BC Behavior Model

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The Business Continuity Behavior Model – Part One, published September 2004

In this, the first of a three-part series, we learn about the Business Continuity Behavior Model. It's an intriguing view of the daily activities BC professionals perform. In CPM's opinion, the BCBM is logical, it's a realistic representation of our discipline, it's flexible and scalable, and it makes good sense. We hope you feel the same.

There are as many different ways to approach business continuity as there are people who practice it. Several approaches exist, such as the ten competencies defined by the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) and DRI International (DRII); the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 1600; and the UK's Publicly Available Specification No. 56 (PAS 56). But these don't really articulate business continuity at the *process level* – how BC is performed in both normal and emergency conditions. The Business Continuity Behavior Model (BCBM) was developed to help people understand exactly what the BC processes are, and how they function in an organization. While it's true that business continuity plans are as different as the companies they support, they still exhibit common attributes. This is what the BCBM defines. *It is a process for problem management.*

In this first article we will examine business continuity *Best Practices*. This is an often-overused term, and can lead to skepticism as to what really constitutes a "best" practice versus "good" or "acceptable" practices. In the BCBM, we define Best Practices as "the implementation of culture (people), processes, tools, and preventive measures that carry the expectation of superior results." The broad description of Best Practices will cover their value and implementation. Think of Best Practices as the work performed during non-emergency times to analyze business operations to identify out-of-normal conditions; anticipate potential problems; initiate actions to minimize or eliminate these issues; and keep the business or government agency running smoothly.

Best Practices is the first of five elements in the BCBM, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

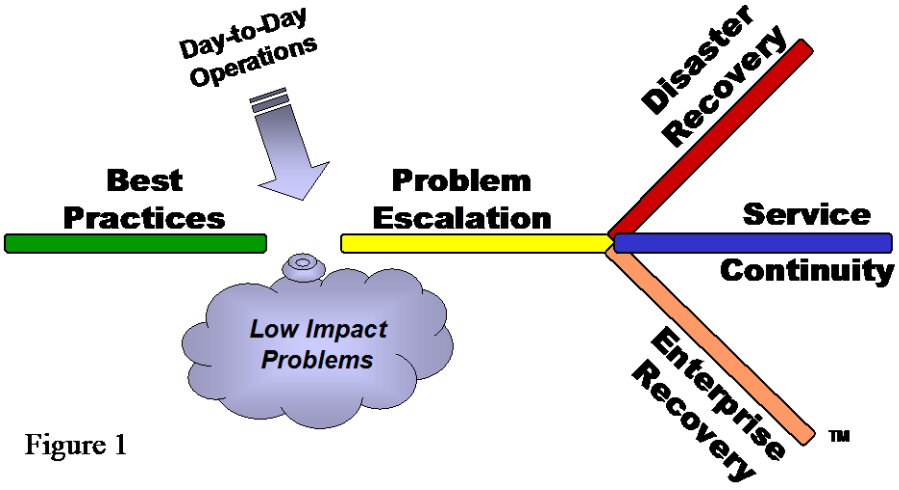

Figure 1

The color scheme (green, yellow, blue, orange, and red) of the Model enhances the visible presentation. We chose green to denote "go" – e.g., go with Best Practices. Yellow conveys "caution and alertness" during Problem Escalation. Blue signals "depth of continuing concern" at the Service Continuity stage. Orange signals "high alert" at the Enterprise Recovery stage. And of course Red shouts "disaster." The colors suggest that problem management is a process that changes from phase to phase. The left-to-right straight-line design conveys continuous problem resolution activities. The foundation is Best Practices. The movement is from Problem Escalation to Service Continuity, Enterprise Recovery and/or Disaster Recovery. We'll address these elements in later articles.

Note the *break* between Best Practices and Problem Escalation. Day-to-day operations take place there. That's where the inevitable low-impact problems that accompany day-to-day operations occur. This is the "stuff" we manage every day. These low-impact problems are the source of most of our operational disruptions.

Elements of the BCBM are interdependent. The logical flow structure helps ensure desired results. These results are further supported by the emphasis on communication, common language, and collaboration among a community of managers, customers, vendors, and senior management.

