

Business Continuity Planning

Responding
to an

Influenza Pandemic

Advice to
Businesses on
Preparing for
a Pandemic



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Forfás 

 **IDA**
IRELAND

Foreword by Mary Coughlan, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Two years ago, the World Health Organisation recommended to governments worldwide that they prepare national pandemic plans. In Ireland's case, the Department of Health and Children and the Health Services Executive jointly published the 'National Pandemic Influenza Plan' in January 2007 which outlines the steps to be taken to prepare for, and deal with, a worldwide influenza pandemic. The work undertaken at that time has greatly enhanced our country's ability to react to the current influenza pandemic threat.

However, the importance of extending preparations for a pandemic beyond the healthcare sector and into other areas of society was also recognised at that time. An influenza pandemic would have a very significant impact on economic activity and would pose a major threat to business continuity. Business continuity planning for high risks should be part of normal business practice. Many large companies and financial institutions already had plans in place for an influenza pandemic but smaller businesses had yet to respond to this threat.

Therefore, in early 2007, the report *Business Continuity Planning – Responding to an Influenza Pandemic* was launched. This report continues to represent an important element of the Government's response to the threat of an influenza pandemic.

Among the many implications and responsibilities for businesses in the event of a pandemic would be high rates of absenteeism, disruption to supply-chains, disruption to business travel, controlling risk of infection in the workplace and a fall in demand for goods and services, as well as human resource, insurance and cash flow implications. This could be devastating for a business which has failed to plan adequately for a pandemic scenario.

This report, which includes a user friendly preparedness checklist for enterprises and 10 illustrative case studies covering a range of sectors, will be a very useful tool for firms for business continuity planning. This work will not only help small and medium sized enterprises prepare for a pandemic, but will also increase awareness of business continuity planning issues for all emergencies.

It is not too late to plan for the effects of an influenza pandemic and I urge all business owners and managers who have not yet done so to give serious consideration to the findings of the report and to use the checklist in their business planning processes.

Mary Coughlan, T.D.

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment

June, 2009

Preface by Martin Cronin, Chief Executive, Forfás

This report is intended to serve as an aid for CEO's, senior managers and staff in the enterprise sector to prepare business continuity plans in response to a 'flu pandemic or other comparable threat.

Business continuity planning is increasingly part of normal business practice. Enterprises recognise the need to respond effectively to disruptions caused by factors outside their control. The need for effective business continuity planning is being heightened by the growing potential for a pandemic caused by avian flu or for events such as acts of terrorism or natural disasters. By preparing business continuity plans for these risks, companies can minimise the resulting disruption and inefficiencies in their operations.

The Government has plans in place for its own response in the event of an influenza pandemic. This report is part of the Government's overall approach to preparing for a pandemic. It provides a brief introduction to the threat posed by an influenza pandemic from a business perspective and its likely impact on the business environment. It also contains a Business Continuity Planning Checklist and ten illustrative case studies of how enterprises across a range of sectors are preparing to respond.

I hope that this report will assist businesses to plan for continuity of operations in the event of a 'flu pandemic or other emergency.

Martin Cronin

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Section 1. Introduction for Business to the Threat Posed by an Influenza Pandemic

Introduction

Business Continuity Planning is increasingly part of normal business practice. Recent acts of terrorism, outbreaks of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Avian Flu, and various widespread natural disasters have served to highlight the importance of business continuity planning by underlining the substantial risk of major operational disruptions for businesses. Best practice is for companies to prepare for a range of eventualities and risks which threaten business continuity. This is particularly important in the context of the risk of an influenza pandemic in the medium term.

This chapter presents a brief introduction to influenza, which focuses on facts that businesses need to know. Businesses should also review guidance on the national response in the event of an influenza pandemic from the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive.

Influenza

Influenza (or 'flu) is an acute illness resulting from infection by an influenza virus. It is highly infectious. It can spread rapidly from person to person.

Typical symptoms include fever, headache, aching muscles, weakness and respiratory symptoms such as a cough, sore throat and difficulty in breathing.

Typically symptoms come on suddenly a few days after the person is infected. Typically, an adult developing symptoms is sufficiently recovered to return to work after a week or so.

Influenza is transmitted through: breathing in droplets containing the virus, produced when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes; or touching an infected person or surface contaminated with the virus and then touching your own or someone else's face.

An adult typically becomes infectious about 24 hours before developing symptoms. They are typically no longer infectious once they have recovered from the symptoms.

Once a person has been infected by a strain of influenza, they develop immunity, and will not generally be infected by the same strain again.

Influenza is a major cause of death among older people, but seldom kills people of working age. Influenza caused by virus strains already circulating in the human population is known as seasonal influenza, because it is typically most active in winter.

Pandemic Influenza

An influenza pandemic is a global epidemic of a newly emerged strain of influenza. Because it is newly emerged, most people have little or no immunity to the virus strain, which allows it to spread more widely, and cause more serious illness.

There have been three pandemics in the last century. The worst of these was the Spanish 'Flu of 1918/19, which killed about 50 million people worldwide. This pandemic was unusual, because it killed large numbers of otherwise healthy people of working age. Particularly large numbers of people between the ages of 20 and 35 died.

The pandemics of 1957/58 (Asian 'Flu) and 1968/69 (Hong Kong 'Flu) were much less severe. The pathogenicity of the pandemic virus strains was much less, numbers who died were much lower, and deaths were concentrated mainly among people past retirement age.

There is very considerable uncertainty about how severe a new pandemic would be.

The Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive assumptions are of:

- a cumulative clinical attack rate of between 25% and 50% of the population over the duration of the pandemic; and
- a case fatality rate of between 0.37% and 2.50% (equivalent to the 1957 and 1918 pandemics respectively)¹.

The typical pattern is that influenza pandemics come in two or three waves, spread over a period that can be more than a year. In each wave, rates of infection start low, and build up to a peak, before falling off. Rates of infection are high for a period of several weeks during each wave.

Cause for Concern

Public health experts are always sensitive to the threat posed by influenza pandemics because of the severe impact of past pandemics.

Influenza pandemics are thought to occur when strains of influenza in birds (and possibly pigs) mutate and cross the species barrier to propagate efficiently among humans. In February 2007, the World Health Organisation had raised an elevated state of alert about the threat of a pandemic because there are a number of strains of influenza circulating in bird populations that are thought to possibly have the potential to develop into human pandemic strains. One of these (H5N1) has shown itself to be capable of infecting people, and causing high rates of mortality, but has not at this time become capable of propagating efficiently among humans.

It is not known for certain whether any of the strains of influenza currently identified as circulating in bird populations will cause a pandemic. Neither is it known when a pandemic will occur. However, there is little doubt that there will be influenza pandemics in the future, as in the past. While the impetus for the development of this guide comes from the elevated state of alert caused by the H5N1 strain of avian flu, the expectation is that preparedness for an influenza pandemic will in any case be important, and that this guide will continue to be relevant.

Expected Impact of Influenza Pandemic on the Business Environment

The likelihood is that an influenza pandemic will have a significant impact on the business environment. Just how significant is uncertain. The more severe the pandemic, the greater the likely impact, but it is highly uncertain how severe an influenza pandemic will be.

A pandemic will not just affect your business. It will be experienced by other businesses, in Ireland and globally, at roughly the same time, although waves of infection may hit different countries, and different areas within Ireland, at somewhat different times.

1. "Clinical attack rate" refers to the percentage of the population who develop the symptoms to be diagnosed as having influenza. "Case fatality rate" refers to the percentage of those clinically infected who die as a result.

The following are among the key likely areas of impact of an influenza pandemic.

- It is likely to cause a sharp increase in employee absences, particularly during the main waves of infection. For a typical business, it would be prudent to consider a fairly severe scenario under which employee absences peak at 40% over the two worst weeks in each wave of infection.
- It may disrupt customer demand, both in terms of volume and in terms of what customers require.
- It may disrupt the flow of supplies and other inputs that a business needs to operate.
- It may disrupt the operation of systems of transport and logistics used by businesses.
- Businesses will have to make operational changes to reduce the risk of infection in the workplace.

It is not possible to say with certainty what the impact of a pandemic will be on essential business services. **Reasonable business planning assumptions** for a pandemic of a level of severity that will allow most businesses to continue staffing their operations are as follows.

- That for banking, drainage/sewerage, electricity, gas, telecommunications and water, in general core services should continue to operate. At the same time, it is plausible that there could be problems with individual providers, or that, for example, individual bank branches might transfer their business to another location. Faults and other interruptions to service might be prolonged by a shortage of repair and maintenance staff. Businesses should also bear in mind the possibility of more general interruptions to service.
- That passenger transport (both international and domestic) might be disrupted both by staff absences, and by a reluctance among users to sit in an enclosed space, in close proximity with others whose health status is unknown.
- That there may be some disruption to waste collection and disposal, arising from staff shortages.
- That domestic and international logistics services may be affected by staff shortages and also by a reluctance among logistics operators to expose their employees to risk of infection as a result of travel.
- That the effective management of supply chains may be affected because of staff shortages which will affect supplies, but also by decisions about the prioritisation of product flow. It is possible that some countries may decide to prioritise domestic markets before export markets in situations where there are shortages.

The following section of the report outlines the key issues to consider in preparing a business continuity plan for your organisation and to ensure that you are ready to respond in the event of an influenza pandemic.

Business Continuity Planning Checklist Responding to an Influenza Pandemic

The following is a checklist of the key risks to the continuity of your business activities in the event of an influenza pandemic and of preparatory actions that can be taken to respond. Guidance on completing the checklist is provided in Section 2 of this publication and illustrative case studies of how similar organisations are preparing can be found in Section 3.

