



Developing Your Business Continuity Checklist


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In 2009, Atul Gawande published an entire book arguing passionately for a very not-exciting thing. Gawande is a surgeon. His days are filled with intricate procedures. If he misses even one tiny step, it can throw off an entire operation. Given the high stakes, it's really important for him to attend to every single detail.

The [New York Times](#) review of Gawande's book, entitled [The Checklist Manifesto](#), was also written by a doctor. Specifically, a cardiologist. The article's author shares this story:

Not long ago, I walked in on a group of medical residents inserting a central line catheter into a patient in the intensive care unit. They were gowned and gloved, working quietly over the patient's neck . . . I noticed they had neglected to drape the abdomen and legs . . . [and] had also apparently forgotten to don face shields and caps . . . Two days later, the patient developed a fever and her white blood cell count shot up. The line had to come out. Bacterial cultures revealed it was infected.

The story serves as the perfect example of the importance of checklists. Without them, it's way too easy to skip steps that don't seem important but turn out to be critical. That's the very point *The Checklist Manifesto* makes.

The humble checklist is a necessary tool – not just in medicine, but in a number of industries.

When details matter.

There are a lot of times in IT support when success or failure comes down to attention to detail. Even setting up a small network requires a lot of diligence. There's really no time when it's okay for your IT partner to take on a relaxed attitude.

That's particularly true when it comes to business continuity.

Your business continuity plan is the only thing that stands between you and disaster. We know that sounds dramatic, but it's true. Business continuity is all about a strategic approach to obstacles – from the less-than-ideal to the catastrophic.



“One in five businesses experience a network outage due to some kind of disaster every year.”

– The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Stuff happens.

What do you do when the power goes out? When inclement weather makes it impossible for your folks to come into the office for a day? When there's flooding, or a fire, or something worse? What if your network falls prey to a cyber attack and your normal lines of communication are down?

Statistically, every single one of those scenarios is entirely plausible. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that [one in five](#) businesses experience a network outage due to some kind of disaster every year. And [54%](#) of companies have been offline for at least 8 hours because of a single incident.

That's an entire workday. Could your business remain productive if your IT tools were offline that long? More to the point, do you know how you'd respond in that kind of situation?

The goal of business continuity is to give you a plan. And the core of any good plan is a checklist.

Your Business Continuity Checklist

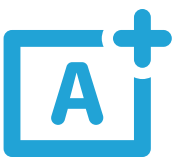
If you want to be ready, you've got to be prepared. But not to worry. We've put together an easy-to-follow checklist to ensure nothing catches you completely off-guard.



Set your **priorities**.

What has to keep happening, no matter what? What processes could you pause for awhile if you absolutely had to? Focus on minimal impact to your customers, your productivity and your reputation.

If a disaster strikes, internal reporting may not matter for a few days, but continuing to provide products and services to your customers is probably still a priority.



Identify your **greatest risks**.

Do you do business in tornado alley? Are earthquakes a thing where you work? Are cyber attacks on the rise?

It's uncomfortable, but take stock of the kinds of things most likely to go wrong. Then you can focus your business continuity plan on mitigating the impact of *those things*.



Estimate the **cost of downtime.**

Downtime is expensive. The Aberdeen Group estimates that it costs the average small business as much as [\\$8,600](#) per hour. **Yeah. Ouch.**

