Best Practices in Business Continuity

Baird turns experience into business resilience

INDUSTRY

Finance

PRODUCT

Business Continuity Management

HIGHLIGHTS

- **More than 100** offices on three continents
- **Employee-owned** wealth management firm with more than $152 billion in assets
- **Continually improving** participation in annual exercises using xMatters

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Pamela Volk ▸ Senior Vice President and Business Continuity Manager, Baird

Milwaukee-based and employee-owned, Robert W. Baird is a leader in wealth management. The company has more than 100 offices and 3,200 employees worldwide, and has been named on Fortune's list of 100 Best Companies to Work for 12 consecutive years. Company leaders felt compelled to maintain safety & continuity worldwide, and invested in technology and best practices to improve business continuity.

Challenges

Pamela Volk sits on the Board of Directors for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and chairs its Education Committee. So Baird's senior vice president and Business Continuity Manager's observations regarding business continuity carry some weight.

When she came to Baird in 2010, business continuity software was not in use. A mass communication tool had been purchased but never implemented. After further evaluation of several tools, she tapped xMatters for communications since she had used xMatters at a previous company.

There was plenty of work to do. Only about 30 percent of associates had their contact information in the system of record. So on top of the technical and logistical challenges, Baird had to engage workers who were placed literally around the world.

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> It used to take three hours to reach everyone.
> Now it takes just minutes.

Pamela Volk ▸ Senior Vice President and Business Continuity Manager, Baird

Solution

Once a crisis situation has started, Volk says operational continuity falls into four distinct phases:

- **Response:** Notify people, mobilize teams, and begin business continuity activities

- **Recovery:** Bring critical business processes to an operational state

- **Restoration:** Facilities, IT and third-party vendors restore physical or technical environments for resumption of normal operations

- **Resumption:** Return to normal operations or whatever the new normal is

The key throughout these four phases is communication.

Gaining commitment

The response would only be as effective as the contact information in the system. So Baird and Erin Jodat, BC analyst, set in place automated weekly updates from the PeopleSoft system.

The Business Continuity department is a team of two, but has a network of 50 people, two people in every department worldwide. Only Business Continuity personnel log into the system. During an incident they use xMatters to reach out to associates using a specific order of devices, starting with work email, work phone and mobile phone.

Benefits

Baird uses xMatters to kick off the majority of their exercises and rehearsals including a full building evacuation drill. More than 1,200 associates walked down 28 flights of stairs in the corporate office. Jodat kicked off the mass notification from her iPad on the 28th floor. The drill involved local firefighters and police for support and inspections.

"Both my husband and son are firefighters," Volk says. I don't want them searching for people in a building when we can account for them in other ways."

Volk says she learned a few lessons along the way as well:

- Don't wait until the incident to test the system

- When it's a life threatening situation where firefighters and police are involved, timeliness is important

- Some people don't answer 800 numbers, so give them an Outlook contact card and customize the system so the caller ID shows your business number calling

Remember how only 30 percent of associates had their mobile numbers in the Business Continuity system? The drill garnered nearly 100 percent participation and started the evacuation within minutes.

"That's a huge deal," Volk says. "It used to take three hours to reach everyone. Now it takes just minutes."

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