Merrycon's Approach to Implementing BCM

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a management discipline that provides a framework for an organisation to build resilience, providing the capability for an effective response to events that might threaten it. A key element of this discipline is the process of preparing contingency plans for situations that may never occur. Such plans aim to ensure that an organisation's critical functions continue to operate during a crisis, and that the remainder can be recovered in a controlled manner.

All too often, the time, complexity, and cost of introducing BCM and developing contingency plans are seen as disproportionate to the benefit. To overcome these obstacles, Merrycon provides a package of structured consultancy aimed at enabling organisations to introduce BCM and deploy effective plans quickly, easily, and at an affordable price.

The package is used in a five-stage process that follows the Good Practice Guidelines for BCM published by the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) and international standards such as ISO 22301.

This document describes Merrycon's package and provides potential clients with an idea of the costs and time that will be involved in a successful implementation of BCM, and forms part of the "Merrycon's Approach to..." series. Other documents in this series include:

Exercising

Reviewing a BCM Programme

Ongoing BCM

Measuring Resilience

BC Tools

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1. Introduction

Merrycon's approach to Business Continuity Management (BCM) is based on the Good Practice Guidelines developed by the Business Continuity Institute (BCI). The approach aims to implement the BCM process using a package of structured consultancy and software to a point where it can be handed over to the client quickly, easily, and at an affordable price.

1.1. BCI's Good Practice Guidelines

The BCI was established in 1994 to promote the art and science of BCM, and to enable members to obtain guidance and support from fellow practitioners.

The BCI's guidelines were written and compiled by BCI members, and aim to provide a generic framework for successful BCM. They are presented as an iterative process, as shown in the diagram below, the outcome of which is to embed BCM in the organisation's culture:

The guidelines are available from the BCI's website (www.thebci.org).

1.1. Merrycon's Approach

Merrycon's approach to implementing BCM is based on 3 core principles:

- **Simplicity** – keep it simple and avoid complexity
- **Achievability** – implement the process iteratively in short, clearly defined, and achievable steps
- **Control** – use a structured project based approach to complete the initial iteration

The approach recognises that incident response and business continuity planning are key elements of the discipline, and has as its priority the development and

deployment of effective Business Continuity and Incident Management plans. The aims of these plans are to ensure that an organisation can effectively respond to an incident that threatens its operations or reputation, that its critical functions continue to operate during a crisis, and that the remainder can be recovered in a controlled manner.

1.2. Merrycon's Package

Merrycon's package of structured consultancy follows the BCI's guidelines, taking an organisation through an initial iteration of the BCM process. It provides the client with the expertise and tools to continue the process of building resilience and ensuring that it has the capability for an effective response to events that might threaten it.

The structured consultancy is provided in a five-stage project, the end point of which is the handover of the BCM process to the client, as shown in the diagram below:
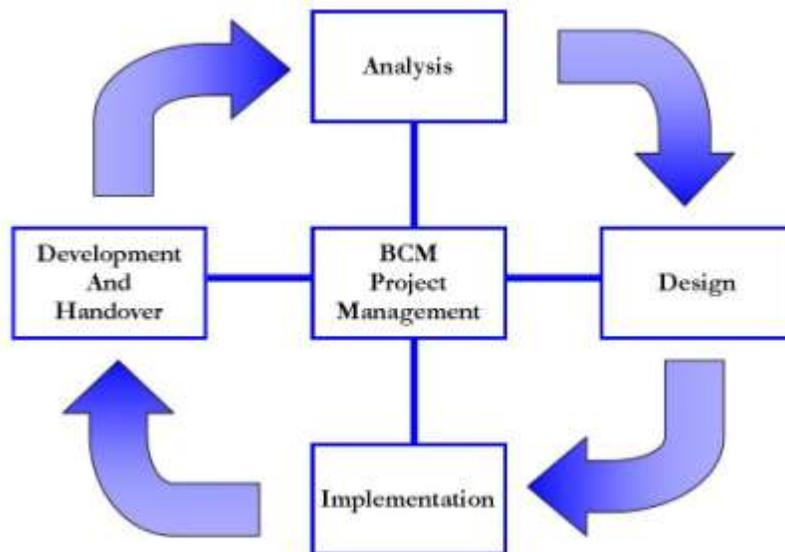
The five stages of the project consist of:

- **BCM Project Management** – defining the initial BCM project, developing a Business Continuity Policy, and planning and managing the work that needs to be undertaken
- **Analysis** – understanding and documenting the impact on the client's operations of an unplanned event that causes major disruption and identifying continuity and recovery requirements
- **Design** – reviewing current resilience, determining Business Continuity strategies and tactics, and designing an appropriate Incident Response Structure
- **Implementation** – implementing the Incident Response Structure, preparing and agreeing the content of the Business Continuity and Incident Management plans, and developing the plans

- **Deployment and Handover** – the deployment of the plans, establishment of programmes for training and awareness, exercising, maintenance, and review, and the handover of the BCM process to the client

2. Core Principles

The core principles that form the basis of Merrycon's approach to BCM are the result of many years of experience in a wide variety of types and sizes of organisation across diverse sectors from Financial Services through Retail and Manufacturing to Local Government, Charities, and Health.