1. Planning Activities

Not Started	Underway	Complete	
			1.1 Assign responsibility for planning and preparedness to a senior executive and a deputy
			1.2 Obtain information on pandemic influenza
			1.3 Consult within the company and with labour representatives
			1.4 Consult with suppliers
			1.5 Assess 'High Level' impact on your business and attach appropriate priority to the planning process
			1.6 Develop a plan
			1.7 Establish authorities, triggers and procedures for implementing plan
			1.8 Test plan in exercises
			1.9 Share best practice with other businesses
			1.10 Revisit plan periodically

2. Business Issues to Address

Not Started	Underway	Complete	
			2.1 Identify critical activities and the employees and inputs required to maintain them
			2.2 Consider the possible impact of employee absences
			2.3 Consider the possible impact of disruption to the supply of inputs
			2.4 Examine the likely impact of a pandemic on your market and on your customers' requirements
			2.5 Identify and agree strategic imperatives
			2.6 Understand the business need for face-to-face meetings during a pandemic
			2.7 Understand the special needs of some employees during a pandemic
			2.8 Consider the issues for business related travel during a pandemic
			2.9 Consider the financial management implications of a pandemic
			2.10 Examine the extent to which others will be dependent on your business in the event of a pandemic
			2.11 Consider the circumstances under which you might decide to scale back or suspend operations during a pandemic

3. Measures to Underpin Continuity

Not Started	Underway	Complete	
			3.1 Nominate deputies
			3.2 Cross-train, and identify alternative sources of labour
			3.3 Communicate with staff in a manner appropriate to the current state of pandemic alert
			3.4 Prepare emergency communications plan
			3.5 Plan for increased take-up of employee welfare services
			3.6 Prepare policies on sick leave and compassionate leave during a pandemic
			3.7 Prepare policies on foreign travel during a pandemic
			3.8 Plan for the needs of staff overseas
			3.9 Make arrangements to assure supplies in the event of a pandemic
			3.10 Consider the possibility of changes to your product, your service, or your interaction with customers, during a pandemic, and plan for any changes you consider appropriate
			3.11 Review insurance coverage

4. Responding to Workplace Risks in a Pandemic

Not Started	Underway	Complete	
			4.1 Prepare policies on hygienic employee behaviour during a pandemic
			4.2 Plan to provide for hand washing, hand hygiene, tissue disposal and other facilities
			4.3 Plan for frequent and effective cleaning of the workplace
			4.4 Prepare policies on attendance by employees who are infected, or are suspected to be infected, with influenza
			4.5 Plan measures to reduce face-to-face contact with customers/ suppliers and between employees from different sites
			4.6 Identify work organisation measures that can be taken to reduce potential for employees who are in the workplace to infect each other
			4.7 Prepare policies on flexible work locations (e.g. teleworking) and flexible working times (e.g. shiftworking)
			4.8 Provide ICT infrastructure to support teleworking and remote customer interaction

Signed

Executive Responsible

Section 2. Planning for an Influenza Pandemic – Using the Checklist

1. Planning Activities

1.1 Establish responsibility for planning and preparedness

Your organisation should appoint a pandemic influenza planning coordinator and/or team with defined responsibilities and budget for planning and for preparedness. A deputy should also be appointed.

If your organisation already has a business continuity planning process, you should consider addressing influenza pandemic preparedness within that process.

1.2 Obtain information on pandemic influenza

This document provides advice on the business aspects of preparing for an influenza pandemic.

Key sources of information on health issues relating to a pandemic are:

- Department of Health and Children
- Health Service Executive
- World Health Organisation

As of February 2007, the *National Pandemic Influenza Plan* is available at www.dohc.ie and www.hse.ie. *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for Ireland – Advice of the Pandemic Influenza Expert Group* is available at www.hpsc.ie.

Other bodies within Ireland may also provide relevant information and advice.

1.3 Consult within the company and with staff labour representatives

Consult widely within the company. An influenza pandemic has the potential to impact on all aspects of the business.

Consult in an appropriate way with staff and labour representatives. In the event of a pandemic, the capability of the business to operate may depend on employee confidence in its response.

1.4 Consult with suppliers

Consult with your key suppliers and subcontractors to clarify whether they have robust business continuity plans in place. You will need to understand how they are likely to react in the event of a pandemic. It may be possible to make arrangements to secure supplies or service.

1.5 Assess ‘High Level’ impact on your business and attach appropriate priority to the planning process

Your organisation should initially prepare a ‘high level’ impact assessment on the business. This should provide a financial assessment of a pandemic impact and propose strategic priorities for the business in the event of a pandemic, and an outline budget for the development and maintenance of the business continuity planning process. This should be approved by the board and/or senior management.

1.6 Develop a plan

Use this checklist to help in developing a plan to prepare for an influenza pandemic, and respond in the event that a pandemic occurs.

An influenza pandemic is not the only threat to business continuity that your business faces. Once the plan is developed, consider using it as the starting point for a business continuity plan that addresses a wider range of risks.

1.7 Establish authorities, triggers and procedures for implementing plan

Establish who will have the authority to trigger the plan and its elements. Establish procedures for implementing the plan.

There should be clarity as to the circumstances under which the plan will be triggered and terminated. Many businesses internationally envisage using announcement of changes in pandemic alert status by the World Health Organisation or by governments to trigger the various elements of their plan. For most Irish businesses, the key pandemic alert frameworks are those of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the European Union and Ireland, which are set out below. The EU and Irish frameworks subdivide the Pandemic (Level 6) stage of the WHO framework into more detailed stages.

World Health Organisation Influenza Pandemic Alert Framework

Inter-pandemic phase: New virus in animals, no human cases	Low risk of human cases	1
	Higher risk of human cases	2
Pandemic alert: New virus causes human cases	No or very limited human-to-human transmission	3
	Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission	4
	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission	5
Pandemic	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission	6

EU and Irish Alert Levels (subdivisions of WHO Level 6 – Pandemic)

Level	EU Framework	Irish Framework
1	Cases only outside the EU	Cases only outside Ireland
2	New virus isolated within the EU	New virus isolated within Ireland
3	Outbreak(s) in the EU	Outbreak(s) in Ireland
4	Widespread activity across the EU	Widespread activity across Ireland

1.8 Test plan in exercises

Implement an exercise to test your plan.

Develop a scenario based on a moderately severe influenza pandemic. It is likely to include elements such as:

- A period of weeks or months, after the pandemic is recognised but before it becomes very active in Ireland
- A wave of high levels of infection lasting perhaps six weeks, with staff absences rising to a peak before falling off again
- Repetition of this pattern once or twice over a total period of up to a year
- Absence of some specific essential staff, including key managers and key IT staff, for periods
- Shut-down of one or more functions for a period of a week or so, as absences rise to high levels
- Implementation of strategies to reduce the risk of infection in your workplace
- Disruption to customers and market
- Disruption to suppliers and logistics

If you wish to include disruption to an essential service in the scenario, consider that a fault develops, and it takes significantly longer than usual for it to be resolved. Consider the possible implications of disruption to the waste collection service.

Work through the consequences of the scenario, either as a desk exercise, or with line managers and staff.

Revise the plan based on what is learned from the exercise.

1.9 Share best practice with other businesses

Discuss planning and preparedness for an influenza pandemic with other businesses. Use business networks or other business organisations to share best practice, to learn from each other, and to engage in joint exercises.

1.10 Revisit Plan Periodically

You should revisit, and retest, the plan periodically, at least once per year, to ensure that it remains current. You should check that preparations that could go out of date (e.g. phone lists or arrangements for deputies) are up to date.

2. Issues to Address

2.1 Identify critical activities and the employees and inputs required to maintain them

Consider what activities will be essential to your business in the event of a pandemic, and what activities will be of lower priority. Identify what people and inputs are required to keep essential activities going.

2.2 Consider the possible impact of employee absences

It is likely that there will be very significant employee absences in the event of a pandemic. Just how extensive the absences are will depend on the severity of the pandemic, and also on factors specific to the business, and on how employees respond to the pandemic.

Employees may be absent for a range of reasons:

- Those who are ill with influenza should not attend work.
- Some employees may have other illnesses that justify non-attendance. Other illnesses will continue to occur during a pandemic.
- Some employees may wish to remain away from work to provide care to ill relatives. In the event of school and/or childcare closures, others may wish to remain at home to care for children.
- Some businesses may ask some employees to stay away from work for social distancing purposes.
- It is possible that medical or public health advice might ask that people from groups particularly vulnerable to the pandemic should remain away from work.
- Some employees may have difficulty in arranging transport to work. There may be a reluctance to travel on public transport in close proximity to other people.
- Some employees may decide against attending work for other reasons, including worries about the risk of infection in the workplace.

The likelihood is that non-attendance will peak during the waves of high rates of infection that occur in influenza pandemics. Typically, there are two to three such waves, each of a few weeks in duration, separated by periods of some months.

It is not possible to predict with confidence how high absenteeism will rise in your business. It will depend on factors such as the virulence of the virus, how employees perceive the risks, whether local schools close, and the measures you take to limit infection within the workplace.

The Department of Health and Children and Health Service Executive project that staff absences due only to illness and the need to care for those who are ill may rise to 15% in large businesses and 30% in small businesses in a pandemic with a high clinical attack rate. Factoring in absences due to other causes, it would be prudent for a typical business to take account of a scenario under which 40% of its employees are absent during peaks of infection when planning. You should also take account of the possibility that levels of absence could be significantly lower than this, or indeed could be higher.

Consider whether there are critical business activities that are vulnerable to the absence of a small number of key staff. There may be key managers. You may depend on a small number of IT staff to operate. You may depend on a specialist function such as a laboratory, or on a small number of certified professionals.

Owner-managed SMEs may face particular challenges if the owner-manager becomes ill while the business is under stress from an influenza pandemic.

2.3 Consider the possible impact of disruption to the supply of inputs

Identify your key suppliers. For each key supplier:

- Understand to what extent inventories buffer your business from supply disruption;
- Explore what the impact would be if the supplier was unable to serve your business, if it could not supply usual volumes, or if its lead times lengthened;
- Assess how vulnerable the source of supply is to disruption caused by a pandemic, taking account of staffing issues, the supplier's upstream supply chain, competing commitments and any other factors that seem relevant;
- Assess how vulnerable your business is to problems with logistics;
- Assess whether your business would have access to alternative sources of supply, and whether this would improve security of supply meaningfully.

