EMBEDDING BCM IN THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE
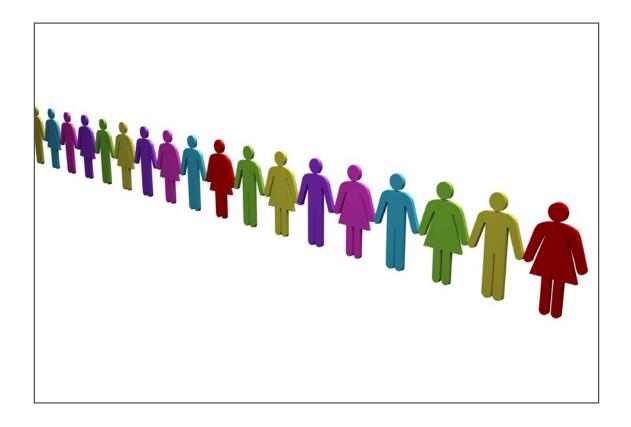
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ABSTRACT: The concept of embedding business continuity in an organization's culture is not new. Over the years it has developed through the various iterations of the BCI's Good Practice Guidelines, was then taken up by PAS 56, and featured in the original Business Continuity Management Lifecycle diagram.

With the onset of BS 25999, embedding BC into an organization's culture has undergone a change in its positioning in the BCM Lifecycle, both within the Code of Practice in Part 1 and as a measurable component of the Specification in Part 2. But what does 'embedding in the culture' mean, what do you need to do, and how do you know you have achieved it? And, most importantly for certification purposes, how can you measure such a potential intangible?

This paper seeks to explore the requirements of BS 25999, and discusses various ways to 'embed BCM within your organization's culture'.

BS 25999 – a catalyst for change

In the development of BS 25999, one of the early discussions revolved around the long-established BCM Lifecycle and whether it should be changed. As a testament to its creators, there actually was very little that could or needed to be changed, and the key components maintained their position. However, it was recognised that all elements of the Lifecycle had a place in embedding business continuity, and as such 'embedding' should move from being a 'spoke' in the old BCM Lifecycle 'wheel' to the 'tyre' wrapped around it, recognising that everything we do within our business continuity management programmes can, and should, be used to embed BC into our organizations' cultures. Consequently, the BCM Lifecycle diagram was changed and forms an essential role in the framework of the Code of Practice.

One of the greatest challenges in developing the new standard was that the target audience was potentially vast and that the language used had to be both inclusive and scalable. This was recognised in the preamble at the head of section 10 on page 40 of the Code of Practice where it says: "To be successful, business continuity has to become part of the way that an organization is managed, regardless of size or sector." It matters not whether your organization is public or private sector, finance, retail, manufacturing or charity, small medium or large, business continuity should be seen as a valid and valued management discipline.

The Code of Practice sets out what organizations should be doing within their BCM programme, and hints at what they 'may' do. Whilst there are a number of commentaries, it does not explain in great detail why or how. So how can we go about embedding business continuity into our organization's culture?

BCM Lifecycle – 'embedding' in all stages

The preamble continues: "*At each stage of the BCM process, opportunities exist to introduce and enhance an organization's BCM culture.*" The key message here is that each element of the BCM Lifecycle is two-way in terms of both gathering and sharing information. Each component of the Lifecycle contributes to a different level of understanding and awareness, bringing in differing and disparate audiences from all levels across the organization. By inputting to the deliverables as well as gaining deeper insight into the components of the programme, they should gain a deeper level of understanding than that achieved by broader and more generic campaigns across the whole organization. This should assist in managing expectations both in the capability of your BCM programme, what is important and achievable, and in the organizations ability to respond to a disruptive event.

Understanding the organization
The discussions held and the questions asked during the BIA process should enable the targeted audience to see what they are inputting to and the benefits that the BCM programme should bring to the organization. The discussion around the impacts of disruptive events should not only provide the information required for the wider BC programme, it could and should act as a catalyst for change required in the organization when issues around resilience and recovery capabilities are highlighted. The risk analysis, by its very name, will enable you to engage with another audience within your organization. Identifying and highlighting the risks to the organization should enable the engagement of the risk management community and into top management through groups such as risk and audit committees. If these two groups begin to ask the 'what if?' questions as a matter of course, then you have moved a long way in terms of embedding BCM into the culture.

