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TRENDS IN BUSINESS CONTINUITY:
EXPLORING THE PAST AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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Trends in Business Continuity: Exploring the Past and Planning for the Future

I'll bet we all wish we could look into the future and know our fate – it's human nature. You can, of course, learn a great deal about the future by first looking back into the past. The goal of this white paper is to gaze back at our recent past and then turn our vision forward into the future, offering some insights into what may happen in the future.

One of America's favorite philosophers, Yogi Berra, had a perfect quote for why we try to look ahead: "If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else." How true that is!

Glancing Back at 2015

2015 was a busy year for disasters, but – interestingly enough – it wasn't as costly as other years. Swiss RE[1] reported that worldwide, total economic loss from disaster events was expected to reach 85 billion USD. That was down from 113 billion USD in 2014, and also down from the previous 10-year loss average of 192 billion USD. Insured loss, however, was much lower, an estimated 32 billion USD. That means that many communities were significantly underinsured and recovery efforts were more difficult. Additionally, there were approximately 26,000 deaths in disaster events in 2015.

Here are some of the big events of 2015:

- Nepal earthquake: A 7.8 magnitude earthquake, in April, killed more than 8,800 people and damaged or destroyed nearly 900,000 buildings.

- Severe weather: This was a major concern in many parts of the world, and included drought, flooding, heatwaves, and wildfires.

- Tianjin (China) explosion: An explosion rocked the city in August. It killed 170 people and disrupted the global supply chain.

- Diseases: A new illness made a big splash at the end of the year, the Zika virus. Avian flu and MERS continued to be concerns.

- Terrorism: Attacks in Paris (November), San Bernardino (December), and 390 other locations worldwide occurred throughout the year.

- Cyber breaches: They became so frequent it began to feel like a "breach-a-day."

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[1] Preliminary sigma estimates for 2015: global catastrophes cause economic losses of USD 85 billion. Swiss RE December 18, 2015, http://www.swissre.com/media/news_releases/Preliminary_sigma_estimates_for_2015.html

Looking Forward

What is there to look forward to? The easiest thing to say is "more of everything." There will be more:

- Cyber breaches, which will impact larger audiences and potentially be more destructive.

- Visible increases of the overall effects of climate change and weather-related disasters of all kinds.

- Disease outbreaks due to population concentrations, zoonotic illnesses, and free-moving populations.

- Issues related to globalization, including outsourcing and supply chain disruptions.

- Global terrorism.

Massive-impact disasters are on the increase and present a broad range of issues. Events now are already being described as the "worst," the "most significant," or the "strongest." Three other words are also being used with increasing frequency: "catastrophic," "deadly," and "expensive."

Our bets for 2016 include the following:

- Endless cyber security concerns and cyber breaches.

- Continuation of severe weather and climate change impacts, driven by the El Niño effect.

- Increased terrorism and attacks taking new forms.

- Growing global supply-chain disruptions based on the above issues.

- Expansion of infectious diseases into new areas and locations.

Does This Spell "Good Times Ahead" for our Profession?

Well, not necessarily. Greater threats do not equate to more resources. In fact, we have found that many of our clients have experienced program retrenchment and resizing. Management is questioning the return on investment of traditional Business Continuity activities. Business Continuity departments are increasingly being moved into parts of

larger enterprise activities (such as Risk) rather than remaining free-standing departments. And we also see a move toward targeted and more strategic planning, instead of broad planning that includes "everything." So what should you be thinking about?

Reimagine Your Program

Here's a big piece of advice for you: It's time to reimagine your program. I have eight suggestions for doing that, but before I share them, I'd like you to stop and empty your mind. An amazing quote sums up how I would like you to think about these suggestions: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind, there are few."[2] In other words, when we think we are an expert, we are inclined to think that we know everything, so when a new suggestion or option comes along, we tend to dismiss it, thereby missing the opportunity for new thoughts, ideas, and possibilities to take seed and grow.

#1 Question Everything

You've spent a lot of timing learning your craft and you are likely very good at it. You know how things are supposed to be done. I ask you to consider two questions:

1. "How can I think about continuity / recovery differently?"
2. "How can I deliver similar results, but develop and/or deliver them differently?"