2.1. Simplicity

Business Continuity is a straightforward and easy to understand management disciple, it does not need to be made complex.

Over complication of Business Continuity wastes time, money, and resources. It also alienates the executives who need to approve the budget and confuses those that need to use plans to respond to an incident.

There is no point in developing complex contingency plans that are "over-engineered". One of the important lessons learnt from September 11th was "Plans that were too detailed were less effective. The minutia of highly detailed recovery plans was often discarded during the recovery process."

2.2. Achievability

There is no intrinsic merit in the Business Continuity process – its value is in the achievement of an improvement in an organisation's resilience and an effective response to events that might threaten it.

Because of the volatile nature of organisations, it is all too easy to embark on the implementation of the Business Continuity process only to find that the organisation and/or the environment in which it operates have significantly change before anything has been achieved.

Overcoming this problem requires the process to be implemented iteratively in short, clearly defined, and achievable steps, with specified deliverables.

2.3. Control

Business Continuity is never the most urgent task on anyone's agenda, except when disaster strikes and it's too late. As such, there is always a tendency for the people involved in implementing the process to give their business continuity work a low priority; with the inevitable result that all too often it never gets done.

Ensuring that business continuity work gets done requires the use of a structured project based approach to ensure that the short, clearly defined, steps undertaken to complete the initial iteration of the process are successfully achieved.

3. BCM Project Management

Merrycon's five-stage approach to take an organisation through the initial iteration of implementing the BCM process is undertaken as a project. In this first stage, the initial BCM project is defined, a Business Continuity Policy is developed, and the work that needs to be undertaken is planned and managed.

3.1. Project Definition

Each stage of the BCM project has clearly defined start and end points and deliverables, and as with any other project, the definition of the work to be undertaken and its communication is critical is to its success.

This is achieved in the first stage of the project by producing a Project Definition Report, which defines the:

- Objectives
- Scope
- Tasks
- Timescales
- People involved
- Deliverables
- Milestones

This report provides a permanent, up-to-date, readily available definition of the project. It is a single document summarising the project, and is used as an aid to communication and as a definitive statement of the project scope.

Depending on the size of the organisation and the number of people that need to be involved, the work required to define the project could range from a telephone conversation through to a series of meetings and workshops from which a draft project definition is produced for subsequent finalisation and agreement by the organisation's executive.

3.2. Business Continuity Policy

Merrycon works with the client to produce a Business Continuity Policy document, which sets out the scope and governance of the BCM programme and identifies responsibilities. This document needs to be kept simple, straightforward, and to the point. Its purpose is to communicate. It identifies the principles to which the organisation aspires and against which its performance can be audited.

Again, depending on the size of the organisation and the number of people that need to be involved, the work required to developing the policy could range from a telephone conversation through to a series of meetings and workshops from which a policy document is produced for subsequent finalisation and agreement by the organisation's executive.

3.3. Project Management

The Project Definition identifies the tasks that need to be undertaken to complete the initial implementation of BCM for the client, and the Business Continuity Policy document identifies responsibilities for the tasks. Using these, Merrycon plans the work that needs to be undertaken, identifying who will undertake which task to produce estimates of the internal and external resources that will be required.

Any of the client's staff that will be working on the project need to be appropriately trained in Business Continuity. Depending on the size of the organisation and the internal resources that will be involved, this can range from simply working with Merrycon's consultant during the project and a short training session on handover, to a series of Business Continuity training courses for the variety of roles that a large organisation will require to establish its own Business Continuity function.

Merrycon will manage the project, and as part of this process will agree with the client a format that will be used for regular progress reporting.

3.4. Deliverables

There are three deliverables from this first stage of the project:

- Project Definition Report
- Business Continuity Policy
- Format to be used for progress reporting

4. Analysis

The second stage of the project involves undertaking a Business Impact Analysis (BIA), which forms the "backbone" of the BCM process. This is undertaken to understand and document the impact on the client's operations of an unplanned event that causes major disruption, and to identify what is required to recover those operations.