Best Practices

Let's enter the model by assuming we're in a more or less normal operating environment. We perform certain activities each day to ensure a smooth, uninterrupted flow of business operations. Figure 2 defines what we include in Best Practices.

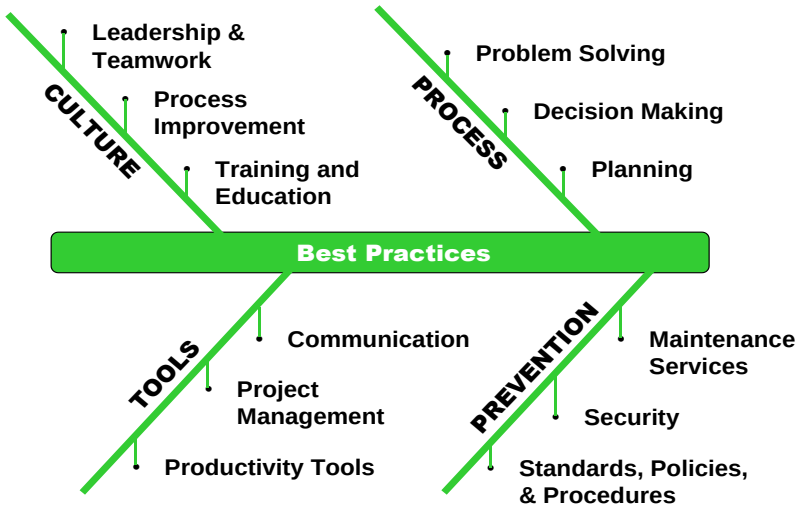

Figure 2

The BCBM defines Best Practices within four major categories of enterprise activity: ***Process, Prevention, Tools,*** and ***Culture.*** Best Practices for ***Process*** include Problem Solving, Decision Making, and Planning. For ***Prevention***, they are Maintenance Services, Security, and Standards, Policies, and Procedures. ***Tools*** include Productivity Tools, Project

Management, and Communication. Finally, ***Culture*** describes Leadership, Process Improvement, and Training and Education. Let's examine these a bit closer.

Process – Action Steps

In problem solving, the fundamental processes are to define the problem (what), determine the problem's location (where), its time sensitivity (when), and how big (scope) it is. Decision-making oftentimes flows from problem solving: It starts with identifying "why" a decision is needed, establishes the decision-making criteria, presents alternatives for comparison, identifies benefits, and then makes a decision. Planning implements the results of decision-making. It pulls together the administrative, management, and technical requirements identified in problem solving and decision-making. The requirements shape the planning procedures, timelines, and responsibilities into contingency plans of all types. Naturally, you must exercise the contingency plans, and update them regularly. The *typical process sequence* is problem solving, decision-making, and then planning.

Culture – A Key Success Factor

From a people perspective, the best practices of leadership, process improvement (an aptitude for change), and training/awareness contribute to a culture ready to unleash the "power of people" to solve problems. While training and awareness is essential so that *all* employees – not just the emergency teams – know what to do in an emergency, leadership in the BCBM falls to a *Situation Manager.* Since BCBM problem resolution is a team effort, the Situation Manager is expected to step forward and lead the Problem Resolution Team through multiple courses of action to solve the problem quickly. Process improvement is also considered a best practice, as it fosters the desire to implement change. For example, the BCBM requires that Situation Managers conduct lessons learned to establish a problem's root cause. With management support, the Situation Manager then links results of the lessons learned to prospective improvement(s) to one or more best practices, processes, and/or other business resources.

Prevention – Staying One Step Ahead

A critical behavior is alertness to potential failures, which can delay schedules and slow enterprise performance. Ideally, we want to minimize the potential for a problem to occur – this is *prevention*. Prevention typically includes periodic risk assessments and testing procedures to minimize the risk of possible disruptions. The use of standards, policies and procedures is highly recommended. When disruptions occur, they are managed using problem escalation components of the BCBM. Physical security and information security programs are essential for protecting enterprise assets. Regular maintenance ensures that potential problems can be identified sooner, rather than later.

