



BUSINESS CONTINUITY TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

At Automata we use the standards of the Business Continuity Institute as the basis of all our work and encourage our clients to adopt those same standards. The BCI recognises two distinct aspects of training within the Business Continuity Management (BCM) programme. There is the **Popular Enlightenment** type of training that seeks to inform the whole population of an enterprise about the broad subject of BCM. At another level there is a need to develop the **Specialist Skills** that are necessary to deal with such aspects as Recovery Management, Emergency Management and Crisis Management.

OUR APPROACH

Over the years we have developed the view that all training should be approached at a sensible gradient, both for the trainer and the trainee. We consider that it is far more effective to build upon the solid foundation of a student's personal experience than attempt to impose a strange discipline on a base of uncertainty in unfamiliar territory. The most powerful form of learning is to discover something for oneself. Therefore the most effective education occurs in an environment of self-discovery.

We believe that it is in our interest and that of our clients to share our knowledge and experience and to compare it with theirs. In the process we expect both parties to assimilate information, increase their understanding and form new ideas.

Popular Enlightenment Programmes

Once the Business Continuity Plan(s) has been developed and handed over to its users the typical Business Continuity Awareness programme runs like this:

- Divisional Emergency Awareness Workshops – introducing the basic principles of BCM and Emergency Planning to managers throughout the enterprise.
- Business Unit Emergency Awareness Workshops – using our materials, the divisional managers then extend the awareness throughout the enterprise.
- Induction Module – working with the Business Continuity Manager we help them develop an Emergency Awareness module for use as an integral part of the standard induction programme.

We feel it is quite important for all staff to have a clear understanding of what has been done and what is planned in connection with such important Health and Safety issues as Emergency Evacuation procedures.

Specialist Skills

The special skills of Business Continuity fall into two distinct categories. There are the pre-planning and preparation skills that are required to develop the plans and strategies that we might call the Pro-Active skill set. These skills are acquired or transferred through an education process. The other set of skills are those very practical 'heat of the moment' skills that are needed to implement or apply the plans and strategies. This second group can be called the Reactive skill set. Reactive skills need to be developed through experiential training.

Pro-Active BCM Education

We have a range of educational offerings that can be tailored to suit individual needs. Our flagship course is the world-renowned Business Continuity Masterclass.

- **The Business Continuity Masterclass** covering both theory and practice has been the *de facto* standard training course for Business Continuity practitioners around the world since 1994. This course is ideal preparation for entrance to the BCI.
- **The Fastpath Tutorial** is a Masterclass derivative, covering the full range of Business Continuity skills with the opportunity to pursue some aspects in more depth than in an open course. This course is also ideal preparation for entering the BCI.
- **BCM for Executives** is a ½ day workshop, introducing and explaining Business Continuity, its relevance to their operation and why they need it. It is an ideal way of gaining commitment to the process.
- **BCM Theory and Practice** is a 5-day in-depth course, exploring various approaches that can be adopted in each of the major skill areas of BCM. The student material includes the Automata toolkit of checklists and templates to support the implementation of a full Business Continuity programme. It provides a thorough preparation for the full-time practitioner.

We also offer a wide range of workshops focussing on specific aspects of Business Continuity Management. Due to the wide-ranging nature of the course materials required by our varied customer base, we have adopted a modular development strategy.

Each course or workshop is composed of a number of elementary modules covering specific aspects at various levels. Thus we are able to pull together the core material from the Automata Training Library for each customised course without recourse to a full-scale course development project. Development is limited to linking the modules and formatting the material to reflect the client's culture and approach to the subject.

Re-Active BCM Training

Generally speaking this type of activity forms part of an overall Business Continuity Management programme. Normally we would expect that programme to be managed and delivered from within and we would be acting in a supporting or supplementary role.

The element of discovery is an important feature throughout this type of training. By asking the team members to proof-read the draft plan we are inviting them to discover what it is and how it works. Later on by asking them to test the components and challenge the assumptions we are leading them further down that same path of discovery.

There are 5 levels of re-active training and two styles of scenario or background that we can employ as training vehicles, internal or external. With an internal format we take the actual operating environment, with all its strengths and weaknesses, as the basis of our training model. This has the advantage of being directly related to likely, and therefore credible, situations. On the other hand it may stifle the development of original thinking and can even be disquieting in certain circumstances.