The objective of the Analysis stage is to discover what is key to the client, and to obtain sufficient information to prepare plans to recover the activities and facilities in the timescale required. The main deliverable is a Business Continuity Analysis Report that will form the foundation on which the Business Continuity and Incident Management Plans are developed.

4.1. Method

The analysis is carried out by interviewing the organisation's key managers or executives, or preferably, by holding one or more workshops. The participants are determined by the scope of the initial implementation of the BCM process and their detailed knowledge of their organisation's activities. The analysis needs to cover all the activities that fall within the proposed scope of the BCM programme.

For small organisations, it may well be that only one person needs to be interviewed. This person might be the General Manager, Managing Director, or Administration Manager. For larger organisations a series of interviews and workshops may be required.

Merrycon provides a briefing document for each interview and workshop, which will usually contain examples of the information that needs to be collected taken from the client's sector. Following each interview and workshop Merrycon documents the information collected and provides feedback to all participants to enable changes to be made and the information to be agreed.

Once all the information from the interviews and workshops has been agreed, Merrycon collates the information into a draft Business Continuity Analysis Report, and following a review of the report with the client will produce a final version.

4.2. Deliverables

The deliverables from the Analysis stage of the project are:

- Briefing document for each interview and workshop
- Feedback to interview and workshop participants
- Business Continuity Analysis Report

5. Design

The purpose of the third stage of the process, Design, is to determine the strategies and tactics that will enable the client to protect its ability to continue to deliver its products and services, and to identify the Incident Response Structure that will be used for the client's Business Continuity and Incident Management plans. The Design stage will also identify the work that needs to be done to implement the strategies and tactics so that the requirements identified in the Business Continuity Analysis Report can be met.

5.1. Method

Three elements of work are undertaken in the Design stage.

5.1.1. Existing Resilience and Recovery Capability

Most organisations will have already developed some contingency plans and will have put some resilience and recovery measures in place, particularly in the area of Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT). A key element of this stage is therefore to review these current measures against the requirements identified in the Business Continuity Analysis Report.

5.1.2. Strategy and Tactics

A Business Continuity strategy identifies the approach that will be used by the client to recover from the loss of a resource (an office, factory, computer system, people, electricity, etc.), which results in one or more functions becoming non-operational. The tactics identify in detail how the strategy is to be implemented.

Merrycon will work with the client to identify the most appropriate and cost effective Business Continuity strategies and tactics, and produce a Business Continuity Strategy Report that documents the:

- Agreed strategies
- Tactics to be used to implement the strategies
- Shortfall between existing resilience measures and the client's requirements
- Work that needs to be undertaken to implement the tactics

5.1.3. Incident Response Structure

Using the existing management structure of the organisation as a starting point, Merrycon will work with the client to identify the most appropriate structure for its response to to an incident that has the potential to cause significant disruption or damage to its operations or reputation. This structure will identify the:

- Response at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels
- Business Continuity and Incident Management plans to be developed

- Roles and responsibilities of the teams that will be responsible for using the plans, including the circumstances under which the team will be activated
- Control and escalation structures between the teams

For a small organisation, the strategic, tactical, and operational levels of response might be implemented as a single plan with a single response team covering all aspects of the response.

A larger organisation may implement the levels as separate plans with separate response teams at each level:

- Strategic – an Incident Management Plan, with a response team made up of the top executives
- Tactical – a number of Business Continuity Plans, each one covering a major division, product or service, or location, each with its own response team consisting of the operational management responsible for the areas covered by the plan
- Operational – detailed recovery plans for specialised support functions, such as ICT, each of which has its own specialist response team

5.2. Deliverables

The deliverables from the Design stage of the project are:

- Existing Resilience and Recovery Capability Report
- Business Continuity Strategy Report
- Incident Response Structure

6. Implementation

The fourth stage of the process entails the implementation of the Incident Response Structure and the development of effective Business Continuity and Incident Management plans.

6.1. Method

Merrycon will work the client to agree the format and content of each Business Continuity and Incident Management plan in the Incident Response Structure. For each plan that is to be developed, the client will need to identify:

- A plan owner
- Someone to take responsibility for maintaining the plan
- The team that will use the plan in response to an incident

Merrycon will develop templates for the client to use in developing the plans, which will normally be delivered to the client in Microsoft Word (this depends on the client's choice of tools used to support the BCM process – see section 8). Depending on resources available to the client, the plans will be developed from the templates by the client or by Merrycon.