Tools – Getting the Job Done

In this category the BCBM defines communication, project management, and implementation of productivity tools as best practices. As a communication tool the BCBM supports a common language, similar to the Incident Command System. This means it only takes a few words to communicate a great deal of information to many people quickly. For example, the role of Situation Manager will always mean "an individual that leads the Problem Resolution Team." Projects are typically *exceptions,* as they exist for a specific period and contrast with everyday tasks we perform as part of our jobs. When a problem escalates, it takes on the characteristics of a project, with a start, a middle, and an end.

This is where project management skills are needed. In that context, Situation Managers deploy "project management on the fly." Their competencies include the ability to lead, employ and coordinate appropriate resources, communicate actions and status, demonstrate procedural skills, and delegate and monitor work. Finally, as a productivity tool, the BCBM drives problem management efficiently and brings results quickly. By tying the results of problem resolution back to improvements in Best Practices, we can achieve a number of results efficiently: improved best practices and process improvements.

Summary

In this first article we have defined the elements that constitute best practices from people, process and operational perspectives. These elements can be adapted to most any business or government environment. In the next article, we will examine what happens when a low impact problem becomes a potentially serious disruption.

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The Business Continuity Behavior Model – Part Two, published October 2004

Every day we are faced with a variety of situations that may or may not escalate into full-fledged disasters. How should we deal with these events? In this, the second of a three-part series, we learn how the Business Continuity Behavior Model addresses the important issue of Problem Resolution.

The first article in this series introduced the Business Continuity Behavior Model (BCBM), an interesting approach to business continuity processes and how they function in an organization. We addressed "best practices" – an often overused term that typically promises more than it delivers. In the case of the BCBM, the notion of best practices gets carried to a new and useful level.

While the BCBM's Best Practices model addresses more or less "normal" operations, in reality we are usually faced with numerous situations each day. In the BCBM these are called *low-impact problems*. Most of them are handled in the normal course of our daily activities.

So long as low-impact problems *remain* low in impact, we assume our environment is normal. But that's not always the case. We occasionally experience the escalation of an issue to something more serious. For example, a slight increase in spam messages may be a harbinger of a major network security breach. And the presence of a serious problem can interfere or totally disrupt business operations.

In the BCBM, the second element in the model addresses out-of-course situations. It is called *Problem Escalation,* and is usually the first step in managing a low-impact problem that becomes bigger. With the right resources

and procedures, we can usually resolve most problems within the timeframes for Problem Escalation. Figure 1 shows the relationship of Problem Escalation (yellow) to the other BCBM modules.

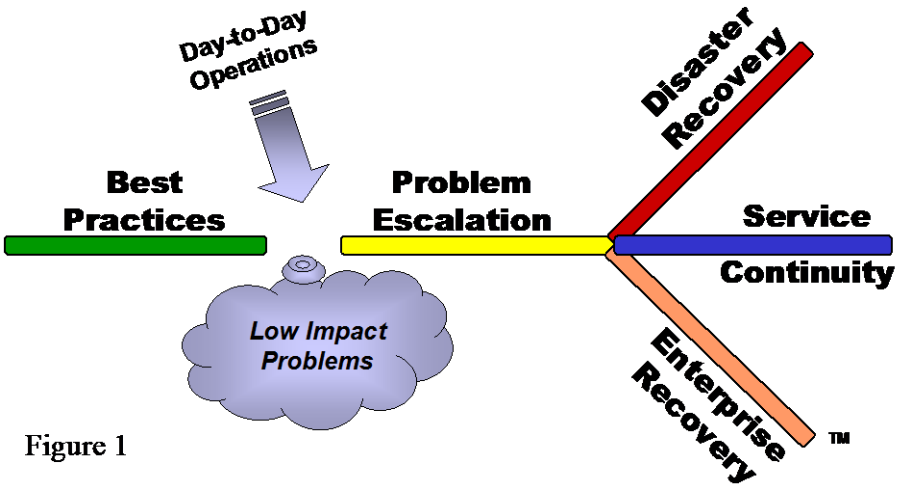

Figure 1

If the situation *cannot* be resolved using the processes in Problem Escalation, we have several options. For example, if we need more time and help, we can escalate to Service Continuity (blue). Or if problem resolution requires a new environment as part of the problem-solving process, we can escalate to Disaster Recovery (red). These will be discussed in more detail in the next article.

Figure 2 defines the Problem Escalation cycle. Each stage has a set of recommended processes for dealing with the situation.