For example, how could you do a Business Impact Analysis more easily? What would happen if you created plans more simply or differently and got similar results, but it took you less time and you spent less of the company's money?

When asked about the importance of their work by their "higher ups," many of our colleagues would likely say, "When the disaster happens, you'll be glad you have this program, spent this money, and have these plans." With that answer, then, the next question they get might very well be, "When was the last time the 'big disaster' happened?" For many, that answer might be "never," or "a long time ago." I would invite you to spend some quality time asking yourself: "What is the value-add of my program (business continuity, emergency management, IT disaster recovery, etc.)?" and "What value do we provide to the organization on a daily basis?" Let me give you a few ideas to contemplate:

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[2] Zen Mind, Beginners Mind, Shunryu Suzuki, Shambala, June 2011

1. Regulatory compliance.
2. Competitive advantage.
3. Brand and reputation protection.
4. Risk identification.
5. Operational improvement.
6. Knowledge capture.
7. Increased robustness.
8. Cost savings.

#2 Location, Location, Location

Where does your department report? Is there an ideal location? Should it be free-standing or coupled with another group, like Risk? Does it matter? It might matter, and if there were a need for consolidation, where should it go? It's better to think about this now than to find it happening and being caught-off-guard.

#3 Benchmark… But Carefully

We are often asked to audit a program and "benchmark" it to others in the industry. Benchmarking can be helpful, but it also can have downsides. It can:
Foster imitation: When a company decides to measure against a market leader, it can end up as a carbon copy.
Limit innovation: Forget to think "out of the box" to surpass the benchmark or innovate.
Lead to complacency and arrogance: "We are doing okay," then relax and fail to see opportunities and challenges.

The question to ask, then, is, "What's right for us?" Look at others, but make sure what you're doing is the right thing for you.

#4 Rethink Plans

We are seeing companies completely rethink their plans – their structure, what's in them, and how they are organized. Many have abandoned software packages and have moved back to a Word document. The easiest explanation for this is its ease of use and low cost. That can be a successful strategy, if it's coupled with a robust emergency notification system (ENS). A great ENS can be a fabulous tool for recovery, and can be used for many of the areas that should be documented in your plans. Here's a question for you: Have you considered migrating your customer or vendor data to your ENS in addition to your employees? Here's another: What about adding your media contacts to your ENS?

When you start to rethink "How could I organize my plans?" think of these three things and the company will likely love you:

- Keep them slim, and easy to maintain and update.
- Provide just the information that's needed and nothing more.
- Make them easy to administer.

#5 Work Out

Frankly, plans are worthless if you don't exercise them on a regular basis. However, there is no requirement or "official" recommendation for how often an exercise should be held. Continuity standards (NFPA 1600, ISO Business Continuity Standards, FFIEC, among others) do not require or recommend a set number of exercises annually, they just refer to "regular exercises" that increases in scope and complexity over time, leaving the individual company to guess at how often "regular" is.

I believe at minimum, exercises should be conducted once a year. However, if the teams only meet once a year to practice, they will never really learn their roles or the processes – they won't be very good initially when an incident occurs. The best teams have exercises twice a year or more. One exercise can be a tabletop and the other should be a functional or full-scale exercise.

Practice (aka exercises) breeds familiarity and "muscle memory," which should be (and could be) the real measure of competence or capability. The term "muscle memory" has been used synonymously with motor learning, which is a form of procedural memory involving the consolidation of a specific motor task into memory through repetition. When a movement is repeated over time, a long-term muscle memory is created for that task, eventually allowing it to be performed without conscious effort. This process decreases the need for attention and creates maximum efficiency within the motor and memory systems. Examples of muscle memory are found in many everyday activities that become automatic and improve with practice, such as riding a bicycle, typing on a keyboard, typing in a PIN number, or playing a musical instrument.

Many of the muscle memory activities mentioned above become automatic because they are done somewhat frequently, often several times a week or more. So does that mean an organization needs to assemble their Incident Management or Crisis Executive Team several times a week? Thankfully, no. However, it does mean that if they don't practice with some frequency, they won't be very good during an incident.