The templates will contain a significant quantity of tried and tested default content that is reviewed by the client and customised as required (e.g. procedures for invoking a plan). The plans themselves will be based on the strategies and tactics agreed in the Design stage of the project.

A significant element of development of the plans is the collation any contact information that is to be included, such as key staff, suppliers, and other stakeholders. In Merrycon's experience, the time taken to collate this information can significantly delay the completion of the plans.

6.2. Deliverables

The deliverables from the implementation stage of the project are:

- Templates for Business Continuity and Incident Management plans
- Business Continuity and Incident Management plans
- Roles and responsibilities for named individuals in using and maintaining the plans

7. Deployment and Handover

The final stage of the process is the deployment of the Business Continuity and Incident Management plans, and the handover of the BCM process to the client. As part of this handover, Merrycon assists the client in specifying further programmes of work to ensure that it can improve its Business Continuity year on year with further iterations of the BCM process. These programmes cover training and awareness, exercising, maintenance, and review.

7.1. Cycle of Improvement

The work that is undertaken during this final stage of the process to establish the further programmes of work is dependent on the resources available to the client, the speed with which it wants to improve its BCM capability, and the Business Continuity standards to which it aspires.

7.1.1. Training and Awareness

All those with specific Business Continuity responsibilities need to be suitably trained, and all staff and other key stakeholders need to be made aware of the programme and their role in it. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a suitable and effective training and awareness programme.

The person who will be responsible for the ongoing management of the BCM programme once the process has been handed over to the client by Merrycon will require the most training, and much of this can be achieved by getting this individual to work with Merrycon throughout the implementation of the project to complete the initial iteration of the BCM process.

An awareness programme does not need to be anything very elaborate, but the key messages that need to be given to the different stakeholders should be identified, and a plan on how these messages are to be communicated should be determined.

7.1.2. Exercising

The effectiveness of an organisation's BCM capability will not be known until it is used, and finding this out whilst responding to a real incident is not to be recommended. Merrycon therefore recommends that the client develops and implements a programme of exercises to ensure that all aspects of the plans and personnel have been used, rehearsed, and tested over a period of time.

As a minimum, Merrycon recommends that the client undertakes a desk-based exercise for each Business Continuity and Incident Management plan that involves the team responsible for using the plan. A desk-based exercise is a vital part of ensuring that the plan is effective and workable, as well as having the added benefit of ensuring that the people responsible for reacting to an incident that might cause serious disruption are familiar with the plan and how it should

be used. It also tests the ability of the response team to work together as a team in responding to an unexpected event.

As well as assisting the client with the development of an exercise programme, Merrycon can plan, design, and run the desk-based exercises on behalf of the client. This service includes the production of a post exercise report with recommendations on how the client can improve its BCM capability.

7.1.3. Maintenance

If the client's Business Continuity arrangements are to continue to be affective, it is essential that its Business Continuity and Incident Management plans and the information that forms the foundation to the plans are kept up to date.

This is achieved by putting in place a maintenance programme to ensure that those responsible for the various elements of the BCM programme keep their information and documents current, and that up to date copies of documents are distributed to the right people.

7.1.4. Review

In order to check that its Business Continuity arrangements are adequate, effective, and up to date, the client needs to put in place a regular review of the BCM programme and its documentation.

7.2. Handover

The final part of the Merrycon approach, which is the eventual objective, is to hand over responsibility for the BCM process to the client. This entails formally handing over the management of the BCM programme to a named individual, and the delivery of a final report containing recommendations on how the client's implementation of BCM might be improved through subsequent iterations of the BCM process.

8. Tools

There are a wide variety of tools available to support the implementation of BCM and for use in incident response and management and specific areas of the process such as Exercising. The choice of tools is down to the client, and Merrycon is prepared to work with whatever tools the client has selected.

For an initial implementation of BCM though, the client is unlikely to have selected any tools. In this instance, Merrycon strongly recommends that the initial implementation of the BCM process is supported by the use of Office software, such as Microsoft's Word and Excel.

The main reason for making this recommendation is that the client should concentrate its efforts on introducing BCM to the organization, and not get distracted by trying to implement specialist software at the same time. Once the initial implementation of BCM has been successful, the use of other tools can investigated in the context of the organization having a far greater awareness of their requirements for specialist software.

In the longer term Merrycon recommends that its clients implement an appropriate set of software tools for:

- The management of the BCM process
- Incident response and management
- Crisis communications

The advantages and disadvantages of using Office tools and specialist software to support the BCM process are outlined below.