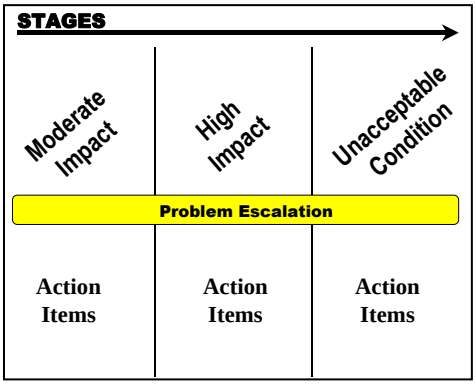

Figure 2

It's important to quickly determine the stage of your situation, based on the model. Before you define the situation as Moderate, High, or an Unacceptable Condition, conduct a careful assessment first. The following are recommended steps to take:

1. Detect the problem.
2. Determine if it's time to escalate.

3. Bring the problem into the problem escalation cycle (the yellow part).
4. Commence problem management – assign a Situation Manager.
5. Manage the action items within timeframes.

To determine if a problem has graduated from low impact to more serious, it's necessary to identify (detect) the problem; evaluate the warning signs, e.g., system alarms, help desk reports, complaints from employees; and then use previously defined metrics to gauge whether the situation needs to be escalated. Among the signs that a situation may need to be escalated include 1) the sense that something is rapidly getting out of control; 2) a breakdown in communications; and 3) realization that existing resources are inadequate.

While time is certainly an issue in a rapidly escalating situation, if possible, take the time to gather as much data about the situation as possible. Consider the following questions:

1. Is there response-time degradation?
2. What is its impact on corporate performance?
3. Is there an extreme condition at this time?
4. Are internal/external customers affected?
5. Is there an impact on schedules or potential for delays?
6. Is there a hard failure or the potential for a hard failure?

If the answers to any of these questions – and others – indicate worsening conditions, it is time to commence the escalation process. Table 1 describes the BCBM's approach to problem escalation.

STAGES →

Defining Condition *any of . . .*	*Moderate Impact*	*High Impact*	*Unacceptable Condition*
Response-time degradation	*Noticeable*	*Disruptive*	*Missed Commitments*
Impact on corporate performance in the area of:	*Productivity*	*Customer Service*	*Finance / Image*
Extreme condition (weather, fire, environment, bomb threat, etc.)	*Notification*	*In Progress*	*Damage*
Number of affected internal / external customers	*Some*	*Many*	*Most / All*
Impact on schedules	*Potential*	*Measurable*	*Backlog*
Hard failure	*Potential*	*Expected*	*Realized*
Problem Escalation			
Action Items	**Do within…**	**Do within…**	**Do within…**
• *Assign Situation Manager*	*Immediately*	*Immediately*	*Immediately*
• *Contact On-call Technician, Supervisor, and/or NOC*	*1 hour*	*Immediately*	*Immediately*
• *Contact Manager, Director, Vendor*	*2 hours*	*1 hour*	*Immediately*
• *Contact Customers*	*8 hours*	*2 hours*	*30 minutes*
• *Contact Crisis Comm, CIO / VP*	*N/A*	*6 hours*	*1 hour*
• *Move to Next Stage*	*12 hours*	*8 hours*	*4 hours*

Table 1

While timeframes and specific responses are part of the model, they can certainly be modified to take advantage of an organization's internal and external resources. Simply refer to the information in Table 1 and determine where your situation "fits" on the model. This will help you decide if your situation is moderate, high, or is an unacceptable condition.

Introducing the Situation Manager

In most crises or incidents, someone needs to manage the response, recovery and restoration activities. In the BCBM, this person is called the Situation Manager. The model recommends assigning a Situation Manager whenever a situation is in the Problem Escalation phase or has expanded beyond that stage. Situation Managers lead Problem Resolution Teams through multiple courses of action and quickly progress problem solving toward desirable outcomes. Among the procedures used by Situation Managers are: 1) assigning a scribe to log problem parameters, 2) establishing primary and alternate meeting places and times, and 3) reporting the problem to a crisis management committee and/or senior management.

