

News

Do CXOs Understand Business Continuity?

By Abhinna Shreshtha, May 29, 2009 04:01 PM



Terror attacks, bomb blasts, cyclones, earthquakes; India has seen it all in the last few years. But for a primarily services country, we still maintain a highly cavalier attitude towards disaster recovery and business continuity.

The main reason is most corporates do not understand what business continuity stands for. The fact that besides a data back-up, it is also important to get people and process up and running. And this is where most Indian companies fail, according to Nitin Khanapurkar, senior director of Deloitte.

"There is no co-ordination or strategic backing when it comes to business continuity planning (BCP) in corporate India. Companies tend to look more from the perspective of IT infrastructure, like data backups, mirror sites, etc.," he said.

Ask any CXO and he is likely to club disaster recovery (DR) and business continuity as the same thing. This definition is erroneous as Atul Hemani, MD of Omnitech Enterprise Services explains, "Business continuity encompasses everything. It is an overall plan on how a company can recover functionality in the event of a disaster or disruption. Disaster recovery is a subset of BCP."

The sorry state of BCP in India is due to three reasons lack of awareness, an unwillingness to invest, and the mindset of the average Indian corporate. Experts agree that disaster plans need to be drilled into workers. As one expert put it, "In the United States, every child knows the importance of fire drills. This mindset stays on even when they grow up and start working. Hence employees and business managers in the US pay more attention to disaster planning activities, even if it is as simple as a fire drill."

All said, having a business continuity plan in place is no easy task. It takes months and years of perseverance and investments. From the IT perspective, ideally, a company should have a network of geographically remote disaster recovery sites for data back-up and alternate office space for, but this does not happen overnight.

To start off, get your baseline strategies in place. "Your employees must understand that there is a process in case of a disaster, and how to go about following it. Constant mock drills will keep them on their toes," advises Khanapurkar.

He gave an interesting case of a Texan company that had a complete disaster plan in place in case of a hurricane. However, they did not conduct mock drills, with the result that when a hurricane did strike, the employees panicked and did not know what to do.

Natural and man-made disasters cannot be predicted. They might be rare, but cause widespread disruption and loss. Maybe it is time Indian CXOs adopt the Boy Scout motto – 'Be Prepared'.