

# Planning Fuels Resiliency

By Stuart Evans and Stefan Ludlow

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**Resilient**—a powerful word that describes our country, clients, colleagues, and even our practices. 2020 has taught us many life lessons, including the importance of business continuity plans (BCPs) that can be adapted “on the fly.” It’s also apparent a practice’s BCP must look beyond finite periods, such as power outages and natural disasters, to support a potential paradigm shift in how the firm operates. No one could have predicted a pandemic would alter business models as much as they have, and we should take this as an opportunity to re-evaluate, adjust and ensure we are prepared for the future.

### Four Key Elements

Based on our firm’s experience during the pandemic, an effective BCP should incorporate the following elements to help maintain ordinary business operations under extraordinary conditions:

- **Communication Network.** With employees dispersed and working remotely, a strong communication network is vital. The right technology and practices can mean all the difference in providing timely service to clients. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, daily meetings and weekly wrap-ups are effective ways to help employees stay connected. That said, you should choose methods that align with your practice’s unique needs and structure.
- **Cloud-Based IT Infrastructure.** Just as employees need to prepare for remote work, your IT infrastructure also needs to be ready. Moving infrastructure, such as servers, file shares and email, to the cloud in advance of enacting a BCP provides employees with access to resources regardless of location.
- **Remote Work Environment Testing.** A BCP that hasn’t prepared employees for the possibility of remote work, either short- or long-term, puts them at a disadvantage. The more you test your BCP remote environment and train employees to operate independent of physical location, the easier it is to pivot business operations with limited service disruptions. It also helps ensure a seamless experience for your clients.
- **Cybersecurity Program.** A remote work environment expands your firm’s exposure to cybersecurity threats. So it’s essential to have a cybersecurity plan that comple-



ments and protects your BCP. Employees working remotely can easily fall victim to an attack if they haven’t been trained about the potential risks. Ongoing cybersecurity training and testing are critical. Your employees are your firm’s first line of defense.

### Effective Plan Management

Having a comprehensive BCP is worthless if it’s not executed properly—that starts with your leadership team. They have to embrace the plan before they can manage it through a disruption. This is true for all firms, small and large. Consider creating a BCP committee comprised of senior managers from different teams. This approach has worked well for us. The committee can oversee the plan’s implementation, communicate with employees, manage expectations, and adjust when the unexpected occurs. Through proper execution, your BCP can bolster your practice’s resiliency.

How do you know your BCP is working? When it feels like business as usual to your employees and your clients and not a BCP. ■

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