As the Situation Manager is a key element in the BCBM, the following are primary functions for this individual:

1. Identify and monitor which stage of the Business Continuity Behavior Model a situation is currently in; supports the choice if challenged;
2. Assigns and supervises a scribe to document the situation and prepare Problem Escalation minutes;
3. Presides over Problem Resolution Team meetings and activates additional resources, if required;
4. Follows local escalation chains; generates problem tickets; invokes change control; and initiates red-flag procedures as needed;
5. Generates all notifications specified by the BCBM via the required internal and external messages.

Frequent status reporting is a key activity for the Situation Manager. This includes reporting status to all members of the Problem Resolution Team and all affected parties during problem escalation (yellow), and throughout any subsequent stages. It is also important that the following rules are applied:

1. Escalation times in the model are *maximums*; it is acceptable to notify people sooner;
2. When someone cannot be reached within the prescribed timeframe, notify that person's supervisor immediately;
3. Adapt local practices and procedures to the model; this applies to those who must be notified and the acceptable timeframes;
4. Be sure to update internal/external contacts on the progress of problem resolution activities; final updates should advise all relevant parties that the problem has been resolved;
5. If the problem continues more than four hours past the start of the Unacceptable Condition stage, it may be necessary to advance to the Disaster Recovery, Service Continuity, and/or Enterprise Recovery modules; continue to notify all affected parties, and/or anyone who might be able to help solve the problem;
6. The Situation Manager should transition his/her activities to the organization's disaster recovery manager once the decision to invoke Disaster Recovery mode is made;
7. Once the problem has been resolved, schedule and conduct a post-mortem meeting; send meeting minutes to the Crisis Management Committee and/or senior management.

Summary

Dealing with situations that escalate from low impact problems to potentially serious disruptions is the focus of this article. These elements can be adapted to most any business or government environment. In the third and final article, we will explore the actions to be taken when an escalating situation requires an even more rigorous response.

About the Authors

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The Business Continuity Behavior Model – Part Three, published November 2004

Suppose you've done everything possible to mitigate a situation that escalates from normal circumstances to something more serious. What if the situation further escalates into a full-fledged crisis? What should we do, and how can the Business Continuity Behavior Model address this situation? In this, the third and final article in our series, we learn how to address more serious issues using the Disaster Recovery, Service Continuity, and Enterprise Recovery processes.

In our previous article, we described how the Business Continuity Behavior Model (BCBM) deals with situations that increase in severity. This process was called Problem Escalation. Assuming the situation in question is not mitigated via Problem Escalation techniques, we have three overlapping paths to resolution: Service Continuity, Disaster Recovery and Enterprise Recovery. Figure 1 shows the relationship of Service Continuity (blue), Disaster Recovery (red), and Enterprise Recovery (orange) to the other BCBM elements. Together, these elements comprise a practice we call Crisis Management.

