify weak points. For example, are there single points of failure in your infrastructure? Is your business overly reliant on third-party vendors? Understanding these risks is the first step in mitigating potential damage.

Assessing vulnerabilities also means identifying critical dependencies on vendors, suppliers, or systems. If a provider experiences an outage, it could disrupt your entire operation. Knowing these dependencies will allow you to develop strategies to minimize their impact.

### **Create and Test a Response Plan**

A business continuity plan is only as good as the testing behind it. Having a detailed response plan is essential for guiding your team during a crisis, but it must be regularly tested and updated to remain effective. Many businesses fall short by assuming their plan will work without testing it under real pressure.

Develop a comprehensive plan that defines specific steps to take during crises, such as natural disasters, cyberattacks, or technical failures. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to your team members. Regularly simulate crisis situations to test how your team and systems respond. These drills will help identify gaps, allowing you to improve the plan before a real disaster occurs.

### **Diversify and Build Redundancies**

Relying on a single system, provider, or location makes your business vulnerable to failure. By diversifying systems and building redundancies – you're ensuring that if one element fails, others can take over seamlessly. Redundancy is critical for data storage, network systems, and cloud services.

For instance, adopting a multi-cloud strategy can significantly reduce the risk of an outage. If one provider experiences an issue, others can step in. Geographic redundancy—distributing resources across regions—can also mitigate the impact of regional outages. Backup systems that can be activated quickly further reduce the risk of operational downtime.

### **Communicate Proactively with Vendors**

In times of crisis, proactive communication with vendors and partners can prevent misunderstandings and delays. Whether you are working with a third-party IT provider or a logistics supplier, having open lines of communication before, during, and after a disruption is critical for minimizing impact.

Establish communication protocols with key vendors ahead of time to ensure a smooth recovery process. Keep them updated on potential risks and ask them to share their own crisis management plans. Discuss contingencies, such as service-level agreements (SLAs) that require rapid support during an emergency. This not only helps your business recover more quickly but also strengthens relationships with vendors by fostering trust and transparency.

### **Regularly Review and Update Your Business Continuity Plan**

The business environment is constantly changing, so your continuity plan needs to evolve as well. A plan that worked five years ago may no longer be relevant today. Regular reviews and updates to your plan ensure that it remains effective when a crisis occurs.

Schedule periodic reviews of your business continuity plan, ideally on an annual basis or after significant changes in your operations, technology, or external environment. Learn from internal drills and real-world incidents, refining the plan based on these experiences. Continuously improving your continuity plan ensures that it remains an active, relevant tool that will help your business survive future disruptions.

Business resilience relies on proactive planning, flexibility, and ongoing assessment. By staying prepared and adaptable, your business can minimize the impact of disruptions, maintain operations during crises, and recover quickly, ensuring long-term stability and success.

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