2.4 Examine the likely impact of a pandemic on your market and on your customers' requirements

Consider whether demand for your product is likely to decrease in the event of a pandemic.

- If your product or service is not a necessity and if it depends on your customers mixing with other people, then demand may fall.
- If you are supplying other businesses, they will also be affected by the pandemic. During waves of peak infection, manpower shortages may mean that they cannot use as much of your product as usual. As waves of peak infection are unlikely to strike all parts of the world at the same time your customers' worst manpower shortages may not occur at the same time as yours. Your customers' markets will also be affected by the pandemic.
- Any disruption to international logistics could have a ripple effect on demand.
- The normal operation of healthcare services will be disrupted by a pandemic, and demand for some healthcare products will fall.

Consider whether demand for your product is likely to increase in the event of a pandemic.

- If your product or service will be used by the healthcare sector, or by others, in responding to the pandemic, then demand may rise.
- Demand for some types of hygiene and cleaning products is likely to be strong.
- Demand for some types of communications service may rise.
- Some products and services will be more attractive than others under pandemic conditions. For example, products and services that facilitate people in avoiding close contact with others may sell well.
- If your products and services that are good substitutes for other products or services that become less attractive during a pandemic, then demand may increase.

Customers may wish to change the ways in which they engage with you during a pandemic. Many customers will wish to reduce or eliminate face-to-face contact with your people. Selling, taking orders and providing customer service by telephone or over the Internet is likely to become more popular. If you sell to consumers, home delivery services and product picking services may be attractive.

2.5 Identify and agree strategic imperatives

A 'flu pandemic is likely to have a significant impact on your business. As a context for the planning process you should identify, discuss and agree strategic imperatives. These might include issues such as:

1. Ensuring business survival.
2. Protecting existing customers.
3. Protecting employees.
4. Acting in a socially responsible manner by taking account of the wider health, social and business implications of decisions, and providing support to the local community where possible.

2.6 Understand the business need for face-to-face meetings during a pandemic

Review the type and number of face-to-face meetings that take place with customers and suppliers, and within the business. Consider what the business need is for these meetings. Consider whether the business need dictates that a face-to-face meeting is necessary, or whether other approaches might be feasible.

Consider whether participants who would usually demand a face-to-face meeting might prefer an alternative approach in the event of a pandemic.

2.7 Understand the special needs of some employees during a pandemic

Your employees will not all be affected in the same way by a pandemic.

- Some will have specific health needs. Once a pandemic strain emerges, some groups may be identified as being at high risk, and needing greater protection. In the business context, these may include employees who are immune compromised or have chronic medical conditions. Depending on the virulence of the pandemic strain, other groups could be at risk, such as employees approaching retirement age.
- Some will place a high priority on maintaining their income.
- Some will have more caring responsibilities than others.

2.8 Consider the issues for business related travel during a pandemic

In the event of an influenza pandemic, there may be a widespread reluctance to use mass transport, including air travel, particularly if the pandemic is highly pathogenic. Any significant reduction in demand for air travel is likely to be reflected in reduced airline schedules.

There are no current plans that Irish or EU borders would be closed in the event of a pandemic. It is possible that borders may be closed, or quarantines imposed, elsewhere in the world in an effort to curtail the spread of the pandemic.

There are no current plans to restrict domestic travel within Ireland in the event of a pandemic, although it is possible that the Government may advise against non-essential travel.

2.9 Consider the financial management implications of a pandemic

Consider what the financial impact of an influenza pandemic may be, on profits and margins, and particularly on cash flow. For example:

- Demand for your business's products or services may fall;
- Manpower levels may be reduced (with the impact on cash flow depending partly on the business's sick leave and compassionate leave arrangements); and
- It may not be possible to maintain production levels.

Identify the areas where a problem has the potential to threaten the business's financial stability. Consider how to manage finances during a pandemic so as to maintain financial stability.

2.10 Examine the extent to which others will be dependent on your business in the event of a pandemic

In addition to considering your business's own needs, you should understand whether others are dependent on your business.

- Does your business supply the Irish health service, or nursing homes?
- Does your business supply healthcare providers internationally?
- Does your business supply providers of essential services?
- Do people depend on your business for food, heating oil or other essentials?
- Do other businesses depend on your business to operate?

2.11 Consider the circumstances under which you might decide to scale back or suspend operations during a pandemic

The main purpose of business continuity planning for an influenza pandemic is to plan for continuity of operations through the pandemic. Even so, circumstances may arise where it is in the long term interests of the business and its employees to intentionally scale back or suspend operations.

This is most likely to be relevant:

- Where market demand for your product or service has fallen sharply;
- If the business runs out of inputs;
- If a high proportion of employees are ill simultaneously; or
- If the pandemic affects particularly large numbers of people (high clinical attack rate) or kills particularly large numbers of those affected (high case fatality rate).

3. Measures to Underpin Continuity

3.1 Nominate deputies

In the event of a pandemic, people in key positions may be unavailable for work for periods. As a part of the planning process, nominate deputies with the authority to manage, make decisions and undertake appropriate actions. As the first deputy in line for a role may also be unavailable, back-up deputies should also be nominated.

3.2 Cross-train, and identify alternative sources of labour

Consider introducing or extending cross-training to:

- Increase the number of employees who can do essential specialist work; and
- Increase flexibility in assigning employees to different roles.

Consider preparing an additional pool of workers, such as retirees or contractors.

3.3 Communicate with staff in a manner appropriate to the current state of pandemic alert

Disseminate information to the workforce that is appropriate to the current state of pandemic alert. The level of detail that it is appropriate to disseminate will increase with the level of World Health Organisation alert.

Communications should address:

- Pandemic influenza – signs and symptoms, modes of transmission, personal and family protection and response strategies (based on information published by the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive); and
- The business's pandemic preparedness and response plan, and employees' role in the plan.

Communications should be appropriate to the target audience in terms of content, presentation and language.

3.4 Prepare emergency communications plan

Prepare an emergency communications plan, for communication with employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders in the business. The plan should identify key contacts (with back-ups), chains of communications, and processes for tracking business and employee status.

Consider preparing platforms, such as dedicated websites and hotlines, for communicating with employees, customers and suppliers about the organisation's status, about the actions it is taking, and about the actions they should take.

Consider preparing notices on subjects such as respiratory hygiene to be used in the event of a pandemic.

The plan should be designed to ensure that communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate. For some businesses, it may be important that communications be made available in more than one language.

3.5 Plan for increased take-up of employee welfare services

If the business provides employee welfare services, it should plan for the possibility of an increase in uptake.

- There is likely to be an increase in demand for medical services and advice during an influenza pandemic.
- During a pandemic, there will be substantial numbers of deaths in excess of normal mortality. This may drive an increase in demand for bereavement counselling.
- Other stresses arising from the pandemic may further increase demand for advice and counselling.

3.6 Prepare policies on sick leave and compassionate leave during a pandemic

Establish policies on sick leave absences unique to a pandemic. These should take account of:

- the likelihood that it will not be practicable for medical practitioners to examine and certify all employees who become ill;
- the need to protect others in the workplace from infection by people who are ill; and
- the need to judge when a person is no longer infectious, and can return to work (when they feel better, and no longer show symptoms, subject to obtaining more up-to-date guidance once the characteristics of the pandemic strain are known).

Establish policies on compassionate leave unique to a pandemic, to cover circumstances such as:

- where employees are bereaved;
- where employees face a pressing need to provide care for others; or
- where employees are at high risk if they become infected, and cannot adequately limit their risk of infection in the workplace.

Consider what the business's response should be to absenteeism during a pandemic, taking account of:

- The business's need to have employees attend so as to maintain business continuity and activity;
- The pressures some staff may be under to remain away from work; and
- The common interest that the business and employees have in business survival and in limiting employee turnover.

3.7 Prepare policies on foreign travel during a pandemic

In the early stages of a pandemic, prior to its arrival in Ireland, develop policies on travel to affected geographic areas overseas, and on employees working in or near affected areas, taking account of advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and information from the World Health Organisation.

Prepare policies on international business travel during a pandemic, taking account of possible disruption to flight schedules and the likelihood that many staff will be reluctant to fly. Take account of the possibility of border closures and quarantines outside the EU.

3.8 Plan for the needs of staff overseas

Consider how to ensure adequate access to medical treatment for Irish staff (and Irish-based staff) who are overseas during a pandemic. More broadly, consider how to manage and support them during a pandemic.

Consider issues such as repatriation and payment.

If the business has subsidiaries or other operations overseas, ensure that they also plan for the possibility of an influenza pandemic.

3.9 Make arrangements to assure supplies in the event of a pandemic

Consider taking action to assure continuity of supply in the event of a pandemic.

- Explore the possibility of obtaining commitments as to the priority that suppliers will place on supplying your organisation in the event of a pandemic.
- Encourage suppliers (particularly small suppliers) to plan for a pandemic.
- Identify alternative sources of critical inputs, and make arrangements to draw on them in the event that supplies are disrupted.
- Review contracts to take account of circumstances that may arise in the event of a pandemic.

3.10 Consider the possibility of changes to your product, your service, or your interaction with customers, during a pandemic, and plan for any changes you consider appropriate

Consider changes to the product or service your business provides during a pandemic.

- Is it possible to provide the product or service with less face-to-face interaction with customers or less customer crowding?
- Is it possible to make measures to reduce the risk of infection visible and transparent?
- Is it possible to make face-to-face contact with the customer less frequent?
- If there is disruption to supplies will it still be possible to produce a product or service that will satisfy customers' minimum needs?
- Is it possible to reduce the labour input into the product or service, perhaps by reducing variety, by operating to a lower specification or by limiting customer service?