Determining BCM strategy
Once the analysis of risk and business impact has been completed, you should have the opportunity to engage in various forums with other parts of your organization's top management, including up to board level, agreeing and developing the appropriate continuity strategies. Whilst the analysis phase interfaces with the management levels responsible for the delivery aspects of the organization's key products and services, and the supporting critical activities and associated risks, the BCM strategy discussions are likely to take place with those who are responsible for the organization's wider objectives and budget. Strategy and steering groups are useful to provide the business viewpoint and necessary support for any programme activity, particularly if there is any cost involved. It is important that once these strategies have been agreed, awareness of the strategies, the potential impacts of events and understanding why they are appropriate, is taken to the top management and wider organization.

Developing and implementing a BCM response

Depending on the size of your organization, yet another audience could be engaged during the development and delivery of your incident management and business continuity plans. The identification of appropriate incident management teams across your organization is likely to include some people who have not yet been directly involved in any of the preceding components of the Lifecycle and, again, when continuity plans are developed for more granular business or service teams and units. Those with specific BCM roles and responsibilities may require more in the way of specialist skills training, and the Code of Practice reflects this in section 10.3 where it states "Response skills and competence throughout the organization should be developed by practical training, including active participation in exercises."

Exercising, maintaining and reviewing

Exercising, rehearsing and testing your teams and plans are by far the best way of directly embedding business continuity in the culture, taking the dry paper and turning it into a more realistic experience. Making these events visible increases awareness and understanding of those not directly involved and shows that business continuity is taken seriously within your organization.

Even regular and ongoing maintenance has the potential to influence culture, either driven by cyclical review-and-amend, or by post-incident or rehearsal learning being implemented to enhance both plans and teams.

Internal or independent auditors are another group that should be actively engaged to assist in the delivery of your BCM programme. They are capable of bringing different viewpoints and weight to the issues you may be facing, can be used to raise awareness of BC to others within the organization and ultimately can raise issues up to the highest levels.

BCM programme management

Steering groups have already been mentioned, but they are useful to ensure that programmes are on track in terms of what the business actually requires and also the objectives and deliverables. By engaging adequate levels of support from the business, you are ensuring that they have recognised responsibilities and are bought into the BCM programme.

Who should you target?

Awareness is for everyone! Business continuity, like health and safety, requires everyone to play their part, and awareness and education is relevant from the board room to the mail room and all points between. The commentary note on section 10.1 in the Code of Practice says "*All staff have to understand that BCM is a serious issue for the organization and that they have an important role to play in maintaining the delivery of products and services to their clients and customers*". Whilst some of your organization requires detailed and specific knowledge, the majority only needs enough knowledge to understand what they should do *now* to make their own business operation resilient before an event takes place, and then what they should do in the event of an incident happening.

The basic rule is to talk to as many people as possible, whoever will listen, and at every opportunity, whether by invitation or creation on your part. You may wish to target specific groups – board members, audit committee, risk managers, regional managers, various leadership teams, etc. You should also look to cover 'everyone' – all staff within your organization, your customers and clients, your third party suppliers, your insurers, etc.

What you say and how you say it?

The Code of Practice states that "*The organization should have a process for identifying and delivering the BCM awareness requirements of the organization and evaluating the effectiveness of its delivery*". What you say is dependent on your organization's own communication style and methods, and the Code of Practice says "*An understanding of the existing culture within the organization will assist in the development of an appropriate BCM culture programme*".

What you say also depends on who you are targeting and communicating with, and what element of business continuity you are raising awareness about. All staff require a general level of awareness on what their roles and responsibilities are in terms of what they should do prior to an incident and what is expected of them during and after an incident. Those directly involved in managing incidents and ensuring continuity of business and services require more in the way of education and in depth training.

Again, how you put over your message will depend on your organization and what is available to you. The Code of Practice gives a number of examples of what an organization may consider doing to raise awareness of business continuity:

- A consultation process with staff throughout the organization concerning the implementation of the BCM programme;

- Discussion of BCM in the organization's newsletters, briefings, induction programme or journals;

- Inclusion of BCM on relevant web pages or intranets;

- Learning from internal and external incidents;

- BCM as an item at team meetings;

- Exercising continuity plans at an alternative location (e.g. a recovery site); and

- Visits to any designated alternative location (e.g. a recovery site).

