

Dialogue

a newsletter
by cenera

cenera  people • strategy • solutions

WINTER 2007

INSIDE...

THE PANDEMIC THREAT – ARE YOU READY?

On a day-to-day basis, most of us don't spend too much time worrying about disasters that may affect us in the future. However, a business owner or leader who chooses to ignore the impending outbreak of an influenza pandemic, is ducking a primary responsibility. The pandemic resulting from a widespread outbreak of avian flu, will affect you, your people, your organization, your suppliers and customers. There are many questions you might ask about a pandemic, but "Is this really going to happen?" and "Do I need to worry about it?" should not be among them.

If you are still not convinced the pandemic will affect you in a big way, consider this: In 1918, the flu pandemic commonly referred to as the Spanish Flu killed an estimated 20 million people, twice the amount of people killed during WW I. Pandemics have been recorded in 1957, 1968 and 1976. Health authorities project that:

- 30-50 per cent of the population will experience symptoms
- fear and care-giving responsibilities will double absenteeism directly caused by illness
- a moderately virulent outbreak will probably last six - eight weeks and may occur in more than one cycle with a brief hiatus between events.



So given the fact the pandemic will affect everyone, why has only one out of every 25 Canadian organizations done the work to prepare?

One could speculate that decision-makers avoid relying on a crystal ball because it means accepting responsibility for uncertainty. Leaders need to understand that no one will be held accountable for accurately predicting the timing and progress of a pandemic. But business leaders are accountable – right now – for understanding the range of possibilities, for grasping their implications for the organization and for orchestrating a resilient response.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

- THE PANDEMIC THREAT
– ARE YOU READY?
- 2007 PRIVACY WORKSHOPS
IN CALGARY
- COMMON MYTHS
SURROUNDING THE
PANDEMIC

*“People don't realize
how quickly confidence
becomes a valuable
commodity in
a crisis”*

Editor/Writer: Cat Hackman

Dialogue is produced by Cenera. For information on content or receive a copy of Dialogue, please phone Cat Hackman at 403.290.0466 or email dialogue@cenera.ca

Subscribe to our on-line version of Dialogue, visit www.cenera.ca

**Subscribe to Dialogue on-line.
Visit www.cenera.ca**

CONTINUED FROM COVER



“As advisors, we help organizations respond to situations that would otherwise paralyze them.”

THE ROAD TO CONTINUITY

Designing a response to a potentially devastating event may seem like a daunting task, but with a systematic approach and expert assistance, the planning process becomes an opportunity to better understand your business. Not only does planning ensure continuity in a crisis, it builds organizational resilience that can solve problems and pay dividends beyond crisis situations.

“The first thing to consider for a business owner or leader is business continuity,” says Mike Luxton, senior associate with Cenera and a proven expert in disaster recovery planning. “A business continuity plan is intended to keep the business going under difficult circumstances, be it a contagious disease, a natural disaster or a terrorist attack.”

“As advisors, we help organizations respond to situations that would otherwise paralyze

them,” says Luxton. “As part of the plan, you need to think about what your organizations critical core competencies are that you must maintain.” Cenera advisors work with companies, first, to understand their operations from a functional perspective. Prioritizing them by importance to stakeholders (such as staff, customers and, in some cases, community or even society) is often an unexpected challenge. Achieving clarity about what processes, capabilities and resources must be sustained through a crisis, takes the guesswork out of developing the various aspects of a disaster plan. Strategies and tactics for communication, staffing, facilities, etc. become obvious once everyone is clear about which functions must be kept on ‘life support.’

“For example,” says Luxton, “if you understand in advance which functions your organization can afford to ‘close down’, you could shift staff proactively. The alternative is falling into

a downward spiral of reactive hole-plugging.” “So,” he continues, “if you know where available people will be shifted to, you have a very good idea of whom to cross-train on what.”

An important aspect of emergency readiness sometimes overlooked is the issue of trust. Do your employees feel secure that you have taken reasonable measures to ensure their safety? Do they trust they will still be paid, even if they miss work? Some employees are likely to stay home because they are afraid or they have to care for someone else. Others may come to work ill as they fear losing their pay. But these are responses you can better predict – and perhaps even modify – if you engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue.