3.11 Review insurance coverage

Review all aspects of your insurance coverage, to ensure it is likely to be sufficient for circumstances likely to arise in a pandemic. Among the areas of insurance you may wish to consider reviewing are:

- Loss of profits cover;
- "Key man" insurance;
- Liabilities that may arise from a pandemic;
- Whether levels of cover are adequate;
- Whether any exclusions may be relevant.

Discuss with your insurance broker whether your business is well covered.

4. Planning in Response to Workplace Risks in a Pandemic

4.1 Prepare policies on hygienic employee behaviour during a pandemic

Consult the general guidance on hygiene during a pandemic published by the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive, and guidelines for business from other sources.

Prepare guidelines on hygiene for your employees to be implemented in the event of a pandemic, based on this advice.

4.2 Plan to provide for hand washing, hand hygiene, tissue disposal and other facilities

You should plan to provide adequate facilities and materials for hand hygiene, hygienic tissue disposal and any other activities likely to be important in preventing the transmission of influenza in the workplace during a pandemic.

You should decide on your business's requirements after reviewing the guidance from the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive and other sources.

Your business may need to establish a stockpile of materials in preparation, as it may be difficult to source them quickly once a pandemic occurs.

4.3 Plan for frequent and effective cleaning of the workplace

Plan to provide for frequent and effective cleaning of the workplace, so as to reduce the risk that employees will pick up the infection from contaminated surfaces.

Examples of frequently touched areas include doorknobs, armrests, seatbacks, tables, air/light controls, keyboards and switches.

It may be possible to make arrangements in advance with your business's provider(s) of cleaning services to provide an elevated level of cleaning activity in the event of a pandemic. Take into account, however, that your provider may be short staffed during a pandemic, like any other business, and that cleaning staff may be reluctant to expose themselves to perceived risks.

Take measures to assure that a sufficient supply of suitable cleaning materials will be available in the event of a pandemic. As cleaning materials may be in short supply, consider establishing a stockpile or arranging for stocks to be held on your business's behalf.

Plan, also, for cleaning measures to be taken in the event that an employee in the workplace is found to have symptoms of influenza.

4.4 Prepare policies on attendance by employees who are infected, or are suspected to be infected, with influenza

Prepare policies on attendance during a pandemic by employees showing symptoms of influenza, or who are suspected to be infected with influenza.

Plan on asking those with symptoms of influenza to stay away from the workplace.

Taking account of guidance from the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive and other sources, prepare policies on:

- Assessing whether staff are showing symptoms of influenza; and
- The measures to be taken if a member of staff is found to be showing symptoms of influenza while at the workplace.

4.5 Plan measures to reduce face-to-face contact with customers/suppliers and between employees from different sites

Explore the scope to reduce or eliminate face-to-face contact with customers and suppliers, and between different worksites in your organisation, in the event of a pandemic. Eliminating, or reducing the frequency of, face-to-face contacts with people in other organisations will reduce exposure to infection, and will help in slowing the spread of a pandemic. Eliminating, or reducing the frequency of, face-to-face contacts with people from different worksites in your organisation will have similar benefits. You may be able to replace face-to-face meetings with teleconference or videoconference meetings.

4.6 Identify work organisation measures that can be taken to reduce potential for employees who are in the workplace to infect each other

Taking account of advice and guidance on reducing the risk of infection from the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive and other sources, you should look at your work organisation to identify opportunities to reduce the potential for employees who are in the workplace to infect each other.

Where work is organised into teams, or can be organised in this way, it may be possible to separate teams sufficiently to reduce the risk that a member of one team will infect a member of another. If this is done, each team should, where possible, avoid contact with other teams.

In some workplaces, there may be scope for physical separation between individual employees.

Consider staggering lunch and break times to reduce crowding in canteens, at entrances and in changing areas.

It may be possible to eliminate, or reduce the frequency of, meetings in the workplace.

4.7 Prepare policies on flexible work locations (e.g. teleworking) and flexible working times (e.g. shiftworking)

It may be possible for your business to reduce the potential for infection in the workplace during a pandemic by reducing the numbers present at the same time.

Consider the scope for work to be done off-site, for example at employees' homes.

If your business has facilities for teleworking, assess what activities could be undertaken through teleworking in the event of a pandemic. Assess what level of teleworking your ICT infrastructure could support, taking account of the availability of home computers and home Internet connections to employees.

It may be possible to reduce the number of staff present in the workplace at one time by introducing shiftworking. It may be possible to allow employees to work flexibly, making them free to choose working hours when numbers in the workplace are low.

Review the security implications of flexibility.

Prepare policies on the work that can be done at flexible locations and at flexible locations in the event of a pandemic, and on who should be enabled to make use of flexibility.

4.8 Provide ICT infrastructure to support teleworking and remote customer interaction

If your business has facilities for teleworking, assess whether it should develop its facilities further. Consider increasing numbers who can telework. Taking account of security risks and operational issues, consider developing the infrastructure to make more parts of your IT systems remotely accessible.

If your business does not have facilities for teleworking, assess whether developing facilities would be justified. Teleworking may provide a means of keeping essential staff involved if they cannot attend the workplace.

Assess your business's capacity to interact with customers remotely, by telephone, e-mail and/or web. Consider developing this infrastructure further, so as to allow business with customers to be carried out remotely during a pandemic.

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Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Food Processing Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of an influenza pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for an influenza pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study necessarily reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

Good Food Limited is a large food processor in Ireland with over 1,000 employees and with a range of almost 500 products, the majority produced in its 3 manufacturing plants in Ireland, and the remainder produced under contract by processors in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe.

- The products are distributed via a network of depots and agents to its 5,000+ retail customers, including grocery multiples, using an in-house fleet of 70 delivery vans as well as agents' vans.
- The products are mainly chilled food of relatively short shelf life. They require regular and frequent deliveries, using refrigerated depots and delivery vehicles.
- As a food producer, the company has been alert to the potential risks of an avian influenza outbreak among birds in Ireland and the related risk of an influenza pandemic.
- As a large food sector company, Good Food is aware of the need for business continuity planning to address food specific issues that may arise such as product contamination and recall, as well as by issues, such as computer failure and factory or warehouse fire or flood, faced by businesses in other sectors.

Adding preparation for a 'flu pandemic to Good Food Limited's existing business continuity planning activities has been a clear priority. A project team was established, led by the HR Department to undertake the necessary planning. The team has undertaken the planning process as set out in the steps below.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The project team developed a planning schedule with action steps based on the 'Checklist', deadlines and associated responsibilities.
2. The project team identified various sources of information (e.g. Department of Health and Children, Health Service Executive, World Health Organisation), about the pandemic threat and impact, and collected and disseminated this information among the team.

3. A list of employees, representing all aspects of the business, was identified for consultation. A questionnaire was developed and circulated to obtain information to act as a basis for an initial impact assessment.
4. Employee representatives were contacted and made aware of the issues. Their cooperation and involvement sought for the planning process.
5. Good Food's suppliers were contacted to request details of their business continuity plans for an influenza pandemic.
6. Based on the WHO 'Alert Framework' the project team identified trigger points to be included in the plan.

2: Issues to be Addressed

The following were the main issues addressed in planning.

1. The project team identified critical activities within Good Food's business, essential for business continuity. These included:
 - Raw material and packaging supplies
 - Finished goods supplies
 - Production including production maintenance
 - Quality Control and Laboratory Testing
 - Logistics
 - Cleaning
2. The project team assessed the impact of these critical activities suffering 40% absences.
 - Good Food Limited has several thousand suppliers of raw materials and packaging. The team assessed how critical each is to the production process, and to resilience in the event of a pandemic. Where a supplier was assessed as being very significant to Good Food, they were contacted and asked to supply details of their business continuity planning. Significance was not always a factor of size.
 - Good Food has a total of 16 suppliers of finished products. Each of these was contacted in order to understand the status of its business continuity plans for a 'flu pandemic. As many of these suppliers also produce products under their own brand, difficult questions relating to priority arose when assessing the impact of significant employee absences. In many cases these questions could not be satisfactorily resolved and remain open. Similarly, it is possible that suppliers in the UK and Continental Europe might give priority to their domestic markets in the event of product shortages.
 - Good Food has three manufacturing locations. The possibility, in the event of significant employee absences, of rationalising the range of products and package sizes, and of consolidating of production at a single site is being evaluated. This would also allow for maintenance to be centralised, and could maximise production efficiency through longer production runs of a limited product range.

