



WHITE PAPER

Split Staffing

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Split Staffing -

Preparation for an Event - Ease During an Incident.

Introduction.

There has been more attention paid to business continuity and disaster recovery since 9/11, Katrina and the other terrorist and natural incidents that have occurred since.

If you are an enterprise, especially a financial institution, you have no choice but to follow regulations and put in the kinds of technical and business solutions that ensure, in some cases, that you have no disaster to recover from -- but rather solutions that procedures that support business resiliency, not business continuity.

But many mid-sized and small businesses have not really considered or may not feel that they can afford to integrate business continuity processes into their business process or deploy recovery solutions.

Every business, who has paying clients should really take the time to integrate business continuity process and solutions into their business.

One way is to consider split staffing.

This article looks at split staffing and its benefits as well as impact to a company's bottom line.

Split Staffing

What is Split Staffing?

Split Staffing is a process where a company's business functions are split between two different sites that are at least 50-60 miles apart. It permits the mission critical processes of a company to be continued, uninterrupted, in case one site experiences an incident that potentially renders the business function performed in that site, unavailable.

Determining if Split Staffing Is Right For You.

Split staffing can be deployed, even for a business of one. However, to determine whether it is appropriate for your business, you must perform a business continuity review of your business to determine the risks of not performing split staffing.

Split staffing is a disaster recovery solution that is identified after performing a business continuity review of your business that will help you to determine how long your business can remain viable with a loss of revenue; e.g., with an inability to generate revenue.

Split staffing, although a business-as-usual process (meaning, it becomes a regular part of doing business) mitigates risk to your business and permits a resilient business, a business that can continue generating revenue during the most damaging event.

Most importantly, split staffing permits your business to continue while staff at the primary location focus on safety and return to home. It is difficult to face, but every business owner must consider the impact to their business at the loss of staff. In major events, staff lose their lives or they retreat from psychological distress. Can your business withstand the loss of mission critical staff who perform a mission critical business function?

Split staffing responds to that question and lowers the risk of complete loss of your business.

Step One: Business Continuity Review

NOTE: I want to make it very clear that the points that I am discussing herein are not indicative a complete business continuity review and that you should contact a professional to ensure a proper assessment.

In order to determine what your business continuity requirements are, ask these questions:

How many days / hours can my business last after an event.

Try to think of events as the following:

Complete disaster - your business, the locale, the local infrastructure are fully impacted.

Examples: Major terrorist or natural event that impacts the complete town, roads going in and out, electricity is out as well as communications.

Mid-Sized disaster - your building is impacted.

Examples: Terrorist or building-related problem, such as plumbing issues, unavailability of water, hygienic services, electrical outage, etc.

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Encapsulated disaster - your business is impacted.

Examples: Lack of credit or funds to fund the business; actions that impact your business as a result of a disgruntled employee; computer problems that impact your ability to access mission critical business data, flu/pandemic.

Time	Impact	Impact to your Business	Days Out
Complete Disaster	Local infrastructure: •Streets •Water •Electrical •Communications	Completely Shut-down	Depending on the largess and impact of the event: 7-30 days (or more)
Mid-Sized Disaster	The building in which your Company resides	Completely Shut-out of the building	Depending on the largess and impact of the event: 7-30 days (or more)
Encapsulated disaster	Your specific business	Depending on the event, the business could be closed or the issue can be circumvented while it is responded to	Depending on the impact of the event and how quickly it can be fixed: 1-7 days

Is this a complete review? By no means, this article is not a primer in performing a Business Continuity review, however, the point remains that you must understand:

1. How long your company can be unable to perform mission critical business process.

How to answer: Make a listing of those business functions that comprise your business and rate them as: mission critical, critical and Low Priority:

Retail could be:

1. Facilities
2. Sales
3. Cashier
4. Business Owner/Manager
5. Accountant
6. Operations Manager
7. Technical Manager

Services could be:

1. Account Executives
2. Accountant
3. Business Owner/Manager
4. Operations Manager
5. Service providers
6. Technical Manager

If your company went through each of the events stated above, what business functions are mission critical to continue through the event and during the transition back to normalcy.

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This is an important question and proper time must be spent in answering this question.

