

A red door with a sign that says "SHUT HAPPENS!" hanging from it. The sign is white with black text and is attached to the door with a string. The door has a brass handle and a lock. The background is white.

EARTH- QUAKES FLOODS SNOW STORMS POWER OUTAGES EQUIP- MENT BREAK- DOWNS...

Disruption and adversity
are just harsh facts of
life for business

The good news is
there are simple steps
that you can take to
help your business
'get thru'.

GETTING YOUR BUSINESS READY TO 'GET THRU' IS PARTLY ABOUT DOING SOME PLANNING AND PARTLY ABOUT ENSURING YOU DEVELOP PRACTICES TO BECOME MORE RESILIENT.

This short guide will take you through steps that help you with both. Each area will have a what, a how, and a why, as well as links to further resources or help at the end of the guide. It's not hard. There are simple, practical easy things that will get you well on the way to surviving in a crisis and potentially thriving in the aftermath.

Action List Summary

This list is intended to get you started with simple practical actions that can start building your organisations resilience. Pick one – and get started.

Page		
4	Make connections with industry members	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Plan a morning tea crisis scenario session with staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Compile a staff contact list that can be accessed in a crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Review how you store electronic data and backup systems	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Ask a staff member, "what is our business about?" to strengthen unity of purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Ask a staff member for problem solutions and ideas for improving the business	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Think: how do I lead, would I follow me?	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Organise a social event – get to know your team better	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Test your backup plans for working from an alternate location	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Make time to work ON your business, not just in it	<input type="checkbox"/>



WHAT

Awareness of external environment

Don't rest on your laurels – sure you worked hard to get your business running smoothly but don't stop now. You need to be constantly alert to changing conditions. Crises for your business are not necessarily natural disasters, a slow creep of changing customer tastes can be just as life critical for your business as an earthquake.

HOW

Be involved in your industry association and your local Chamber of Commerce; get to know your neighbours, your customers, your suppliers, your competitors, your local community.

Review – is your insurance cover adequate for today's environment?

Ask – Why would people stop buying from us?

WHY

The more people you know and interact with, the more information they will funnel your way that is relevant to your business. This information may enable you to adapt your business before a crisis develops. In a disaster situation, these relationships may well be what gets you through – perhaps your competitor has spare equipment that you can borrow, perhaps your neighbour has spare space you can utilise if yours is damaged, perhaps your suppliers will be thinking of your needs ahead of their other customers?

WHAT

Identify core business needs

- What are the things your business needs to operate and how might they be vulnerable?
- How vulnerable to damage are your premises?
- How vulnerable are your key suppliers?
- What are your risks in getting things you need to operate?

HOW

The easiest way to do this is to have a morning tea or Friday drinks and put some scenarios to your team.

These can range from the simple; If you are a bakery, then discuss – what do we do if we come in one morning and the oven does not work, to the more complicated; what do we do if there is a fire in our building and everything inside is damaged?, Make sure you consider people, premises, processes and technology.

WHY

The point is not to come up with right or wrong answers but to explore just what your options may be as well as revealing the key vulnerabilities of your business. These sessions may result in follow up plans or agreements with others, or they may simply provide you with a pre thought out course of action that can be easily set in motion in the heat of a crisis.

Don't do this alone – your staff will have ideas, access to other networks or resources and they need to be ready to roll these out in the event of a crisis – remember, you may not be there. If your staff are not used to being involved in the firm's decision making, then this is a great way to get them involved which grows their sense of ownership and loyalty – but it may take time for this to develop. **Make it fun and keep repeating it.**

WHAT

Getting back together

- Do you know how to contact your staff, your suppliers and your key customers if your IT system is down and you cannot get into your office?
- Do you have alternative contact information for when landline or mobile networks are down?
- Does anyone else in your organisation know where to find this information if you are not there?
- Do your staff and their families have a plan for communicating in a crisis?

HOW

Just do it! Compile a list; make multiple copies in both electronic (mobile phone, USB stick or in the cloud) and paper format and diary a reminder to check that it is up to date periodically. Talk to your staff about what they, and their families would require.

WHY

Being able to contact each other is a key first step to beginning recovery from a major disaster. How much of those precious first few days following a disaster do you want to have to spend on such simple tasks when you could be getting on with the process of getting back into business.