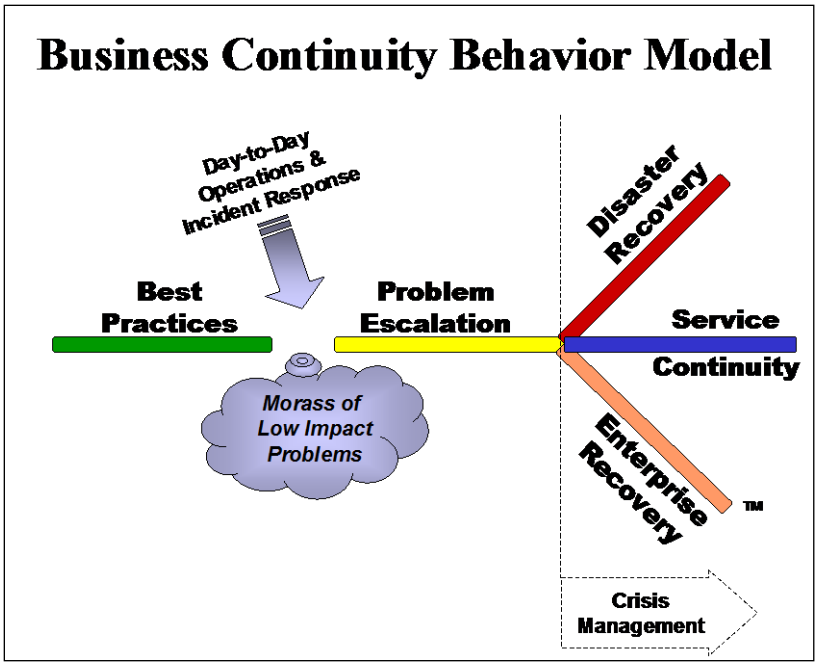

Figure 1

A crisis is an unexpected de-stabilizing event that may threaten an organization's reputation, revenue, or ability to deliver customer service. In the contingency planning industry, we often deal with crises resulting from operational failure, including "disasters". As you read this article, notice that the BCBM deals with any crisis that may concern executives, including labor relations, executive succession, hostile takeover, product failure, sudden market shift, regulatory anomalies, adverse international events, cash crisis, or public perception. Of course, it also includes operational failure.

Service Continuity

In the BCBM, "Crisis Management" addresses out-of-course situations that continue to exist beyond an acceptable time frame. If more time and help are needed to address an escalating situation, the first option is *Service Continuity*, which is defined as "a continuation of problem escalation beyond an Unacceptable Condition." Service Continuity brings added business and organizational focus to problem management. Participants in Service Continuity include senior management, vendors, customers, Problem Resolution Team members, and the Situation Manager.

If problem resolution requires that normal functions be moved to an alternative location, escalation to *Disaster Recovery* is indicated. The support functionality for any crisis we call *Enterprise Recovery*. These will be discussed in more detail in this article.

Figure 2 shows the various stages of addressing an escalating situation using Service Continuity. Knowing immediate business requirements may lead to expedient alternative solutions. Alternative solutions can offer quick and easily manageable short-term results, not necessarily driven by technical requirements, but by business needs. The longer-term business/technical solution will provide the complete solution that addresses the full burden of business and technical requirements, but at a different time and a different pace. If the situation has not been resolved, for example, in 24 hours, Service Continuity is maintained until the problem has been solved. If circumstances justify escalating to Disaster

Recovery, the Situation Manager must notify the Disaster Recovery Director/Manager, who will assume responsibility at the time of problem hand-off. The BCBM always advocates moving forward; it's not advisable to return to the "Problem Escalation" leg of the model.

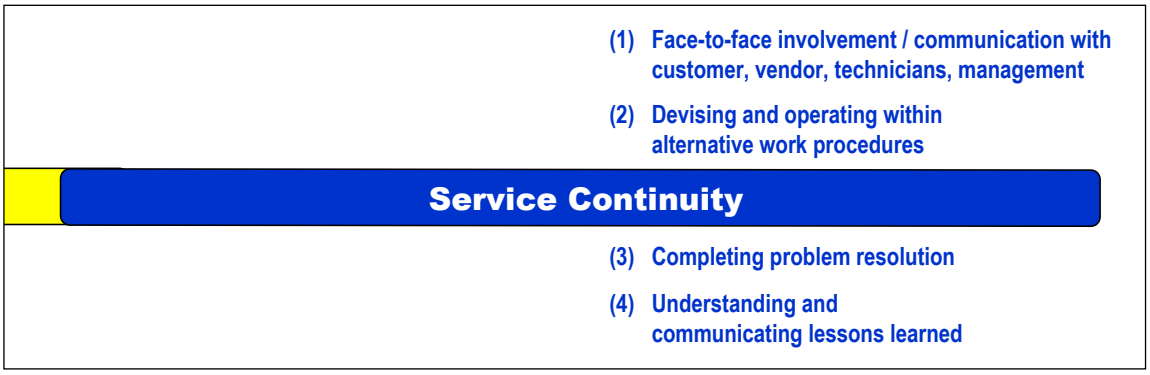

Figure 2

During the first 24 hours, the Situation Manager leads the Problem Resolution Team toward problem resolution. The Situation Manager also scans the problem horizon looking for unexpected issues. Anticipatory problem management may conclude there is a threat to the business. Such a conclusion would become clear during the 24-hour Problem Escalation Cycle. The threat may be obvious, or it may be subtle and insidious. This is another case where it's recommended to escalate to Service Continuity. The Situation Manager's mandate is to seek managers who are skilled, interested customers, helpful vendors, and additional resources to help with or take over problem management when the situation becomes complex and/or requires their input.