- As in any food company, compromising quality control and laboratory testing is not an option. The project team has set in motion a process to identify staff who could be cross trained to undertake some of this work. It has also contacted the nearest Institute of Technology to assess its capacity to support the company's test laboratory in an emergency.
 - Good Food's logistics is largely an internal activity, although with some agents, and with a small element handled by third parties. The Logistics Director has been asked to prepare a contingency plan to cater for a pandemic.
 - Good Food's cleaning is conducted by a contracted agency. The project team has contacted this agency for details of expected continuity plans in the event of a pandemic, and assurances that the cleaners have the necessary knowledge and training to cater for a pandemic. Mindful of the fact that the contracted agency will itself be impacted by employee absences, and will also be in significant demand in a pandemic situation, the project team has recommended that selected internal staff receive appropriate training in cleaning.
3. The project team has contacted the company's major customers, and asked them for information on their business continuity plans in relation to continuity of supply. They found that the grocery multiples are aware of the need for business continuity planning for a 'flu pandemic, although some, like Good Food, are still at an early stage of this planning process. It is envisaged that the grocery multiples will take responsibility for allocation of supplies to their stores in the event of shortages. Allocations to independent grocery stores might have to be administered by Good Food based on sales history. The Good Food sales team would inform retailers of the planned approach to allocations in advance of the pandemic spreading to Ireland.
 4. Based on the information received to date and on the assumptions made, the project team has prepared financial impact statements for the business for review by the senior management team.
 5. In relation to administrative employees, the project team has identified those tasks which could be managed from home (e.g. administrative, finance and some IT work), and have identified the IT resources required. Sales contact with customers will be essential during a pandemic to keep customers advised of the status of supplies. This contact will be by telephone or e-mail only. Delivery staff cannot avoid contact with customers but will be trained to minimise the risk of infection, and will be supplied with hygiene kits for their vehicles.
 6. The project team has identified a small number of employees who are potentially at higher risk to receive special medical advice in the event that a pandemic emerges.
 7. The team has analysed business related travel for the last year as a guide to action steps required. Most travel related to visits to customers, particularly the grocery multiples, for regular management and coordination meetings. It has been agreed that in the event of a pandemic, such meetings would be replaced by telephone or e-mail contacts. Teleconferencing has been evaluated, but is considered unnecessary.
 8. The Financial Controller has been asked to develop a plan to manage day to day financial requirements. This plan will be submitted to the project team for review and inclusion in the overall plan.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. After obtaining appropriate medical advice, the project team has developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for those showing symptoms while at work.
2. It has also developed policies to facilitate working from home where this is appropriate, including expenses related to telephone calls and installation of broadband.
3. A contingency plan for key employee replacement in event of illness has been prepared.
4. An emergency communications plan has been developed. This is based around collecting contact phone numbers and e-mail addresses of all staff for use in an emergency.
5. Good Food's insurance company has been asked to review all policies and to advise on any necessary amendments to cater for a pandemic.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. Hygiene notices are being drafted for printing, using suggested wording drawn from various informed agencies.
2. Good Food's cleaning is conducted by a contracted agency. The project team have contacted this agency for details of expected continuity plans in the event of a pandemic and assurances that the contract cleaners have the necessary knowledge and training to cater for a pandemic. The project team has recommended that some internal staff should also receive training in appropriate cleaning techniques.
3. Stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and cleaning materials have been ordered.
4. Policies have been developed to reduce face-to-face contact internally, particularly on Good Food's production floor and in its open plan administration.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

1. Food will be an essential commodity during a pandemic. Ensuring continuity of supply will be a major challenge in the face of possible disruptions to supplies and staff absences. Achieving the maximum cooperation with the grocery multiples will be if significant stock outs are to be avoided.
2. Planning without creating unnecessary panic is a challenge.

Conclusion

Good Food operates in a sector where planning for a pandemic is important both to businesses themselves, and to the wider community. It is important that food businesses should prepare effectively for the challenges potentially posed by an influenza pandemic.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from an IFSC Financial Services Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details have been altered to protect its identity.

Background

1. The business is a financial services operation based in the IFSC in Dublin. It is part of an international group. The majority of its work is back office, although there is some customer service and sales activity.
2. The international group of which the business forms a part places a heavy emphasis on business continuity, and there has planned for the possibility of an influenza pandemic at corporate level as one of a number of scenarios for emergencies.
3. The Dublin operation has its own "Continuity of Business" capability. This focuses on two main types of emergency – one in which the building becomes unavailable, and one in which an extreme event such as a pandemic makes substantial parts of the workforce unavailable.
4. The business has a "warm" back-up recovery site in Dublin, so as to allow key staff to continue working if the main building becomes inaccessible. There are regular exercises to test this facility.

1: Planning Activities

1. The business has well established Continuity of Business structures and capabilities internationally at corporate level, and in Ireland. Much of the planning for an influenza pandemic has taken place at corporate level.
2. Planning for continuity of business in the event of an influenza pandemic locally in Ireland takes place as a part of the wider Continuity of Business programme of activity. Many of the elements of preparedness for an influenza pandemic are already in place as a part of the organisation's established approach to Continuity of Business.
3. The staff responsible for Continuity of Business within Ireland have studied the likely implications of a pandemic for the Dublin operation, and plans have been adopted on the basis of their findings. They have consulted with their suppliers through a committee of support service vendors, including health insurers, canteen operators, the agency providing cleaning services and others. They have discussed continuity of service with telecommunications providers.
4. The business regularly undertakes exercises to test its preparedness plans. It will conduct a simulation exercise to test its preparedness for an influenza pandemic in the near future.
5. Plans for an influenza pandemic will be triggered by the convening of a crisis management meeting, which is likely (at latest) to follow from the identification of cases of pandemic influenza in Ireland or the UK.

2: Issues to be Addressed

1. The business has systematically attached priorities to different parts of the work that it does, and will be able to apply these priorities in the event of a pandemic.
2. As its work is people-intensive, any substantial level of absences will impact on its capability to operate. The level of absences likely at the peak of a severe pandemic would be likely to prevent the Dublin operation from carrying out its role effectively.
3. Aside from telecommunications and electricity, the business is not highly dependent on supplies from other organisations for continuity of business. Its operations are primarily concerned with back office processing of information from elsewhere in its group of companies. It would be vulnerable to a loss of power.
4. Consideration has been given to the impact of a pandemic on the volume of business. The conclusion is that some areas will probably slow down in the event of a pandemic, but that the volume of activity in other areas could be much higher. For example, a crisis such as a pandemic could trigger higher volumes of share trading, driving more back office activity.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. In the event that a pandemic seriously compromises the organisation's capability to operate in Dublin, there are plans to move work usually carried out in Dublin to another location within the group. It is expected that waves of infection will not hit all countries in which the group has back office operations at the same time, and that it will be possible to concentrate work in locations where the pandemic is relatively inactive.
2. The business has consulted with its telecommunications provider on continuity of service, and is considering whether there is anything it can do to further limit its exposure to an interruption in telecommunications.
3. The business has an established system of nominated deputies, which will continue to operate if key people are unavailable.
4. The business places a heavy emphasis on cross-training, making it straightforward to allocate staff to the highest priority work.
5. There are plans in place for emergency communications internally, including a call tree system that allows all employees to be contacted efficiently. There are plans to open up telephone lines for clients to call, and a line for family members to call in the event of a pandemic.
6. Policies for sick leave and compassionate leave specific to a pandemic have been put in place.
7. The business has involved suppliers in its planning, and has made agreements regarding continuity of service.
8. To the extent that the Dublin operation has staff temporarily located at other offices overseas, taking care of them in the event of a pandemic will be the responsibility of the office where they are currently based.
9. There are plans in place to cater for increased take-up of employee welfare services, made in consultation with health insurers. There are arrangements for counselling to be provided by a psychologist if required.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. The business will introduce guidelines on hygienic behaviour for employees in the event of a pandemic, following the guidelines similar to those published by the Department of Health and Children.
2. A substantial stockpile of materials has been established for cleaning and hand hygiene (including alcohol-based washes) in the event of a pandemic.
3. The business has acquired disposable face masks to be available for use by employees in the event of a pandemic. The quantity acquired was calculated at three per employee per day for three months.
4. Staff responsible for business continuity have obtained advice on what to do with air conditioning in the event of a pandemic. They are considering the possibility of turning it off to reduce air circulation provided that it this does not have too severe an impact on working conditions.
5. Arrangements have been made to change the pattern of cleaning in the workplace in the event of a pandemic. This will involve changes in what is cleaned, changes in the cleaning materials used (drawing on the stockpile), changes in cleaning methods and an increase in the total amount of cleaning activity.
6. There is scope to restrict access to different areas within the operation, and this may be used to reduce mixing between different teams.
7. There is only limited scope for increased teleworking. It would not be practical for back office work to be done offsite.
8. The business has considered the possibility of establishing a stock of antiviral pharmaceuticals for use by staff in the event of a pandemic. So far, the organisation's view has that the issues this would raise outweigh the benefits.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

Planning for business continuity is a regular part of this organisation's approach to business. Planning for an influenza pandemic broadens the range of challenges, because the main focus is on people rather than buildings and systems, but this is an incremental change. It has been possible to build plans for a response to the threat of an influenza pandemic on the base of existing plans for business continuity.

Conclusion

This business has placed a high priority on preparedness for an influenza pandemic, and has made a significant and well planned investment in time and resources to underpin continuity of business.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: A Case Study from an Engineering SME

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*, with the objective of raising awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland in the near future.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for a 'flu pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

- Mulroy Engineering (Mulroy) has developed an innovative product for use on farms, which it assembles in its plant in rural Ireland.
- The product is assembled in Mulroy's plant, from pre-cut parts manufactured under contract by suppliers in UK and Eastern Europe.
- The product is currently sold in over 25 countries through a network of dealers. Technical and marketing support is provided by Mulroy's team of engineers and sales personnel. These are based in Ireland, but travel abroad on regularly to visit dealers and exhibit at trade shows. Irish and UK customers are supplied and supported directly by Mulroy.
- A recent innovation has been the development of an e-business system where dealers can access technical information and have visibility of, and can order, stocks of product and spares.
- With a number of customers located in regions affected by avian 'flu, and with a strong dependence on exports, Mulroy has been conscious for some time of the need to prepare for a 'flu pandemic as part of its business continuity planning process.
- A project team has been established, led by the Managing Director, to undertake the necessary planning.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The project team has developed a planning schedule with action steps and deadlines and responsibilities.
2. The project team has identified various sources of information e.g. Department of Health and Children, Health Service Executive, World Health Organisation, about the pandemic threat and impact, including Ireland's National Pandemic Influenza Plan, and has collected and disseminated this information among the team. Through its network of dealers and its suppliers, Mulroy has also collated information from those countries where it has customers.

3. A list of dealers, representing all aspects of the business was identified for consultation. A questionnaire was circulated to dealers to obtain information as a basis for an initial impact assessment.
4. Employee representatives were contacted and made aware of the issues. Their cooperation and involvement has been sought for the planning process.
5. Mulroy's suppliers, including suppliers of logistics services, have been contacted to request details of their business continuity plans in the event of a 'flu pandemic.
6. Based on the WHO 'Alert Framework' the project team identified trigger points to be included in the plan.

2: Issues to be Addressed

The project team identified critical activities within Mulroy's business, essential for business continuity. These included:

1. Pre-cut component supplies
2. Product Assembly
3. Dealer network continuity and support
4. Spares supplies
5. Logistics

The project team assessed the impact of these critical activities suffering 40% absences.