WHAT

Backup your data

Be clear about just what data is critical to the operation of your business. Most firms ensure their accounting data is backed up – but what about your customer contact lists, process manuals, important contracts? Is the information stored on your mobile phone also stored elsewhere? Is there always a backup copy off site?

HOW

Ask yourself these questions:

- Where is your backup data stored?
- What kind of disaster would destroy your back up data too? How do you reduce this risk?
- How would you restore that data – What equipment do you need? – is that easily obtainable?
- Do I need to consider other options such as cloud computing?
- What information, that is vital for business, is NOT on your computers or backups?
- Does anyone else in your organisation know where to find and retrieve this information if you were not there?

WHY

This depends on the nature of your business but generally **the quicker you can get your key systems up and running, the less interruption** to your cash-flow and risk of customer loss.



WHAT

Be clear about what your business is trying to achieve

In the event of a crisis, **speedy decisions are often needed** without all of the information you may normally rely on. You and your team need to be really clear about just what your business is all about. Can you state this in 3-4 sentences?

HOW

Ask each staff member to state what your business is all about in 3-4 sentences. Do you get different answers? Perhaps, you need to remind them once again!

WHY

Unless you and your staff are clear about your goals and priorities, you cannot restore your business in the event of a crisis.



WHAT'S YOUR SUPERHERO ELEVATOR PITCH?

WHAT

Cultivate Open-mindedness and adaptability

If you have a rigid way of doing things and seeing the world, then you will have difficulty in adapting to the new circumstances presented by a crisis. These are skills and ways of thinking that can be nurtured and grown in good times but they are unlikely to suddenly emerge in a crisis.

HOW

Consider how often does your team come to you with an idea for improvement? How often have you implemented them? Being receptive to ideas, to innovation in both process and product does not mean that you have to implement them all – just ensure that you do not stop the flow of thinking and ideas – you will need them in the harder times.

If innovation or creative thinking is not your thing, perhaps it is someone else's in the business who can be the champion?

Are you the go-to person for any problems or issues? If so, then start trying to cultivate your own team's ability to come up with solutions by asking them what they suggest. That may be the person who is on hand when a crisis develops.

WHY

The ability to **adapt your business to the changed environment** that may present itself in a crisis is one of the key skills that will ensure your survival.

WHAT

Leadership

Would you follow you? Think of leaders that you admire and then consider how your leadership compares.

HOW

Be brave – ask a neutral person to ask your staff for their honest views about your strengths and weaknesses as a leader and be prepared to take actions to moderate those weaknesses. If you are not sure how, ask a trusted friend or pick up a book on leadership at the local library or on-line. Leadership can be learned. Your local Chamber of Commerce may offer free skills seminars relating to leadership.

WHY

Good leaders can inspire and produce hope.

Crises often require rapid decision making and the ability to communicate decisions in a way that gets others to see both the desirability and achievability of the task at hand. There is no one right way to be a great leader but acknowledging your weaknesses and attempting to moderate them – trying to behave in a way that you would wish to follow can have a powerful effect on morale, loyalty and work-effort.

WHAT

Staff engagement

You cannot have all of the ideas or solutions yourself – **two (or more) heads are better than one**. In a crisis situation it is very likely that you will be overwhelmed by the number and magnitude of decisions to be taken. You need to utilise the talents, knowledge and potential networks of your staff. There are proven benefits to doing this in normal business times, not just in crisis environments.

HOW

Involve your team as much as possible in the day to day decision making and running of the business.

Encourage their sense of ownership and pride in the company – make sure there is a feeling that you are all in it together.

Remember everyone will react differently to a crisis – it is really helpful to have as many people to call on for help as possible in case some cannot be there.

WHY

If your business fails, staff lose income, workplace friendships and the sense of purpose that work provides.

They have just as much of a vested interest in the business continuing and succeeding as you do. If you acknowledge this then together you can be a powerful force



WHAT

Testing and keeping up to date

We all know that practicing physical evacuation is a good idea to discover any flaws in our escape routes and make the process automatic. Business resilience is similar in that every test you can run (be it restoring from your back up tapes or working from home or another location for a day) will enhance both your mental preparedness and check for flaws in your plans.

HOW

Test those things that are vital for your business

operation. Refer to the lessons learned in identifying your core business needs and ensure any plans that resulted are tested – at the very least in a further morning tea scenario exercise (p. 5) that asks “But what if.....”. If you have physical backup systems e.g. power, phones, IT then switch over to them once a month. Conduct a trial restore of your computer data. Continue to run new scenario exercises at least annually, preferably more often. Practice operating without landlines for a morning.