If you are in retail, what would you need to do to continue your business or revenue generating income if your original business is “out” for 1 day, 3 days, 5 days, 2 weeks, etc.

Maybe you would be out of business. Or, maybe you would be able to transition to a web-based business or you have another store 50 miles away that is not impacted. How long could you continue business without these mission critical business functions?

If a service provider, consider those members of your staff who own the client relationship and who provide the services. How long could you continue business functions?

2. What tools support your business.

Now that you have identified the mission critical, critical and low priority business functions, you need to ask what tools support them.

List out the tools that: 1) form the foundation of your business and 2) are required by each business function x the type of incident as defined, above.

Business Requirement:

Technical

- Application Servers
- Web Servers
- Database Servers
- Web-based Content Servers
- Applications
- Email Services
- PDA Services
- Workstations or Laptops
- Microsoft Office and related licenses
- Network Equipment: for Lan/Wan (if you have alternate sites for your technical environment)
- Phones: landlines
- Cellular Phones
- Contracts with Network Carriers
- Contracts with Cellular Carriers
- PKI
- Remote Access Solution

Administrative

- Stationery
- Sales Forms
- Time Sheets
- Paper, Pencils, Pens, Pads

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Financial

- Book-keeping Software
- Tax forms or reporting software/forms
- Communication with staff re: time sheets, sales
- Payroll process/software

3. Listing of Business Functions, Criticality, Tools by Incident Type

Role	Criticality	Number of Staff	Required Tools	Number of Staff Required during an Incident		
				Full	Building	Business
Account Manager	Mission Critical	2	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Access to Client-based data PDA Travel Accounts Car/Gas Credit Card Conference Bridge Service Printer Email	2	2	2
Accountant	Critical	1	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Communication to Staff - Meeting Place PDA Access to Company financial data Printer	1	1	1
Sales Person	Low Priority	7	Not available during an incident	0	2	7

Now you should be able to get a picture of what you need to have available in terms of staffing and tools in order to keep you business going through any one of the events. Now, this is not a thorough review, just an example to facilitate this article.

Then ask yourself, **“If I lost everyone at one time, could my business continue.”** This is a very difficult question to ask, but unfortunately, one that must be asked. Another question to ask is: **“If I put my staff in two different locations could that improve the viability of my business during the worst case scenario.”**

Once you identify the above, you should have enough information to see what your business requires in order to make it through anyone of the 3 events.

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Step Two: Identify Your Risk

In order to identify your risk, you need to ask how long your business can go without generating income - based on the business continuity review in Step One.

You can measure risk by identifying your income during quarterly increments of one year. Remember that your business has peak times. Remember that you cannot control man-made and natural events -- so you have to consider loss of your business during peak earning periods.

Create a graph that identifies what your business earns by quarter, the business functions that support that and the tools required to continue your business during the worst-case event. An outage during a low revenue generating period may be difficult but may not close your business while an outage during peak times could put your business out in 2 days. Think of those scenarios that could impact your business and align the functions, resources and tools.

Rate your risk of even during these periods by high, medium and low. Add in the Recovery Time Objective (RTO) to determine how many days you can be out of business in order to still generate the highest revenue you have generated for that period for the duration of your business.

Period	Revenue	Req Bus Function	Number of Staff	Risk	RTO	Required Tools
1Q	\$1.5M	Account Manager Operations Manager	8	Low	3 Days	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Access to Client-based data PDA Travel Accounts Car/Gas Credit Card Conference Bridge Service Printer Email Remote Access
2Q	2M	Account Manager Operations Manager Technical Manager	12	Med	2 Days	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Access to Client-based data PDA Travel Accounts Car/Gas Credit Card Conference Bridge Service Printer Email Remote Access

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Period	Revenue	Req Bus Function	Number of Staff	Risk	RTO	Required Tools
3q	\$5M	Account Manager Operations Manager Technical Manager	16	High	.5 Day	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Access to Client-based data PDA Travel Accounts Car/Gas Credit Card Conference Bridge Service Printer Email Remote Access
4Q	\$3.5M	Account Manager Operations Manager Technical Manager Accountant	12	High	1 Day	Cell Phone Computer or Laptop Connection to Servers Access to Client-based data PDA Travel Accounts Car/Gas Credit Card Conference Bridge Service Printer Email

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Step Three: Make Your Decision

Now that you have performed the business continuity review, decide how much revenue the business can live without and still be viable. That becomes the scenario that you have to create solutions for -- that becomes your disaster recovery solution.