- Mulroy has 6 principal suppliers, all located outside Ireland. It also has a number of smaller suppliers of components and consumables, mostly within Ireland. Continuity of supplies is so critical to Mulroy that it was decided that Mulroy personnel should visit each of the main suppliers and involve them in the business continuity planning process. In relation to the smaller suppliers, Mulroy is in the process of identifying and quantifying the buffer stock levels required in to afford protection from disruption under various scenarios. A decision on stockpiling of the necessary supplies will be made on the basis of this analysis, and the suppliers concerned will be contacted.
- Mulroy's assembly process is organised in 5 teams of 4 operatives, each assembling a complete product. All operatives are multi-skilled and can handle any assembly task. This system affords Mulroy significant protection and flexibility. In the event of employee absences the number of teams will be reduced, and maintaining continuity of production.
- Mulroy's dealer network is essential, not just for the generation of sales, but also in providing technical support and supplying spares to customers. Here, Mulroy's e-business system will be invaluable in ensuring continuity. Dealers will continue to have access to information on deliveries, spares and technical support. As long as the dealers have put in place the continuity plans agreed with Mulroy, there should be minimum disruption to communications with dealers.
- The reliability of any engineering product is dependent on spares availability. Mulroy prides itself in its spares system. Spares stocks are listed, real time, on the company's extranet system. Dealers can order spares on-line, and they will be delivered by courier, next day where possible, and otherwise the following day. The potential weakness of the system in a 'flu pandemic situation is with the reliability of the logistics service providers.

- Being located in Ireland, and dependent for component supplies from abroad and on export markets for business, means Mulroy is particularly dependent on its third party logistics service providers. Mulroy has contacted each provider. All of them are aware of the threat posed, and, like Mulroy, are each engaged in the business continuity planning process for a 'flu pandemic. They have undertaken to contact Mulroy within the next month to review and agree appropriate business continuity plans.

Based on the information received to date and on the assumptions made, the project team is preparing financial impact statements for the business for review by the senior management team.

In relation to administrative employees, the project team has identified those tasks which could be managed from home e.g. administrative, finance and some IT work, and has identified the IT resources required to make this happen.

The team has analysed business related travel for the last year as a guide to action steps required. Most travel related to visits to dealers and to trade shows. It has been decided that, because the e-business system has proved effective, all sales calls would be suspended during the period of the pandemic. Videoconferencing has been evaluated and considered not necessary. In relation to trade shows, it is expected that these would be cancelled in the event of a pandemic. The project team will ask sales to check this, and also to confirm whether insurance cover protects Mulroy from committed costs in the event of cancellation.

The Finance Manager have been asked to develop a plan to manage day to day financial requirements. This plan will be submitted to the project team for review and inclusion in the overall plan.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. With appropriate medical advice, the project team has developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for those showing symptoms while at work.
2. It has also developed policies to facilitate working from home where this is appropriate, including expenses related to telephone.
3. A contingency plan for key employee replacement in event of illness has been prepared.
4. A emergency communications plan has been developed.
5. Mulroy's insurance company has been asked to review all policies and to advise on any necessary amendments to cater for a pandemic.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. Hygiene notices are being drafted for printing, using suggested wording drawn from various informed agencies.
2. Stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and other necessary materials have been ordered.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

1. The process of business continuity planning for a business which is so dependent on outside agencies for essential supplies and logistics services in the event of a 'flu pandemic has been a major challenge.
2. Planning without creating unnecessary panic is another challenge.

Conclusion

Mulroy Engineering has built a successful business on the back of innovative and competent management. The company intends to apply the same approach to protecting the business from the risks that a 'flu pandemic might bring. Timely and comprehensive planning are the key activities in this approach.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Software Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a composite from a number of real businesses, and is fictionalised in some respects, including the name.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for an influenza pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study necessarily reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

Diltisys is a Dublin-based software company, which was established in the late 1990s. Its business is based on licensing its financial software product, and on providing associated services, both remotely from its Irish operation and on-site.

It has a number of customers in Ireland and the UK, and has made its first sales in the US. It is working hard at growing its sales in North American markets, and is developing its product to better meet the needs of US customers.

It employs 40 staff in Ireland and three in the UK. It has a small US office with two American sales staff and two Irish engineers.

1: Planning Activities

The management team agreed that the Human Resources Manager should take the lead in planning for the possibility of an influenza pandemic, as many of the key issues were felt to relate to people management.

She consulted information from a range of sources. These included the Department of Health and Children and the World Health Organisation, the material on pandemic influenza preparedness published by Forfás, and also material from the US and the UK where the company is active. In addition, she also consulted with her counterparts in other Irish software companies through the industry organisation.

She consulted with other members of the management team, including the Vice-Presidents responsible for sales, and for consulting & services, who manage the overseas-based staff.

She developed a draft plan, and after discussing it with the CEO, brought it to the management team for discussion and sign-off. As part of this process, the team worked through the implications of a scenario based on a fairly severe pandemic with significant staff absences and disruption to international travel.

2: Issues to be Addressed

The Human Resources Manager considered the activities within the company that are critical to business continuity. She decided that these fell into two categories:

- Some activities are required to keep the company operating day to day, such as IT systems and customer support.
- Some activities, particularly sales and work on product development have to continue if the company is to meet timing-critical constraints on its success and survival. The window of opportunity is of limited duration. The business has to satisfy its investors on meeting agreed milestones. Unplanned delays in obtaining a return on its investments in product development and sales could force the company into seeking more funding, which might not be successful, and which would in any case dilute the founders' shareholdings.

Consulting with the other members of the management team, and with the systems manager, she concluded that there would be scope for many staff to telework. The company already has the required infrastructure, and most staff have broadband access at home. There are limits to what can be done at home arising from security and work process considerations, and there could also be productivity issues. However, teleworking could allow many staff to keep working if kept out of the office by sick dependents, school closures or moves to limit the risk of workplace infection. Some staff (mainly in sales and consulting) spend relatively little time in the office under normal circumstances in any case.

Business continuity requires that the company's customer support services and IT systems are kept in operation. As the number of people working in these areas is small, continuity could be threatened if a small number of people became ill simultaneously.

The Vice-President responsible for sales observed that the sales environment might become more difficult during a pandemic. It might become more difficult to get the attention of customers, as companies become more concerned about continuity in the systems already in place, giving them less time to think about new developments. Some customers might avoid face-to-face meetings, and, indeed, sales staff might have concerns about face-to-face meetings themselves.

Disruption to travel might also have a negative impact on sales activity. Difficulties in flying internationally, or internally within the US could make meeting with customers meetings by sales staff and senior executives difficult to arrange, even without any reluctance to meet face-to-face.

The Vice-President responsible for consulting and service observed that any issues with meeting customers face-to-face or with travel could also make it difficult for his staff to do their jobs.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

Measures envisaged in the plan to underpin business continuity include the following:

- The company already has a system of deputies in place to allow business to continue when key managers are travelling, and it is envisaged that this will be used if needed during a pandemic.
- The plan envisages making the company more resilient to staff absences in customer service by introducing occasional cross-training sessions for technology staff.
- A small number of technology staff will be nominated as deputies for IT systems staff, and will be trained in the basics of keeping the company's systems up.

- The company already has home contact details for its employees. The plan envisages circulating staff with e-mail messages, and using telephone contacts if any information has to be disseminated urgently. The company will use its website for customer and staff communications.
- The Vice-Presidents responsible for sales and for consulting & services will work together to develop practical approaches to working with customers during an influenza pandemic.
- The Human Resources Manager will assess the healthcare options available to US-based staff, and will confirm that their health insurance will cover any necessary treatment.
- In the event that the WHO influenza pandemic alert level rises to 5 (significant human-to-human transmission), the company will develop a policy on overseas travel taking account of the potential for a pandemic. Managers and team leaders will also start planning how best to use teleworking during a pandemic.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

Measures planned to respond to workplace risk include the following:

- The company envisages facilitating staff in teleworking in the event of a pandemic, particularly at the height of waves of infection. Depending on the severity of the pandemic, it may actively encourage staff to telework.
- Face-to-face meetings with customers are likely to be less common in the event of a pandemic in any case.
- Staff will be advised to follow the Department of Health's guidelines on respiratory hygiene in the event of a pandemic. They will be asked not to use each others' telephones, computers, desks or chairs.
- The company will lay in a stock of cleaning and hand hygiene materials to be used in the event of a pandemic.
- Face-to-face contact between staff will be reduced to some extent, although there are limits to what is possible in the open plan offices where the majority of staff work. If numbers in the office are reduced, it may be possible to reduce mixing between teams.
- Cleaning will be stepped up during a pandemic.
- During a pandemic, staff will be encouraged to choose non-classroom approaches to training and learning.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

A small, internationally focused software company like Diltisys cannot afford to let its existing customers down, and cannot afford to interrupt its sales efforts or development work. Maintaining continuity in these areas in the face of staff absences and changed customer behaviour will be a challenge.

Conclusion

An influenza pandemic poses significant potential risks to a software company, both in terms of people availability, and access to customers. While small software companies often have difficulty in looking beyond their immediate short term priorities, it is worthwhile for them to give some thought to business resilience in the event of an influenza pandemic.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Retailer

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for a 'flu pandemic, their plan is not yet complete, and the case study necessarily reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

1. Murphy's is a medium-sized retail grocery store, a member of a symbol group, located in an Irish provincial town.
2. It employs approximately 30 staff, half of them full-time and half part-time and is open 7 days a week from 7.30 a.m. until 10.00 p.m.
3. It receives a delivery from the symbol group twice a week. It also receives deliveries of other products (e.g. milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, some chilled and frozen product and newspapers and magazines) from other suppliers, some daily and some weekly.
4. While the symbol group has done some business continuity planning at a head office and logistics function level, it has not yet extended this planning to the store level.
5. "Open all hours regardless", is the philosophy of stores like this and the concept of maybe having to review this level of service because of a 'flu pandemic is alien to the owner/manager. The 'Checklist' prepared by the consultants for this study was his only guide through the necessary thought processes.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The owner-manager's first step was to identify various sources of information e.g. Department of Health and Children, Health Service Executive and World Health Organisation about the pandemic threat and impact. The possibility of 40% staff absences was a shock.
2. He prepared a list of current full-time and part-time employees, together with a list of other people he knew he could draw on in the event of an emergency.
3. He contacted the symbol group Head Office to be told they were planning a meeting of store managers in various centres within the next six months to brief them on details of their business continuity plans in the event of a 'flu pandemic. In conversation with them he received another shock when they indicated that their plan took account of the possibility of supply shortages, and that it would therefore include a possible system for allocation of limited stock to stores.
4. It was at this stage that the owner/manager began to appreciate the seriousness of the potential threat of a pandemic and the consequences it could have for stores like his. It was not hard to imagine the possibility of panic buying and stock shortages.