WHY

Planning for crisis is not a one-off event. As your business and its environment evolve, your preparedness needs to evolve too. Keeping up to date is crucial to ensure the relevance of your plans. Testing is about mental preparedness – both yours and your staff’s needs to be kept fresh and current.

FEELING OVERWHELMED?

TO BECOME MORE RESILIENT, YOU HAVE TO FIRST MAKE TIME TO WORK ON YOUR BUSINESS, NOT IN IT.

You probably feel you don’t have enough time!

How do you make the time?

If you are spending all of your time just maintaining the day to day operations, then who is working on improving, growing and ensuring your business endures – no one! You can turn a vicious cycle of problem solving and fire fighting into a virtuous cycle of improvement but only by stepping back and looking at the bigger picture. Sometimes you have to take a risk and bring in someone else to take on the day to day so that you can focus on improvement or perhaps just sitting down and recording what you do spend your time on for a week may show you what tasks you are doing that are not good use of your time?

If you cannot see a way out from the day to day, get some help. Speak to a friend or a colleague or your local Chamber of Commerce about how you are spending your time and how you would like to be and how to bridge that gap. Don’t wait for a crisis to develop, ask for help now.



Detailed Action List



- 1 Get involved in your industry association and your local Chamber of Commerce. Get to know your neighbouring businesses, your customers, your suppliers and your competitors
- 2 Organise a morning tea or Friday drinks crisis scenario session. Put a scenario to your team and make notes as to the issues and potential solutions raised.
- 3 Compile a contact list for your staff, key suppliers and customers and store it in multiple electronic and non-electronic forms
- 4 Talk to your staff about what they and their families would require in the event of a disaster
- 5 Review how and where both your electronic and non-electronic data is stored. Consider how you (or someone else) would actually access it in the event of a disaster?
- 6 Ask each staff member to state what your business is all about in 3-4 sentences. If you get different answers then take action to gain a unity of purpose.
- 7 Cultivate your team's ability to solve problems by asking for their suggestions when an issue arises.
- 8 Ask a neutral person to ask your staff for their honest views about your strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Consider how you could best use those strengths and improve the weaknesses.
- 9 Involve your team as much as possible in the day to day running of the business – grow the feeling that you are all in it together.
- 10 Test your backup systems. If one of your back-up plans is to work from home, do it for a morning. If you have IT backup systems, practice a restore.

Further information:

Organisational Resilience

www.resorgs.org.nz

Crisis Management and Business Continuity Planning:

<http://wellington.govt.nz/services/emergencymgmt/pdfs/busguide.pdf>

www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074458463

<http://toolkit.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au/chapter/18/92>

www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_176447.pdf

www.business.govt.nz/managing/implementing-health-and-safety/workplace-emergency-planning

www.civildefence.govt.nz/memwebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Being-Prepared-How-to-be-prepared-in-your-business-Index?OpenDocument

Backing up Data/Cloud Computing:

www.business.govt.nz/managing/using-technology-to-improve-performance/cloud-computing-for-your-business

www.ready.gov/business/implementation/IT

www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1084685982

Leadership:

www.sideroad.com/Leadership/developing-leadership-skill.html

http://soar.ucsc.edu/forms/developing_leadership.pdf

Improving employee engagement:

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Engaging-Employees-and-Empowering-Your-Workplace-by-Improving-Your-People-Dynamics&id=856150>

www.working.com/resources/story.html?id=bf3dc2ea-a8cd-41e1-9abd-3dfb9c6bdd15

If you want further help or advice, contact your local Chamber of Commerce or look on **www.business.govt.nz** for your nearest regional business advisory service

This guide was developed by Resilient Organisations – a public good research programme based in New Zealand. We have been researching what makes organisations resilient to crises since 2004.

Resilient Organisations is a collaboration between top New Zealand research universities, particularly the University of Canterbury and University of Auckland. We are funded by the Natural Hazards Platform and supported by a diverse group of industry partners and advisors. We are a multi-disciplinary team of over 20 researchers, representing a synthesis of engineering, science and business leadership aimed at transforming organisations into those that both survive major events and thrive in the aftermath.

Resilient 
ORGANISATIONS

A collaboration between research & industry

See **www.resorgs.org.nz** for further information