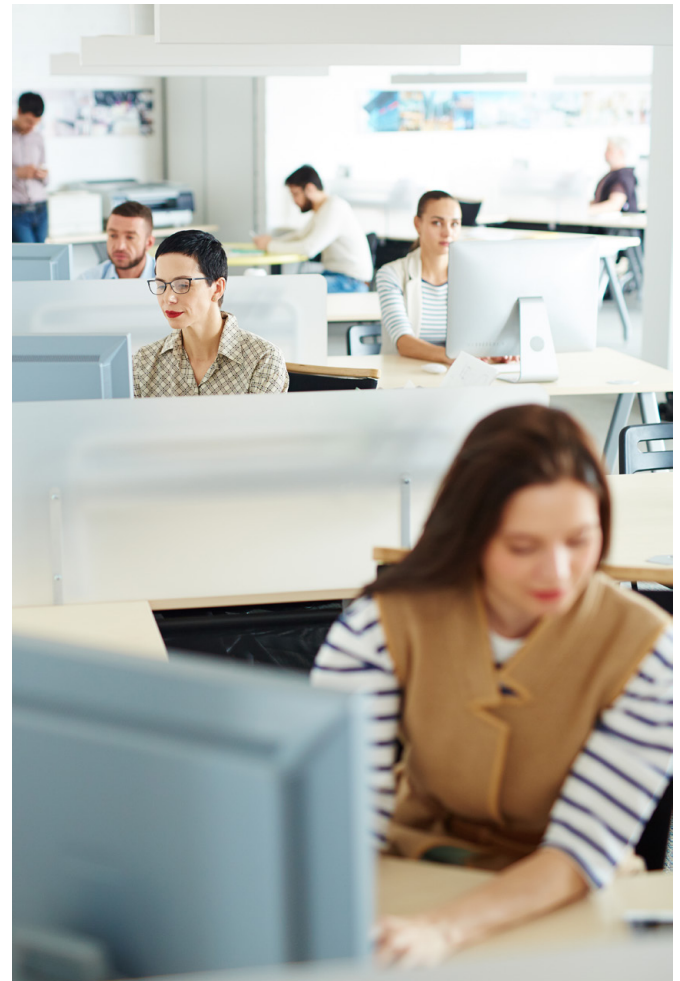
But the average doesn't matter. The cost for your business does. Think through the financial implications of downtime so you have an idea of how much an hour, a day or a week will affect your bottomline.



Know **who to call.**

Does your organization have a clear point of contact for every critical process? If the network goes down, for example, do you know [who to call?](#)

Don't wait until you're in the midst of chaos to start figuring out who's in charge of each area of your business. Make sure your entire team knows who will handle what if things get messy.



Nail down a **BDR plan.**

Business continuity is a strategy. Backup and disaster recovery is the nuts and bolts of getting your network back to where it was pre-disaster. You need both.

BDR is important enough that we have [an entire whitepaper](#) on that topic alone. Your data is only safe if you have a backup and a plan for restoring it.



Make sure you have **offsite backup**.

We know. This sounds like a repeat of the last point. But really, this is important enough to warrant it's own check mark.

Onsite backup is fast and convenient, but what if something happens to your office? What then? Offsite backup is your failsafe. Ideally, even small businesses should have *both*.



Be ready to **go remote**.

Speaking of your physical office, what will you do if that space becomes unusable? Even a power outage can make it impossible to work where you normally work.

Do your employees have remote access? Is enough of your IT infrastructure in the cloud to make it possible to work from anywhere? Does your staff know the protocol for working from home if needed?



Decide how you'll **stay connected**.

Along the same lines, if you can't work from your office, even for a short period of time, do your people know how to stay connected at a distance?

Don't just assume everyone knows everyone else's phone number. Put together a comprehensive communication plan that includes *internal and external, customer-facing* communication.



Decide what (and how) you'll **tell your customers**.

Even with a thorough business continuity plan, there may still be some impact on your customer base. If that happens, it's best to share what's happening. There's a right and a wrong way to do that.

Make sure your staff knows what it's okay to tell customers and how they should phrase things. Also think about how you might use email and other tools to make customers aware of unavoidable delays.



Test, test, **test.**

Test every part of this checklist you can. There's no other way to know if you've taken everything into account. Trust us, you don't want to find a flaw when you're counting on your plan.

Have folks periodically work remotely just to see if they can and remain productive. Verify your onsite and offsite backups. Reassess the potential cost of downtime annually.

If you need some help . . .

There's a lot on that checklist. Undoubtedly, you can handle several of those things all on your own. But there are some technical parts that you may find more challenging, which is why we'd like to add one more supplemental check.

Partner with **KME Systems.**

The pros at KME are ready and willing to help you put together a comprehensive business continuity plan. We know what it takes to keep a business up and running in the midst of a disaster. We'll make sure you're ready for any contingency.

Just [give us a call](#). We can start today.

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