2: Issues to be Addressed

1. The owner/manager identified critical activities within his business, essential for business continuity. These included:
 1. Stocks
 2. Staffing
 3. Cash flow
 4. Hygiene
2. He began to assess the impact on these critical activities of a 40% level of staff absences.
 - Murphy's has one major supplier of stock, the symbol group. The owner-manager was reassured that it had thought through how to manage continuity of supply. Hopefully the briefing would include guidance on how to equitably manage an "allocation" situation where this became necessary.
 - His other suppliers were a mix of local and national distributors. He knew that his local suppliers, like himself, had not considered the impact and undertook to raise it with them. Of the national suppliers, the local reps were not aware of what plans were afoot, but undertook to find out on his behalf.
 - He felt he could rely on his staff and other local resources, including family members to keep the store open. In any case he was convinced that staffing levels were not going to be the most serious issue and stock levels could well decide whether he remained open or closed.
 - As with any small business, cash flow is critical to Murphy's. However, it is not just the shop's cash flow; it is the additional 'unofficial' banking service provided by many country stores where cheques can be cashed. The owner-manager felt that, in the event of a pandemic, he could not guarantee to be able to continue to offer this service. On the other hand he was also conscious that it might be exactly because of a pandemic that his customers might need his 'banking' service.
 - Hygiene is a major consideration in any shop, but particularly a grocery store. The owner-manager decided to organise a hygiene training programme for all the staff. He also decided that, in the event of a pandemic, he would most likely have to close his hot and cold food counters, if only to respond to customer perceptions of risk.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. With appropriate advice drawn from the websites, the owner-manager developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for dealing with those showing symptoms while at work.
2. A contingency plan for key employee replacement e.g. department managers, in event of illness was prepared.
3. A communications plan was developed. This included:
 - i. Obtaining, with employee approval, all contact details for all staff including home and mobile numbers and e-mail addresses for use in an emergency.
 - ii. He organised a dedicated mobile with a number to be circulated to all staff and to be used by staff when they wanted any information about the business status at any time.

- iii. He prepared a draft briefing package to inform and educate staff in the event of a pandemic including information for individual employees and their families to be circulated in the event of a pandemic, on topics including: hygiene; identification of symptoms; and policies on absence from work.
4. He asked his insurance broker to review all policies and to advise on any necessary amendments to cater for a pandemic.
5. Face-to-face contact with shoppers is a given in retail. The owner-manager decided to make arrangements for home deliveries for customers where they registered in the event of a pandemic. Orders would be taken by phone and delivered to the door where the appropriate money would be left, thus avoiding any unnecessary contact.
6. The owner-manager agreed with a local GP that he will provide advice to any staff likely to be at high risk in the event that an influenza pandemic appears imminent.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. Hygiene notices are being drafted, using suggested wording drawn from various informed agencies and to be posted in the period before a pandemic arrives in Ireland.
2. Notices have also been drafted for printing and posting outside to inform the public of expected behaviour during a pandemic including being responsible enough not to enter the shop knowing they were suffering symptoms.
3. Murphy's cleaning is conducted by all staff. The owner/manager has arranged for training to be provided to all staff for appropriate hygiene standards and practice during a pandemic.
4. Stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and other necessary materials have been ordered.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

1. Food will be an essential commodity during a pandemic and ensuring continuity of supply will be a challenge in the face of possible supply chain disruption and staff absences. Cooperation between retailers and their suppliers will be essential from if significant stock outs are to be avoided.
2. Normal retail operations require contact with the public. Rethinking the operation to minimise this is a major challenge.
3. Planning without creating unnecessary panic among staff and customers is a challenge.

Conclusion

Murphy's operates in a sector where service to the public is the major objective. Having to consider a different approach is very different to the owner/manager's usual experience. For this reason, planning and clear communication are essential.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Medical Devices Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a composite of more than one real company.

Background

1. The business is a medical devices operation based in the West of Ireland. It is part of an international group. It produces medical devices used in surgery.
2. Corporate headquarters has asked the business to develop a plan for business continuity in the event of an influenza pandemic. It has offered some guidance, but the plan is to be developed locally. The business is in a position to consult with other manufacturing operations in the corporation.

1: Planning Activities

1. A team has been appointed to develop a plan for business continuity in the event of an influenza pandemic. It is led by Human Resources because the key issues expected to arise relate to the availability of people, and to their welfare.
2. The plan will be subject to approval by plant management, and by corporate headquarters.
3. Elements of the plan will be triggered by reference to the World Health Organisation pandemic alert framework. Other elements will be triggered by perceptions of the immediate threat in Ireland and in other locations in which the corporation has a presence, informed by guidance from health authorities in those places.
4. The plant draws supplies from international sources both within and outside the corporation. It also has a small number of local suppliers. The team has approached the key suppliers to discuss their preparedness and resilience in the face of the threat of a pandemic.
5. The business envisages consulting, and sharing best practice, with other members of its industry Association.

2: Issues to be Addressed

1. The business is looking at likely demand for its products during a pandemic. The majority of the demand stems from elective surgery, and part from emergency surgery. The likelihood is that many of the hospitals that use its products will cut back heavily on elective surgery, only admitting the most urgent cases. This will be partly a matter of avoiding exposing elective patients to the risk of infection by influenza in the hospital, and partly because the capacity is needed to cope with emergency admissions of severe influenza cases. Some hospitals may cancel elective surgery entirely during peak phases of the pandemic. Some specialist hospitals may be able to keep elective surgery going.

A complicating factor is that hospitals hold inventories. It is not clear to what extent they will replenish them during peak phases of a pandemic, or allow them to run down as they focus their administrative resources on more urgent tasks.

2. Employee absences will have a direct impact on production capacity. Much of the work is labour intensive, manual assembly work.
3. The working environment gives rise to concerns about employees infecting each other. The majority of the work is done in a clean room environment, with workers sitting close together in rows. Existing clothing designed to protect products and the clean room environment from contamination may afford some protection, as may the efficient air extraction system. There are possibly greater risks at crowded shared entrances, and in the canteen, which is also typically crowded.
4. There are some concerns about the supply of inputs. Staff absences could affect suppliers' production capacity. It is possible that some small suppliers might not be able to continue production, where they depend on having most of their employees present in order to operate.
5. There is a concern about whether adequate sterilisation capacity would continue to be available in Ireland. The business contracts out sterilisation of its products. It is possible that staff absences in the event of a pandemic could lead to a reduction in available sterilisation capacity.
6. It is anticipated that air freight would continue to operate between Ireland, the US and other key locations for sourcing inputs and for product sales.
7. It would be possible to suspend most international travel in the event of a pandemic without major disruption. It would be possible to conduct necessary business by telephone, Internet and videoconferencing.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. The company already has a system of deputies that will continue to function if key staff are absent during a pandemic.
2. Most staff are cross-trained sufficiently well to allow them to move between product lines. Production processes are well documented and well structured, so it would not take long to train a skilled employee to move to a product that they were unfamiliar with.
3. The company has developed policies in sick leave and compassionate leave to be applied during a pandemic. The main difference from normal sick leave policies is that they recognise that there will be times during a pandemic when it will not be possible for employees to obtain a medical certificate, and that they emphasise the need to be cautious about attending work with symptoms that could be from influenza.
4. There is an emergency communications plan in place that allows the human resources department to arrange for all staff to be contacted by telephone if necessary.
5. The business expects to suspend all foreign travel during the main phases of a pandemic, and to operate very low levels of foreign travel for the duration of a pandemic.
6. The business plans to work with small Irish suppliers to encourage them to prepare for business continuity in the event of an influenza pandemic.

7. The business is contacting suppliers located in other countries to confirm that they are putting appropriate plans in place, and to obtain agreement that it will be accorded sufficient priority for supplies during a pandemic.
8. The business is looking at the possibility of building up increased inventories if a pandemic appears imminent (Level 5 in the World Health Organisation alert framework).

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. In the event of a pandemic, there will be a heavy emphasis in employee communications on the need for employees to refrain from entering the workplace if they have possible symptoms of influenza.
2. The business will introduce guidelines on hygienic behaviour for employees in the event of a pandemic. Employees are accustomed to compliance with detailed rules for behaviour.
3. The business is considering whether to acquire a supply of disposable N95 face masks for use during an influenza pandemic. They may be more practicable in this industry than in others because employees are accustomed to wearing specialist clothing. The business is investigating how effective face masks would be in a clean room environment, and how many would be needed per employee per day, before making a decision.
4. A stockpile of materials has been established for cleaning and hand hygiene (including alcohol-based washes) in the event of a pandemic.
5. The business is exploring ways to reduce crowding at entrances and in the canteen. It is looking at how it might approach staggering shift starting times, finishing times and break times. It is considering how it might manage shift working in the event of a pandemic, so as to reduce numbers present.
6. There is already a heavy emphasis on cleanliness in the workplace. In the event of a pandemic, cleaning practices will be changed to focus more on cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated with the virus.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

The biggest challenges this business faces in planning for a pandemic are in striking the right balance. If demand for the business's products falls during a pandemic, then significant absences might not be a problem provided that the market dip and the absences happened at around the same time. However, it is unlikely that waves of peak infection will hit both Ireland and the business's main markets at exactly the same time.