Each organization should look for both 'push' and 'pull' opportunities, pushing business continuity information out to staff, as well as giving opportunities for staff to explore more in-

depth topics. A multi-channel approach, using all the communications channels your organization has, should greatly improve the chance of getting your message across. However, there is a fine balance between enough awareness and overkill. It must be recognised that other parts of the organization will be trying to achieve the same aims, so it is vital that a joined-up and coordinated approach is adopted, where the business continuity message is pushed out via the risk, health and safety, security, information security and other business messages.

Will anyone listen?

In the commentary on section 10.1 in the Code of Practice, it recognises that "*Creating and embedding a BCM culture within an organization can be a lengthy and difficult process which might encounter a level of resistance that was not anticipated*". However good and creative your awareness and education campaigns may be, it is almost inevitable that you will experience everything from opposition to denial, claims of information overload to just plain ignoring the message. Not everyone in an organization, however much we BC professionals jump up and down, will want to read, understand or take any actions. People will focus on doing their job today and all the problems that they may face, so they may not be interested in the ifs, buts and wherefores of tomorrow. Unless they can see a real reason why they should do something now, then expect resistance, and even if they see the reason for doing it – still expect some resistance.

BS 25999:2 – How do you measure it?

Part 2 of the British Standard focuses on the 'shall haves' of your BC management system, and as such is more concise in its requirements, with the purpose of "To ensure that the organization embeds business continuity into its routine operations and management processes, regardless of its size or the sector in which it operates". In turn, it lists three areas of activity:

a) Raise, enhance and maintain awareness through an ongoing education and information programme for all employees and establishing a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the BCM awareness delivery; and

b) Communicate to all employees the importance of:

- meeting business continuity management objectives;

- conforming to the business continuity policy; and

- continual improvement; and

c) Ensure that all employees are aware of how they contribute to the achievement of the organization's business continuity objectives

Measuring success, particularly in something as intangible as 'culture', is the challenge, not only for those who are trying to implement programmes, but also for those who are reviewing the programmes for return on investment, internal audit, quality and certification. Various measures could be adopted that assist in showing continual improvement and evaluating effectiveness, including:

- Repeated questionnaires and surveys, with measured responses and analysis

- Attendance at awareness raising, governance and rehearsal events, measured feedback scores

- Number of requests for wider assistance to the business e.g. client proposals or supplier due diligence

- Other parts of the organization asking for assistance in developing their own plans and programmes.

Despite all of this, embedding into the culture is reliant on the actions and activities of people. Measuring the breadth and depth of your impact on the organization's culture through these same people is likely to be subjective at the very best, and the capability to measure with any degree of 'accuracy' is likely to diminish as the size of an organization gets bigger.

Conclusion

Educating, awareness-raising, training, whatever you like to call it, is a vital and ongoing part of any BCM programme. I believe that 'embedding' is now accurately reflected in the BCM Lifecycle diagram, showing that all we seek to deliver should have a wider impact on the culture of our organizations. By utilising every opportunity within each component of the Lifecycle to spread the word, you should be able to provide deeper levels of understanding that broad and generic campaigns could never achieve.

While we will always have different depths of knowledge as to what business continuity means to each individual and business unit, and support for the BCM programme, 'embedding into the culture' is truly where the BCM programme meets with the people who make up your business, this is where the rubber hits the road! Awareness equals understanding, and understanding leads to a greater chance of success in what you are trying to achieve.

Author

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Andy started his working life in 1985 in computer operations at the University of London's LSE and King's College. He then moved to Pickfords Ltd in 1990 and in 1995, became an IT Auditor for Hertfordshire County Council. 1997 saw a move back to the private sector, when Andy joined the IT Audit team at Sainsbury's. In 2002 he was invited to join the Business Continuity Group on secondment, becoming permanent in 2003. In April 2006, Andy joined PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as the Head of Business Continuity, responsible for the internal-facing BC programme for the UK Firm's offices and c16000 staff.

Andy is a serving member of the British Standards Institute Committee that developed the British Standard for Business Continuity, BS 25999 Parts 1 and 2.

Authors note