10 Tips to Safeguard and Protect Business Continuity

Weatherize Your Business for the Elements
10 tips to help safeguard and protect business continuity
Extreme weather events, be they tropical storms, winter storms, tornadic activity, or other, can be devastating to your – and your customer’s business. Now is the time to make sure that your office is ready to face the elements!

Power outages, road blockades and school or business closures are just a few of the things that can have a severe, negative effect on productivity and the bottom line. Having plans in place and creative work options for business and for employees can mean the difference between profit and loss during challenging weather events.

Global Convergence Inc., a global IT channel services and specialty distribution company, has partnered with Digium, the creator and primary developer of Asterisk® to develop our Top 10 Tips to help weather the storms.

Take a look and consider developing some worst-case weather scenarios into your operational plans. Good planning facilitates faster recovery.
1

Evaluate your systems and business processes

The first step in ensuring that your office is ready for the elements is to assess your current systems and business processes. Gain a thorough understanding of what the consequences would be with an outage or work stoppage, and prioritize in which order equipment should be brought back up. Also do an analysis to associate a dollar value to the expected downtime to help gain management buy-in.

Determine risks
Determine acceptable downtimes
Prioritize order of recovery
Gain management buy-in
Develop a disaster recovery plan

With the knowledge you gained from your risk assessment process, you can develop a strong disaster recovery plan. Make sure that every conceivable detail is anticipated so there are no surprises or unnecessary delays in your recovery process when an event hits.

Be Prepared

- Test your restores
- Know the location of the details
- Have pre-approved expenses
- Understand partial restore processes
- Have spare hardware
- Monitor your systems for changes
- Keep test scripts handy
- Maintain up-to-date contact information
- Use trained staff
- Consider the cloud

Redgate: Steve Jones
Components of a disaster recovery plan

There are several key components to a quality disaster recovery plan. None is more important than employee preparation and succession planning. Don’t just write down your disaster recovery plan, practice it so that you’ll be ready when a real situation occurs. Succession planning is vital as well. Every key function of a disaster recovery plan needs to have more than one person capable of performing that task in case your primary person is out.
3

Talk to someone who has been through it

You can gain valuable information from people who have been through a disruptive weather event. Learn what they did well and learn from their mistakes.
Create a disaster recovery testing schedule for each system

Perform extensive testing on all systems at least twice a year and ensure new employees are trained in the disaster recovery plan

4

Test, test, then test some more. When done, test again.

Practice makes perfect. Lack of practice brings chaos and, in the end, costs money. Practice your disaster recovery plan so that you eliminate unforeseen situations and can make necessary adjustments when there's nothing on the line.
Plan for power outages  
(short and long-term)

Investing in back-up power options is essential. Your company can not control when the power goes out, but you can be prepared if it does.

Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) and battery backups are necessities, and generators can save you thousands if you have any extended downtime.

**Short Term**
- UPS/Battery Backup  
  (2-12 Hours)

**Long Term**
- Generators
- Stationary Standby System  
  (Autoswitchover)

10 Tips to safeguard and protect business continuity
Anticipate that communication providers will go down — make plans

- Analog (POTS) Lines
- Multiple internet providers or delivery methods
- SIP Trunking

6 Have back-up services

Again, you can’t control when your provider goes out, but you can be ready when they do. If communications are vital to your business, make sure you have backup communication lines available to keep your business moving.
Get SIP Trunks

SIP trunking is a service offered by your service provider that allows businesses to adopt VoIP using the same connection as their Internet connection. Integrating SIP trunking into the UC solution can save money in more ways than one. Not only are the rates inexpensive, but it has failover options that traditional services do not.

- Less expensive
- Bursting features
- Easily scalable
- E911
- Immediate failover between sites or to mobile phones
- No manual intervention
Plan to transition to a remote workforce

Allowing your employees to have multiple workplace options can really pay off in a weather event. Letting them work from home can keep them productive and out of harm’s way.

Provide tools and equipment to critical employees to be able to work remotely
Create a way to manage remote workers
Practice year-round with virtual meetings
Have solid bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies in place
Clearly define expectations throughout the year
Consider the cloud

Moving your systems to the cloud can eliminate the worry of a disaster occurring at your physical location. With a cloud unified communications (UC) system, you can continue to communicate from anywhere.

Benefits of moving to the Cloud
- Cost
- Flexibility
- Security
- Custom design options
- Managed recovery teams (support)
Get a modern Unified Communications system

Unified Communications systems provide many tools that can help your business run during any situation:

- Easily customizable messages to keep your customers and employees up to date on company status.
- Mobile applications to allow your workers to function from anywhere. Full call control from any remote location and more.
Do more than just talk!

Count on Digium's Switchvox UC to help you easily transition from a basic phone system to a feature-rich Unified Communications solution.

In an effort to provide a similar solution accessible to everyone, Digium offers Switchvox – a full Unified Communications solution, built on the power of Asterisk.

Switchvox is a business phone system specifically developed for small- and mid-sized businesses and organizations that want the power of the open source Asterisk solution, but without the need for custom development skills for installation. The advanced features, ease-of-use, and simple out-of-the-box setup make Switchvox an ideal solution for organizations with limited technical staff.

A full-featured UC solution, fueled by the innovation of open source technology and open standards, Switchvox allows users to integrate their phone system with their existing networks and get all of the advanced features they need at a price they can afford. Most importantly, by using Asterisk open source software as the foundation for Switchvox, Digium is able to provide a communications system with superior capabilities for a fraction of the cost of proprietary systems.

Digium’s Switchvox solution delivers UC features everywhere you need it: on-site, in the cloud, and with mobile.

Get started at www.digium.com/switchvox

“SMBs are always on the lookout for ways to simplify their infrastructure without compromising on all the benefits that technology provides. This is especially true when it comes to business phone systems. Digium's Switchvox Cloud lets users take advantage of all the Unified Communications features found in its premises product, now in the cloud and with a simple migration path and low per user pricing.”

Richard Costello
Senior Research Analyst, Enterprise Communications Infrastructure, IDC
Global Convergence, Inc. (GCI) has been a Digium Distribution Partner since 2007, and has a thorough understanding and knowledge base of the complete suite of Digium solutions.

GCI is a channel-centric IT services and technology supplier that empowers solution providers to exceed customer expectations through our full, end-to-end portfolio of global services and emerging, innovative and disruptive technologies.

Founded in 1990, GCI reaches more than 114 countries with a high-touch services-focused model that includes everything from design to management to deployment.

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Digium. We’re changing the way businesses communicate.

Founded in 1999, Digium is the creator and primary developer of Asterisk, the industry’s first open source telephony platform. More than one million customers in 125 countries have deployed Asterisk-based systems. Digium is committed to ending the days of expensive, proprietary telecom. The Switchvox family of Unified Communications solutions is built on Asterisk and is designed to provide enterprise class features at affordable prices for small and medium businesses. The award-winning line of Switchvox IP PBX phone systems provides more than a phone system – it delivers a Unified Communications platform that integrates multiple features that increase productivity and lower monthly communication costs. It’s the affordable solution with a proven return on investment for businesses with 10 to 600 users.

Learn more at digium.com/switchvox

Want more information on Switchvox?
Take a virtual tour of this powerful Unified Communications platform:
www.digium.com/switchvox

Contact us – we’re here to help.
Talk with a Switchvox specialist:
1 877 344 4861
1 256 428 6271
sales@digium.com

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