An external format is where we use a case study type of approach and put the students into imaginary but realistic situations. This has the advantage of greater flexibility in the number and type of problems that can be posed. It is also very useful when the participants come from differing backgrounds because no one has a 'home' advantage. The difficulty is in ensuring the transfer of knowledge from an artificial experience across into the regular working environment. This transference is achieved in the short-term by means of structured debriefings that are supplemented by progress and achievement reports based on accurate observation.

Plan Familiarisation (Delivery and Introduction)

The objectives of this first level of training are to ensure that:

- All of the users are familiar with the contents of the plan.
- They agree with the aims and structure of the plan.
- They understand and accept their roles and responsibilities.
- To capture suggestions for improvements.

All the plan users are asked to proof-read the plan and attend a local discussion or debate with a view to suggesting improvements and identifying (from their point of view) the key processes and critical areas within their business unit.

Plan familiarisation occurs within each business unit. It is normally delivered from within, perhaps with the aid of some simple instructions. The link forward to the next level comes from the concerns expressed about key processes and critical areas.

Plan Adoption Programme (Handover and Trial)

The objectives of this second level of training are to ensure that:

- Everyone has a clear understanding of the processes, procedures and roles
- The proposed solutions are practical and likely to be effective

All the plan users are invited to a workshop where we talk through the plan using a simple story line to explore the implications. Participants are encouraged to highlight the dependencies and assumptions within the plan. The programme then continues with element testing, in which the team is expected to:

- Test the call out procedures during working hours and weekends.
- Check recovery procedures and identify areas for improvement.
- Check timings for all recovery operations.
- Check availability of resources and facilities.

Plan adoption programmes occur within the individual business units. The workshop is usually a half-day event followed by a progress and achievement report based on our observations. A number of items for element testing are normally identified at the initial workshop. Then members of the recovery team subsequently carry out the actual tests. The link forward comes from the dependencies and assumptions that need to be explored.

Plan Rehearsals (Development and Confidence)

The objectives of this third level of training are to ensure that:

- Individuals are able to practice their roles as outlined in the plan.
- They each develop the capability to perform their allotted tasks.
- Areas for further improvement are highlighted.
- Timings are established for the decision making and recovery processes.

The plan users are asked to deal with a realistic scenario and they are coached to success. Participants are encouraged to express their views about the timings and business needs within the scenario situation. These views are evaluated during the debriefing and are then captured in a progress and achievements report.

Plan rehearsals occur within each business unit. They are normally a half-day event based on a specially developed scenario script. At this level there are relatively few messages and interruptions for the participants. The timings and business needs take us forward to the next level.

Team Exercise (Proof and Competence)

The objectives of this fourth level of training are to:

- Develop and demonstrate competence within the recovery teams.
- Explore and develop co-ordination processes between unit level teams.
- Establish internal and external interdependencies.

These events are run as an observed exercise under the direction of a control team that provides little or no coaching at this level. The participants are expected to deal with an unfolding situation, dealing with messages and interruptions as they go.

Team exercises may involve more than one business unit working together to solve a number of problems. They are often full-day events based on a complex script that allows for variable outcomes as the participants bring the situation under control in their own way. We use a single stream scenario whereby all the participants are working together with the same information available to everyone. The communication and co-ordination aspects together with the interdependencies provide a link forward to the next level.

Full Exercise (Expertise and Certainty)

The objectives at this fifth level of training are to:

- Develop and demonstrate competence across a number of teams occupied with different aspects of a major event.
- Explore and develop hierarchical co-ordination between teams concerned with differing levels of responsibility and areas of interest.
- Provide intensive management training under emergency conditions.

These events are run for a number of teams acting in concert under close observation. The control team offers no coaching or support. The participants are expected to deal with an unfolding situation, dealing with information, messages and interruptions. They are also expected to interpret and verify the information they receive, resolve data conflicts and to route messages and information amongst themselves.

Full exercises are often run out of normal working hours and time compression is sometimes used to ensure that the tempo doesn't flag and to stimulate handovers and other long-term considerations. These events are run as a multi-stream scenario so different groups and individuals may have different information at different times.

The link forward from a full exercise is a realistic command and control model that has been proved, together with the certainty that comes from having put it all into practice.

The benefits of this type of training do need to be reinforced on a regular basis otherwise those hard won skills and confidence are soon dissipated.

Jim Burtles, FBCI