

**All functional units have a role**

## HR as BC resource

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Human Resources, sometimes known as Personnel, often is overlooked as a Business Continuity resource.

Yet, depending on the organization, it can be a valuable asset to the Business Continuity planner and to the Business Continuity plan.

**Many functions**

HR can wear a variety of hats, among them:

- Communications provider (newsletters, etc)
- Contact manager
- Insurance manager
- Keeper of resumes
- Paymaster
- Policies and procedures author and keeper
- Supplemental staffing manager
- Time keeper
- Travel agent

HR operations in the US also have a special risk Business Continuity planners need to consider: I-9 forms.

I-9 forms are the federal forms which attest that employees are legally allowed to work in the United States. HR needs a form for each employee working in the US' no exceptions. Federal agents may swoop down without warning and demand to see I-9 forms; failure to produce an I-9 form can cost a company \$1000 for each missing form.

If the organization has 100 employees and a fire destroys all I-9 forms . . . you do the math.

## **Communications provider**

In many organizations HR is charged with internal communications - getting the word to the organization's staff.

HR has two separate "spread the word" tasks.

First it is charged with alerting off-duty personnel that an emergency has been declared. This is addressed under the **Contact manager** heading.

Second, it is charged with on-going communication with the organization's personnel.

In normal times, HR's communication effort typically is a paper or electronic "house organ" or newsletter.

The HR editor had a direct line to management and knows - or should know - what is of interest to the rank and file. HR has developed the expertise to communicate critical information to all hands.

In normal operations, HR uses in-house distribution options: paper at the doors and in common areas, email, or intranet.

In an emergency situation, HR needs to expand its operation to meet the emergency needs.

If the intranet is still functioning, it is one viable source; likewise email.

But if these resources are gone, HR needs to return to the days of yesteryear and broadcast the (organization's) news on pre-determined strategically located bulletin boards.

Which bulletin boards? How much information?

HR needs to locate (and advertise to the troops) several easily accessed bulletin boards. These bulletin boards should have access from several routes not only for ease of access by the staff, but to help ensure that access paths will be available. Roads can be blocked by flooding, debris, emergency equipment, parades, or any number of other things.

If personnel relocation is anticipated - for example moving staff out of a hurricane's way - at least one bulletin board needs to be identified at the remote location.

How much information to put on those bulletin boards is another matter which requires HR's consideration.

Bulletin boards are, almost without exception, in public places for all to see.

Organizations need to carefully consider what is "appropriate" for public information to assure that competitors don't take advantage of the organization's condition. Is the information suitable for publication in the press or broadcast on radio and TV?

### **Contact manager**

As contact manager, HR must maintain an accurate and complete list of personnel and multiple contact options.

It also must assure that personnel can be contacted at all times, "no matter what."

Contact processes require confirmation. Using call trees for any but the smallest Mom-n-Pop operation usually is inefficient.

Electronic options, which can attempt to contact personnel via multiple methods - email, landline and cellular telephone, fax, pager, etc. - are the preferred method for most organizations, particularly since they can provide a record of contact attempts and results of the attempts. Unlike humans who may have to abandon the call tree to attend to their emergency response duties, electronic options can, to paraphrase a battery commercial, keep on trying and trying until contact is made (or until a user-defined timeout is reached).

Still, electronic options are only as good as the information fed to them. This includes both contact information and the message to be delivered. Some systems use preset messages, others allow the user to create new messages as required.

### **Insurance manager**

In this case, insurance is employee health-related insurance and the management is to assure personnel can devote undivided attention to emergency response activities rather than worry about insurance claims.

This scrivener once worked for a company which had one person assigned to make certain insurance claims were complete before being sent to the insurance company. If the insurer rejected a claim, this person knew who to contact to resolve the issue, and usually managed to get the issue resolved to the employee's benefit. In return, the employee could devote his or her energy to the job. (The HR person had other duties as well, but her primary function was to help personnel with insurance claims.)

When employees are at remote locations and their families are left behind, having someone available to help with insurance claims is more than welcome, both by the people filing the claims and the people responsible for the claimants.

## **Keeper of resumes**

How many times has a person been hired for specific skills and all other skills were overlooked? More often than not.

Which means that unless the folks in HR are sharp, we may be overlooking critical response skills.