“People don’t realize how quickly confidence becomes a valuable commodity in a crisis,” Luxton points out. “A lot of companies will lose customers and staff, many of them permanently, because a competitor was better prepared to weather the storm.”

A PHASED FRAMEWORK FOR UNEXPECTED SITUATIONS

Planning is not about how you can immediately put in place emergency measures, but how you can make effective decisions on your feet. “The key is a phased measured approach that follows the course of the crisis itself, whether it’s a pandemic or a different crisis,” says John Lamb. Lamb offers Cenera clients his experience gained from extensive involvement with numerous organizations that required high degrees of security, sensitivity and disaster response planning. “You may never get to the final stage of your plan, say stage four, but you will likely get to stage three,” says Lamb. “Our goal is not to get a specific step exactly right, it’s to create conditions for good decisions about when, where and how to change focus and reallocate resources.”

The United Way of Calgary recently asked Cenera to assist with pandemic preparation. Local and pandemic infectious disease outbreak was a top planning priority for 2006 during United Way’s annual risk management review. “As a public organization United Way carries a big responsibility at all times,

but especially in the case of a pandemic, because people and organizations depend on the United Way for their own continuity," explains Malcolm Gowie, CFO, United Way of Calgary. "To us, having a reliable plan in place is a fulfillment and demonstration of social responsibility," says Gowie, who believes that organizations who invest in a lot of "social marketing", but aren't actually prepared to remain intact and functional during a social crisis lack real commitment to those depending on them.

"We initiated our planning process the right way – by identifying all our stakeholders. From staff and donors, to client agencies, bankers and suppliers, we asked ourselves how a pandemic might impact each of these stakeholders," explains Gowie. "Following some very preliminary work we knew we did not have the time, resources and expertise to develop the kind of plan we knew we needed. We brought Cenera onboard to help us meet our objectives of having something in place by the next quarter."

"It was a tremendous effort by all," says Gowie. "It's hard to appreciate the value of something like this until you actually need it. And so that our staff would not feel the plan was imposed on them by an external source, we engaged some 40 per cent of them in some way. It truly was a collaborative exercise and resulted in real ownership."

CENERA'S APPROACH

Cenera consultants draw upon a broad base of business and HR expertise that is strategic and practical when working with businesses to improve their resiliency. "Our approach is not to publish a document, it is to help organizations interested in understanding and proactively addressing gaps in their existing resources, structures and processes," says Luxton. "At the end of the day, you will have a plan, but something your company owns and believes in because you and your team were involved in creating it from start to finish."

For more information or to set up an appointment with one of our consultants please visit www.cenera.ca or call 403.290.0466.



2007 PRIVACY WORKSHOPS

- INTRODUCTION TO PRIVACY
- INFORMATION SECURITY
- WORKPLACE PRIVACY
- RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Cenera privacy workshops are highly interactive and will make use of scenarios, examples and participants' input to enhance the learning experience.

INTRODUCTION TO PRIVACY

- Are you running up against privacy issues in your small company and you don't know where to start?
- Do you need to train new staff in your non-profit agency about the basics of privacy for their work?
- Were you recently made CPO (Chief Privacy Officer) in your organization, but you feel more like C3PO?

If so, then this workshop is designed for you! Read more at www.cenera.ca

INFORMATION SECURITY FOR PRIVACY PROTECTION

With companies and government more dependent than ever on sensitive business and personal information, information security has become a key priority. Organizations face a bewildering storm of advice, services, and technology as they attempt to deploy information security to support privacy compliance. This half-day session presents a realistic perspective on privacy requirements and some strategies for implementing compliant security policies, practices, and systems. Read more at www.cenera.ca

WORKPLACE PRIVACY:

WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO YOU

- Do you know the limits and boundaries that set the proper balance for workplace privacy?
- Do you know how to balance your need for information about your employees with their right to privacy?