8.1. Office Tools

The main advantages of using Office tools are:

- Less training – the client's staff should require minimal training in using the templates
- Cost – the client does not usually have to purchase additional licenses
- Familiarity – the client's staff are usually familiar with Office tools, and have less difficulty when accessing the software at infrequent intervals

The main disadvantages of using Office tools are:

- Lack of data integrity – data is held in many places and there are no integrity checks in place between documents
- Maintenance control – for large organisations with many plans, keeping control of the maintenance and distribution of documents is a major problem
- Consistency – there is no control over the look, feel, and content of documents developed and maintained in Office tools
- Management – Office tools provide very little in the way of managing the BCM process, all they do is record, manipulate, and display information

8.2. Specialist Software

The main advantages of using specialist software to support the BCM process are:

- Integrity of data – the use of a database ensures that data is held just once and used wherever required
- Process Control – automated tools to assist with management and control of the maintenance, review, and document distribution process
- Consistency – there is an automatic consistency in the look, feel, and content of BCM documents developed and maintained using specialist BCM software
- Management – specialist BCM software commonly provide tools to support the management the BCM process
- Apps – many suppliers of specialist software now provide plans as Apps, enabling a move away from document based plans

The main disadvantages of using specialist software to support the BCM process are:

- Cost – a licence to use the system needs to be purchased
- Training – users require special training
- Infrequent users – people who use the system infrequently will not find it as easy to use as Word and Excel, which they are probably more familiar with
- Less flexibility – the use of specialist software inevitably means less flexibility in the look and feel of plans

9. Time and Cost

Every organisation is different, and Merrycon tailors the implementation of its five-stage project to the particular requirements of each client.

Merrycon will review the client's needs, and prepare a project proposal that best meets those needs within the client's budget. The proposal usually consists of a number of stages of work (corresponding to the stages of Merrycon's approach that the client requires), with each stage to be completed within a specified timescale at a fixed price.

The time and cost involved in the initial iteration of implementing the BCM process and the delivery of appropriate plans will be unique to each client, but Merrycon can provide some guidelines based on its experience.

9.1. Management Time

One of the barriers to implementing BCM is the perception of the amount of management time that will be taken up. Typically, Merrycon would expect each manager or executive that is involved to spend the following amount of time in each stage of the project:

- BCM Project Management – 2 hours
- Analysis – 3 hours
- Design – 2 hours
- Implementation – 2 hours
- Deployment and Handover – 4 hours

9.2. Staff Time

The client may decide to use some of its own staff to undertake some of the work involved, rather than using Merrycon's consultants. In this case Merrycon will work with the client to identify the tasks that its staff will undertake, and provide appropriate training and coaching.

In addition, time will be required to collate staff, supplier, and stakeholder contact data, and if required in training the users of the web-based Business Continuity system.

9.3. Elapse Time

There are six factors that determine the elapse time to complete the five-stage project. These are the:

- Scope of the initial BCM implementation, defined by the client's products and services and the planning horizon for the initial set of plans
- The client's existing BCM capability
- Complexity of the client's operations
- Number of managers and executives that need to be involved

- Availability of key individuals (people usually have "more urgent" tasks to complete, which can make the process long and protracted)
- Difficulty in collating the staff, supplier, and stakeholder contact data

Because of the pace of change and inherent volatility of organisations, it is Merrycon's view that a project to complete the initial iteration of implementing the BCM process must be completed within a year, and preferably within six months.

The longer the elapse time, the more likely it is that something will have changed, which will result in the need to re-work the plans before they have been developed and exercised. This can lead, in exceptional circumstances, to plans never being completed and deployed.

9.4. Merrycon's Charges

Merrycon has significant experience in using its package of structured consultancy and software to introduce BCM across a wide range of organisations, and will provide a fixed price quote for each stage of the project.

The following examples of Merrycon's charges for the full implementation of the five-stage project are provided for guidance on the likely cost of using Merrycon's services:

- **£2,000** – a simple organisation with a single combined Business Continuity and Incident Management Plan
- **£5,000** – a specialist manufacturing company based on a single site
- **£13,000** – a UK regulator based on a single site
- **£30,000** – for the head office of a UN agency

9.5. Other Costs

In addition to Merrycon's charges and the cost of software, there are potentially three other significant areas of cost to clients in the introduction BCM:

- **Improving Resilience** – putting in place facilities to improve resilience (particularly for ICT)
- **Establishing Recovery Facilities** – putting in place facilities for recovery in the event of an incident that causes serious disruption
- **Training and Awareness** – implementing a training and awareness programme, including training in Mataco, if required

The cost of these will depend on the each client's requirements and existing situation, and can range from the trivial to the substantial.