This planner once mentored a government organization. During the course of the contract, I discovered that the fellow in the next office had some really good Business Continuity experience.

The government didn't need my services; it had expertise in-house. It just didn't do its homework (read my neighbor's resume).

There are skills needed for "normal" operations, skills needed for "emergency" operations, and skills needed "all the time."

Since HR is the "keeper of resumes," HR needs to go over each resume with a fine tooth comb and regularly update skills whenever personnel complete training or course work.

## **Paymaster**

I like to be paid on time. Most of us appreciate knowing the bank account will be incremented in due course.

In many cases, my pay is a "direct deposit"; all I see is a statement that tells me a deposit has been made to my account.

But some companies still hand out checks - and some employees prefer it that way - and HR usually is charged with assuring the checks get into the right hands.

When personnel are working away from home, HR needs to know where the checks go; do they go to the employee's home address or do they go to the employee at the remote site? How do they get to their destination? Hand carry or mail?

It's up to the employee (any "rank") to inform HR where the pay is to go and how it is to get there. (HR doesn't like it, but as Paymaster it sometimes is involved in "domestic disputes.")

HR may not actually hand out pay; it may need to assure a payroll vendor (e.g. ADP) makes changes to its check distribution routine before the check is cut.

Knowing in advance what an employee prefers is an Business Continuity question that should be on every new hire questionnaire.

## **Policies and procedures author and keeper**

There are "regular" policies and procedures and there are "emergency" policies and procedures.

Sometimes the emergency varieties are nothing more than the regular P&P with an extra word or two.

However, there always are P&Ps unique to the situation.

For example, overtime.

How much overtime is allowed before a person is obliged to take time off (to avoid burn out or becoming so tired his or her actions endanger others)? How is the overtime paid - time and a half, double time after "n" hours? Will the employee be paid or given compensatory time off - and if time off, when?

Another example, travel.

Can an employee be obliged to travel to a remote site? Who makes travel arrangements? Lodging? Is there a food allowance? How are bills paid? By one company person for all, or does each person handle his or her own bills? Is a company credit card used, or does the employee use a personal can and expect to be reimbursed? (And if the reimbursement is tardy, who pays the late fees?)

As with most things "Business Continuity," identifying all the possible Business Continuity-related P&Ps is something to be done over several days and with input from a number of sources.

Once relevant P&Ps are identified, see how many need to be adapted for inclusion in labor agreements (union contracts).

## **Supplemental staffing manager**

If a facility must be restored there is a great likelihood that the organization will need supplemental staffing.

While the IT folks are getting things going at an alternate site, someone needs to be setting up facilities for the business units so the profit centers can get busy generating income to pay for the IT facilities.

Who can do this? Local IT folks who can pull cables, place infrastructure, test equipment and systems, and generally assure everything is working as expected.

When calm returns, the business units which had been using work arounds will need to "catch up." Again, this may be accomplished with casual staff. (This is an area covered by the Business Continuity-related policies and procedures.) Who will do the catching up; will additional equipment or systems be required; for

how long? Will staff be asked or required to work overtime? How will personnel be compensated. For how long? (Finance does have the funds for this . . . right?)

### **Time keeper**

Time keeping was touched on under the Policies and Procedures heading. Not only does someone or group need to assure people don't burn out, but that someone of group needs to keep a close watch on hours worked. People often forget to accurately record their time as they work it - in a crisis situation that is more common than not. When they try to reconstruct their activities, the reported time may be more or less than actually worked. For most people, it is an honest mistake. HR may be responsible to make certain the time sheet is accurate.

### **Travel agent**

If I have to travel to a remote facility, do I make my own arrangements, do I contact a selected travel agent, or do I expect HR to make the arrangements?

If anyone is concerned with economies of scale or the dangers of multiple staff traveling together, HR probably is the best choice to coordinate travel, lodging, and remote site provisions.

Who handles these things, of course, is covered by Business Continuity-related policies and procedures.

### **Everybody needs HR**

Everybody needs HR, both in good times and "not so good" times. The Business Continuity planner is no exception. Getting to know HR personnel and taking advantage of their expertise is good for the plan, good for the organization, and good for the planner.

The best plan includes everyone in the organization.

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