Disaster Recovery

In the BCBM, *Disaster Recovery* represents the plan for recovery of business operations when disaster phenomena force the relocation of critical IT processes, supported business processes, and/or people to alternative work sites. An important part of this leg of the model is the presence of a formal corporate BCP policy. This typically reflects senior management's support for disaster recovery and demonstrates its commitment to maintain continuous business operations during a disastrous event. Examples of policy elements include:

- Critical information, both electronic and hard copy, is copied and maintained off-site;
- Critical equipment is recoverable;
- People have a place to perform critical functions;
- Voice communications is available and data connectivity is provided to distributed/client server, midrange, and mainframe systems;
- A detailed plan, tested regularly, is in place for performing functions in recovery mode;
- Employees are aware of disaster recovery policies and plans;
- Strategies are in place to minimize the impact of a disaster on the business; and
- Properly trained emergency teams are in place, with clear lines of authority and responsibilities

Disaster-causing phenomena will sometimes force business units to operate from alternative work sites. Particularly for business units with IT components, plans for Disaster Recovery provide strategies, steps to follow, and information to support the business units that will have to operate off site. Specifically, if it is necessary to move operations off site, the BCBM recommends selecting the Disaster Recovery path (Figure 3).

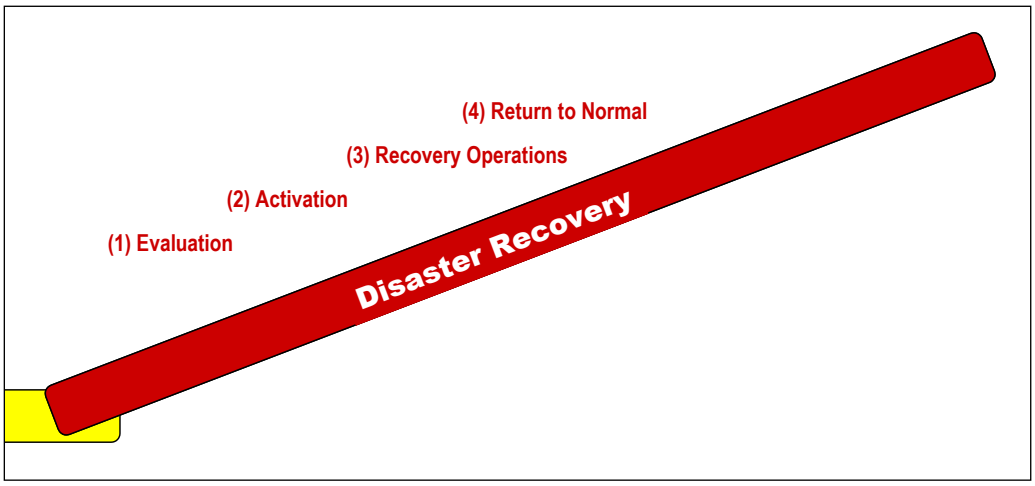

Figure 3

As can be seen from Figure 3, four phases can be identified in Disaster Recovery. The Evaluation phase detects the situation, generates an initial reaction (e.g., evacuation), and assesses the potential short, medium and long-term impact of the event. In the Activation phase, a decision is made to declare a disaster, notify key individuals and organizations, and mobilize recovery personnel. The Recovery Operations phase is considered a transitional activity, pending the eventual return to normal operations and the original business location. When the Return to Normal phase is entered, it is assumed the disaster has passed, reconstruction (if needed) has commenced, and a return to normal operations will be achieved.

Enterprise Recovery

The disciplines that support Service Continuity and Disaster Recovery comprise an element of the BCBM we call Enterprise Recovery. These disciplines already exist in most organizations, and, depending upon the nature of the crisis, a blend of such disciplines is necessary. They are: *Human Resources, Labor Relations, Emergency Response, Senior Management, Finance Services, Real Estate / Facilities, Corporate Communications, Information Technology, Risk Management, Business Continuity Services, Legal Services, Customer Service, Environmental Health & Safety,* and *Business Process Ownership*. Together, these disciplines perform within the phases shown in Figure 4.

