

Arguing for business continuity

When times are tight, marketing budgets are the first to feel the scissors, or so the cliché goes, but in reality it's more likely that business continuity will suffer from budget cuts. According to the money-men, the risk of a major fire or an ICT meltdown is remote, an argument that is particularly strong at the moment as trading conditions continue to be difficult as the aftershocks of the 2008 financial crisis are joined by lower growth in China and other key growth markets.



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However, it's important not to think that lower growth prospects mean that business continuity is a luxury that the company cannot afford. Now is really the time for the business continuity team to make their case even more strongly. "I advise those who are responsible for business continuity to make a multi-dimensional case for maintaining a focus on this area, but it's important also to frame the discussion in terms of business value. Business continuity has to be seen within the context of the corporate strategy, not in isolation," says Pete Frielinghaus, senior Advisor to ContinuitySA.

Frielinghaus offers the following two pointers for arguing the case for business continuity:

- Load-shedding and strike action remains a reality. While it seems like Eskom may have recently discovered an extra power station, the threat of load-shedding remains real. The current coal-mining strike should bring that home to all businesses. This is not the only big risk that South African companies face, and contingencies need to be in place. Labour issues and militant strike action can also be expected to continue. As a way to understand and then mitigate risk in a very risky environment, business continuity actually offers good value for money when the alternative could be going out of business.
- Business continuity can help create efficiencies within the business as a whole. Performing a business impact analysis means understanding not only what the business processes are, but also their impact on, and value to, the business as a whole. This kind of granular, yet objective understanding of what the moving parts are, and the relative importance of each part, is extremely valuable. It's not something that businesses usually have because each process owner sees his or her processes as critical. "Understanding the relationship between each process and the company's ability to achieve its strategic goals can be used to drive improvements, over and beyond assigning business continuity budgets," says Frielinghaus.

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