If the answers to these questions are unclear, this workshop is for you! Read more at www.cenera.ca

SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR PRIVACY & ACCOUNTABILITY: INFORMATION & RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Information is the lifeblood of any organization, yet it is often the most poorly managed resource. With the introduction of privacy legislation, companies must be more accountable than ever for how they manage information. Do you feel your organization needs to improve or establish sound information and records management. Then join us for this highly interactive workshop. Read more about the content of the workshop at www.cenera.ca.

PLEASE CHECK OUR WEB-SITE WWW.CENERA.CA FOR TIMES, LOCATION AND TO REGISTER.

Workshops take place in downtown Calgary, 8:30 – noon.

COMMON MYTHS SURROUNDING THE PANDEMIC

For the infamous Y2K scare many businesses spent hours and thousands of dollars preparing for a disaster that never occurred. As a result, companies consider the pandemic as just another scare one need not pay attention to. Here is what the experts say about the myths surrounding the pandemic:

The Pandemic scare is just another Y2K issue – While Y2K was a one time man-made potential disaster, a pandemic is a naturally occurring phenomena that has hit before and will hit again. Just like an earthquake or volcano, you may see some warning signs or you may not. All you know for sure is that you can't stop it when it hits. What you can do is have a plan ready to deal with it in the best possible manner.

The Pandemic is coming and I must have a specific plan in place to deal with it – It's not just a pandemic alone that you should plan for. Plans may have specific measures to deal with a particular type of disaster, but planning is about business continuity and recovery throughout the disaster, whatever crisis it is that hits.

Business continuity planning is only for large firms – Any business can be hit by a disaster. Whether you have five employees or 500, if you don't have a plan in place, you will spend most of your post-disaster time trying to re-open your business. It's a well known saying that failure to plan is planning for failure. It's also well known that with a good plan, you can be back up and running quickly. With a plan you know what needs to be done, or at least have a skeleton to build a response around. Without a plan, you'll spend the first weeks to months figuring out what to do, before you can even start doing it.

Business continuity planning will be extremely expensive – Business continuity planning costs are scaled to the size of your

company. It may be that all you need is information on how to plan. Or you may need someone to plan for you. What can be expensive is the person-hours to develop the plan internally by a staff member who may not have the expertise or the actual time available.

A plan to deal with a crisis is very much an HR issue – Human Resources can take the lead in getting the planning off the ground, but business continuity planning is very much an "entire organization" project. HR cannot fully represent the needs of other departments, and does not have the training or experience to ensure all issues are covered for every single department and business function.

My organization already has a crisis plan. It will cover all types of emergencies, including a pandemic – A crisis plan can be many things. It can be as simple as a plan to handle emergencies like a fire or bomb threat. However, a business continuity plan will ensure your business is ready to go through any kind of adversity. For example, your business may need to address relocation of the primary business site.

A solid business continuity plan is all we need. We don't need to practice a scenario – How do you know the plan will work? Have you talked it through? Have you reviewed it for currency? Does your staff know how to do the things demanded in the plan? Do you have the resources to carry it out? Has your staff bought into it? Do they even know where to find copies of it? Running a scenario is a great

way to test a plan's parts and to allow staff to see how it works and gain confidence in it.

Disaster planning is just another way to make money. No disaster will ever hit my company – Well, tell that to the businesses shut down, or even destroyed, when the World Trade Centre came down. Tell that to the businesses that had to shut and evacuate their people as their neighbourhoods were washed out by Hurricane Katrina. Ask the beachside resorts pummeled by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Talk to the businesses that faced the man-made threat of Y2K and couldn't know if it would affect them or not. Speak to the businesses closed and persons whose jobs were eliminated due to the \$2 billion lost during the SARS crisis. A disaster will hit, we just don't know when.

Myths are just that... something that may or may not be true. But faced with uncertainty, it is best to be prepared. Cenera experts have during the last decade provided broad and sustained improvements to clients' organizational effectiveness and business performance – and our approach to pandemic response support is no different: we work with your organization to meet your requirements and desired outcomes. Cenera's goal is to integrate business continuity planning with your current plans, operating environment and business processes. Most importantly we work with you to ensure a plan is practical and of great value when the moment of truth arrives.

To set up an appointment with one of our experts go to www.cenera.ca or call 403.290.0466