#6 Manage Information Creatively

One of the challenges that we all face is how to manage our "situational awareness." Sometimes it's difficult to find hard information in an incident, and other times there can be so much it's like drinking out of a fire hose. How do you manage the information so that your team can make the best decisions possible? The old way had teams posting status boards using a white board and markers. That can be appropriate, but is there something better? What if your team is virtual? Getting the information is one thing, but if you haven't thought about what you will do with it, how it can be displayed to be meaningful, or how the decision-makers can use it, it will likely be a significant choke point for you in an activation.

#7 Engage with the World

You must engage with the world in new ways, and you especially need to explore social media options to get information. Mainstream media is changing rapidly. Many people around the world get their information from social media platforms like Twitter and FaceBook; even traditional media gets its information from those sources! You must become social-media savvy. I encourage you to get a Twitter account, even if you think you will never tweet in your whole life. Follow people and groups in your field as well as traditional media sources. When something happens, go to Twitter and follow the information trail and popular hashtags. For example, on the morning of the Boston Marathon bombing, as soon as I heard that something had happened at the marathon, I immediately went to Twitter, typed "Boston" in the search field, and in real time, I was following what was happening from people on the ground. Twitter gave me real-time information that was unavailable from other sources.

#8 Market your Program

You need to find ways to market the important work that you do. Think of your program as a product that needs to be marketed "strategically" within the organization. If you had to market your department, what would your marketing approach be? There can be two types of marketing to consider: overt and covert.

An overt effort might be to capitalize on a regular event such as the month of September, which is "National Preparedness Month" (it really is). A more covert effort might be keeping your business leadership current on topics of the day, such as a recent cyber breach, supply chain disruption, or closure of an important port. In those cases, you could report the information, include some analysis of contemporary events, and send your leadership team a short email or arrange for a short meeting. Build value.

Change is in the Air

Change is definitely in the air. Our industry, the world… everything is changing. Your task in all of this is to become a change master.

My challenge to you is to think about the following conversation that might happen with your CEO. Imagine that your CEO tells you in a short conversation in the hallway, "I want you to do recovery 'differently.' I want you to come back to me in a week with suggestions on how it can be done." How would you do that?

What if she asks you, "How could Business Continuity be part of 'routine business,' not a stand-alone plan or function?" What might you say to that?

What if, as she turns to walk away, she says: "…and be prepared to discuss the ways your program adds value to the business every day." How would you answer that?

Your Homework Assignment

When you think about the challenges ahead, you need to get going! Take these eight suggestions on ways to reimagine your program and get crackin'! You don't have any time to waste.

Regina Phelps is an internationally recognized expert in the field of emergency management and contingency planning. Since 1982, she has provided consultation and speaking services to clients in four continents. She is founder of Emergency Management & Safety Solutions, a continuity consulting firm. Ms. Phelps's new book: Cyber Breach: What If… Your Defenses Fail? Designing an Exercise to Map a Ready Strategy will be released March 2016.

About Everbridge

Everbridge provides a unified critical communication suite that helps clients be better prepared, make better decisions, and respond quickly and confidently during disruptive events. When an incident happens, whether it's a natural disaster or an IT service outage, we automate communications to ensure that the right messages get to the right people at the right time.

Widely recognized by analysts as the market leader, Everbridge solutions are trusted by clients in all major industries and government sectors to connect with over 50 million people around the world.

THE ONLY END-TO-END PLATFORM

- **Planning**: Everbridge is easy to set up, maintain, and organize, meaning that you're always ready for a quick, coordinated response. Everbridge ensures that the right messages get to the right people - with the most advanced opt-in portal on the market, streamlined integration with internal and external data sources, and simple group and contact management.

- **Assessment**: When trouble strikes, you need rich insight, presented simply - so you can quickly assess potential impact and make an informed decision to avoid loss. Everbridge offers the only solution on the market that meets these demanding requirements, with the most advanced interactive dashboard in the industry.

- **Response**: In critical situations, ease-of-use can mean the difference between an effective response and a mistake that carries serious consequences. Everbridge is engineered to be simple to use under pressure, with a user interface that accelerates time-to-message and reduces the likelihood of errors.

- **Delivery**: Even during large-scale disruptions, Everbridge stays on. The most advanced platform in the industry ensures that you reach your contacts - every time. And with worldwide coverage and capabilities, including globally local calling infrastructure and data storage, we're ready to support you wherever your people are in the world.

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