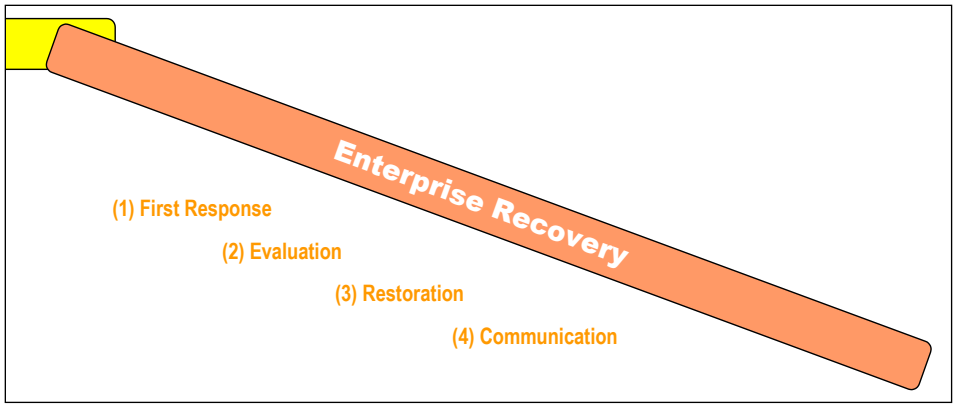

Figure 4

Dealing with a Crisis

The three legs of the model described in this article represent the process of Crisis Management. Crises include operational failure, including disasters, as well as the list of problems mentioned at the beginning of this article. In a crisis, enterprises need well-trained and well-organized people doing the right things the right way. Organizations need to know who will report to whom (structure) and what they will do (process). In the BCBM, the combination of the three legs of the model (Figure 5 below) represents the *process* that leads to optimal action when a crisis occurs.

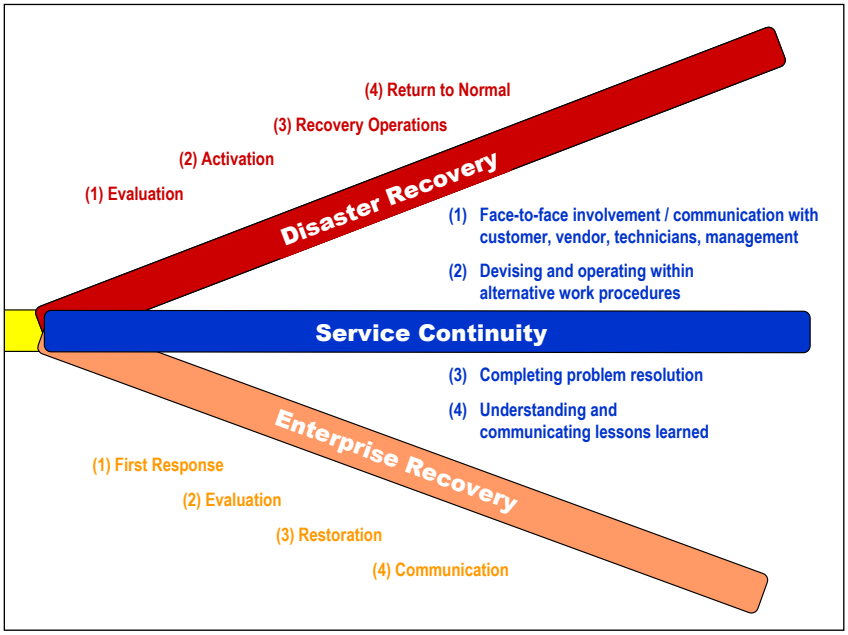

Figure 5

In a crisis, senior management needs to know what's happening and what will happen next. They need to be appropriately informed and involved. Figure 6 represents the reporting *structure* of crisis management at a high level. The colors of the structure below correlate to the colors in the BCBM that represent the Crisis Management *process*.

Figure 6

Summary

The Business Continuity Behavior Model is a communications tool and a day-to-day reminder to problem solvers of an organization's protocols and policy for managing problems. Depending on the type, size, and severity of a problem, the BCBM offers a complete end-to-end approach to identify, assess, respond to and recover from problems of greater than low impact. It satisfies the need for common language that communicates a story everyone can understand. The BCBM is easily adaptable to most any small, medium, or large business or government agency, and represents an easily adaptable process to ensure business and government survival and productivity.

About the Authors

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