Your Split Staffing Solution

Split Staffing can be performed in various increments based on what it takes for your business to continue in the worst case scenario and the money your business has to create the solutions that support the split staff.

What is important here, is listing out the technology and tools that your business needs in order to become viable. This will be a determining factor in the cost of split staffing.

Depending on your business' requirements your disaster recovery solutions could include various flavors of:

- Sending data off-site on a daily/weekly basis to an off-site data storage facility and setting up an office in another town through a hotel room where you have put 5 laptops, software, phones and administrative materials in a storage facility or with the hotel or office building.
- Copying client data to disk, putting them in a safety box at a bank 50 miles away and storing materials at a relative where you could continue business.
- Putting your servers in a co-located data center.
- Creating an alternate seating environment for your staff to continue business.
- Re-aligning your technical architecture to handle fail-over over a MAN or WAN and creation of a secondary data center to handle the secondary side of your application/server kit to support failover.
- Split-staffing

What do we mean by "split-staffing" in relation to these solutions. Remember the two questions you asked earlier?

"If I lost everyone at one time, could my business continue."

"If I put my staff in two different locations could that improve the viability of my business during the worst case scenario."

There are two basic ways to split staff:

1. A literal split of the staff so that you have a microcosm of your business working from a single alternate or several alternate sites.
2. A split of mission critical business functions so that these staff members are never are in the same place at the same time.
3. A split of mission critical business functions so that some staff overlap sometimes during the week, and are split on others.

Add the answer to the technical/logistical solutions identified above.

Split Staffing

- Sending data off-site on a daily/weekly basis to an off-site data storage facility and setting up an office in another town through a hotel room where you have put 5 laptops, software, phones and administrative materials in a storage facility or with the hotel or office building.

If you identify that your technology manager is a mission critical business function, you could have your technical team or members of your technical team work at alternate locations 3x a week. This could be a hotel room, their homes, an alternate office with remote access to the technical environment.

- Copying client data to disk, putting them in a safety box at a bank 50 miles away and storing materials at a relative where you could continue business.

Here, consider a relative or aligning with a temporary worker organization in the city you would be going to for additional help. You will have to consider that they will be over-taxed with people like you in case of an event in the city in which your business resides, but do your homework and work through the options.

- Putting your servers in a co-located data center.

Here you remove a great risk to your daily business and you can further remove risk of possible loss of technical staff who may work in the home office. Once your technical environment and client/financial data is off-site, you can hire technical staff to manage your servers who do not need to be in your immediate area.

- Creating an alternate seating environment for your staff to continue business.

Here you can perform a straight split of your business function or just perform a split between mission critical business functions. Perhaps between trading floor and operations; between account managers and accountant. Again, you can determine that by your business requirements.

- Re-aligning your technical architecture to handle fail-over over a MAN or WAN and creation of a secondary data center to handle the secondary side of your application/server kit to support failover.

Although an expensive solution, along with this is could potentially come an alternate site for staff - or outsourcing of certain business functions - to eliminate risk of loss of mission critical tools and staff in case of an event.

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Summary

Split staffing is an important tool in the tool-case of disaster recovery solutions for small, medium and enterprise companies and corporations. In saying that it is a tool identifies that a decision to use this concept requires a great deal of planning and that it is just one of the many solutions that a can be considered. It must be cost-effective tool yet ensure that the mission critical business functions that are an integral part of the viable business can be secured in times of a worst case scenario. No business is too small to consider split staffing.

Another thing to remember is that split staffing is important for the psychological well-being of staff during and after an event. The ability for a company to re-bound after an event is based directly on the staff that are available to keep the mission critical business functions going during the worst days of their lives, the lives of their Colleagues, their business and possibly their country's.

Consider the full impact of an event on your business and remember that your staff are part of the equation. They are human and their humanness requires attention to their physical and psychological well-being.

Split staffing can support both your concerns for your business which means your business can continue to generate revenue as a result of safe, healthy business process and the staff that carry them out.