Deciding on what measures to plan to protect employees from infection in the workplace also requires striking a balance on disruptive measures such as staggering of entry and exit.

Conclusion

This business is planning effectively for an influenza pandemic, and is carefully evaluating the advantages and disadvantages to different measures to limit the risk of infection in the workplace in the event of a pandemic.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Computer Printing Services Sub Supply Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for a 'flu pandemic, their plan is not yet complete. The case study necessarily reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

1. Computer Printing Services Limited (CPSL) supplies and maintains computer printing services for companies in Ireland.
2. Clients include financial institutions, Government Departments, professional service organisations and medium and large companies.
3. The company supplies printing hardware and consumables. Under the terms of a service level agreement, it responds to requests for maintenance support.
4. It has over 50 clients, together comprising approximately 400 sites, and supports over 3,000 pieces of hardware.
5. CPSL employs 10 field engineers responsible for installation and maintenance, and three office staff who take approximately 30 calls per day for maintenance support. In addition, there are two engineers based in a maintenance workshop at head office.
6. Where possible, service requests are resolved by phone/e-mail in the first instance; by a visit from a field engineer in the second instance; and if necessary by collection and repair of the equipment in the workshop and return or replacement within 48 hours.
7. CPSL already has a detailed business continuity plan in place to address situations such as total computer failure, fire, flood or other similar disaster situations. This plan is the responsibility of the Finance Director.
8. CPSL had not considered including a 'flu pandemic as part of this planning process until they were approached by one of their customers, a major financial institution, as a part of its own BCP for a 'flu pandemic.
9. In circumstances where 40% of CPSL's staff were absent, the company would find it difficult to meet current service level demands.
10. In response to the financial institution's enquiry, the issue of pandemic preparedness was raised at a CPSL board meeting. The Finance Director was asked to take the necessary steps to cover a 'flu pandemic within the company's business continuity planning process.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The Finance Director prepared a job description, including responsibilities and a provisional budget for the preparation and implementation of the plan, for approval by the board.
2. He identified websites and other information sources for up-to-date information regarding a 'flu pandemic e.g. Department of Health and Children, Health Service Executive, World Health Organisation.
3. With the cooperation of staff representatives, he requested contact details (e.g. mobile numbers, e-mail addresses, home numbers and addresses) of all staff, for use in the event of an emergency only, and to facilitate tracking staff and communicating up-to-date information.
4. He contacted all “critical” suppliers to request details of their business continuity plans in the event of a 'flu pandemic, just as the bank had approached CPSL.
5. Based on the WHO 'Alert Framework' he identified trigger points to be included in the plan.

2: Issues to be Addressed

1. The Finance Director identified critical activities for the continuity of the business in the event of 40% of the staff being unavailable. These included:
 - Maintenance engineers
 - Call centre staff
 - Office cleaning
 - Logistics service providers
 - Spares and consumables suppliers

He developed measures to underpin continuity of these critical activities.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. The Finance Director listed all staff qualified to undertake the “critical” activities he had identified, for example, sales and marketing personnel who had previously worked in maintenance and who could undertake maintenance work if necessary.
2. He prioritised customers in terms of impact (e.g. banks versus professional service organisations; health related departments versus commercial organisations) and prepared draft revised service level agreements.
3. With the operations manager, he reviewed each customer to identify opportunities for centralising printing services, and therefore reducing the equipment to be maintained.
4. He developed “scenarios” with different critical staff being unavailable, and nominated other staff to replace them.
5. With appropriate medical advice, he developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for those showing (or likely to show) symptoms while at work.

6. He developed policies to facilitate working from home, including expenses related to telephone calls and installation of broadband.
7. He prepared a practical exercise to test the plan, to be implemented in advance of the pandemic, but, to avoid unnecessary worry among staff and customers, only when the threat of a pandemic is imminent.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. In consultation with other members of the management team, the Finance Director devised work practices where face-to-face contact with customers was minimised, for example with service calls being managed by phone and with service call staff working from home.
2. Draft hygiene notices were prepared for printing.
3. He sought advice, and arranged for the office cleaner to be appropriately trained on hygiene requirements.
4. He ordered stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and other necessary materials.
5. He proposed that all travel outside Ireland be cancelled during the period of the pandemic.
6. He prepared information for individual employees and their families to be circulated in the event of a pandemic, on topics including: hygiene; identification of symptoms; and policies on absence from work.
7. He prepared a briefing for staff, to be delivered in advance of a pandemic.
8. He developed a template for a company website for use to disseminate information to employees and customers during a pandemic.
9. He approached the industry association to organise a workshop to share best practice in relation to planning for a pandemic.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

1. Persuading his managers and suppliers to take the threat of a 'flu pandemic seriously is, and continues to be, a major challenge faced by the finance director in the preparation of the plan.
2. Unlike other emergency plans e.g. computer failure, maintaining the planning process for a 'flu pandemic is more dynamic. Circumstances change daily e.g. new customers, new sites, new priorities which require incorporation in the plan.

Conclusion

CPSL is convinced that the investment it is making in planning for a 'flu pandemic is essential to underpinning the future of the business. It is encouraging suppliers and customers to undertake similar exercises.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from an Accountancy Practice

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real business, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details have been altered to protect its identity.

As this business, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for an influenza pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

The case study is based on an accountancy practice with two Partners and about 15 staff, based in a city location. Its clients are mostly small and medium enterprises, the majority of them owner-managed.

1: Planning Activities

One of the two Partners took responsibility for planning and preparing for an influenza pandemic.

He consulted information from a range of sources, including the Department of Health and Children and the World Health Organisation, as well as the material on pandemic influenza preparedness published by Forfás and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. He also checked with his professional body for information.

He consulted with the other Partner, and with a number of senior staff on the planning process.

The practice is not heavily dependent on any supplier of goods, or on suppliers of services other than electricity and telecommunications, for business continuity, so it was not felt necessary to consult with suppliers.

The Partner developed a plan, and reviewed it with a number of key staff. As a part of the review, the group worked through the practical implications of a number of scenarios.

2: Issues to be Addressed

The Partner looked at critical activities within the practice, essential for business continuity.

These included:

- Accounts
- Company secretarial
- Submission of returns
- Information technology

The key issue likely to affect these in the event of a pandemic is the availability of staff and Partners. The practice is organised so as to spread work evenly throughout the year, as far as possible, so absences at any time of year have the potential to affect business continuity. It has very low rates of unplanned absence among employees.

Some of the work (e.g. company secretarial) is undertaken by a small number of people with specialist skills, and two or three absences have the potential to shut these areas down.

Accounts is the biggest single area within the practice. It would be put under pressure by two absences, and might be unable to cope with the volume of work if more were unavailable.

The practice manager has the main responsibility for submitting returns, and for looking after the IT systems day to day. No one else has the skills and knowledge required to take on her work at short notice. However, the IT systems are fairly stable, and usually do not require much maintenance. If problems arose with the systems, and there were problems with getting support from a technician during a pandemic, this could be a problem for business continuity.

There is a well-established procedure for backing up data, which is undertaken daily. A number of staff are familiar with it, and could take on the work if the practice manager was unavailable.

The practice is organised on the assumption that at least one of the two Partners will be in the office during every working day, available to sign off on work, supervise and take decisions. If both were to become ill with pandemic influenza simultaneously, and be unable to attend the office for a number of days, this could be highly disruptive to the operation of the practice.

Face-to-face meetings with clients form a regular part of the work of the Partners, and of some other senior staff. They are important to good client relations.

The Partner considered what likely impact an influenza pandemic might have on attendance by staff.

- Most of the staff have children, and some might find it difficult to attend work regularly in the event that schools and crèches closed.
- A number of staff depend on public transport to get to the office. In the event of a pandemic, some might have trouble getting to work.
- At least one member of staff might be classified as at “high risk” in the event of a pandemic.

The Partner considers the practice to be in a relatively resilient position when compared with other small and medium accountancy practices. As the practice does not rely heavily on overtime, it is likely that it would be possible (in agreement with staff) to compensate for some absences with overtime working. In contrast, many other accountancy practices work long hours at busy times of year, which will leave them exposed in the event that an influenza pandemic wave coincides with the period leading up to an important date for the submission of returns.

The practice relies heavily on telecommunications and Internet services, and would have difficulty in operating if these were interrupted.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

Measures envisaged in the plan to underpin business continuity include the following.

- The plan identifies deputies to cover for the Partners in the event that they cannot work, and sets out the deputies' responsibilities and limitations.
- It envisages using a small number of well-trusted subcontractors in the event that significant numbers of accounts staff are unavailable, provided that the subcontractors are available.
- Staff who are still healthy may be asked to work overtime in the event of significant absences.
- The plan envisages that staff would be facilitated in working from home where it is not feasible for them to attend the office, and where this is can be made to be consistent with workflow and oversight requirements.
- A deputy will be cross-trained to fill in for parts of the practice manager's role.
- The practice already maintains home and mobile contact details for all its staff, and it will use these for communication in the event of a pandemic.
- The practice usually pays sick pay. It envisages continuing to do this during a pandemic, provided that the total cost remains supportable.
- The plan gives consideration to prioritising between clients in the event that an influenza pandemic makes it necessary to choose which work to do, and in the event that a pandemic triggers failures among client businesses.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

Measures planned to respond to workplace risk include the following:

- Unless the pandemic is particularly mild, the number of meetings conducted in person with clients will be reduced sharply during waves of peak infection, and possibly also at times when the pandemic is less active. While this would be damaging to the business under normal circumstances, it is anticipated that it will be seen in a positive light by clients during a pandemic. Eliminating many client meetings will also free up some manpower for other work.
- There is some concern that infection could be carried into the office during a pandemic on the large number of documents provided by clients and others. It is envisaged that the practice will seek information on the survival of pandemic strain viruses on paper in the event that a pandemic seems imminent. Depending on the information it obtains, it may respond with document handling procedures.
- The practice will lay in a stock of additional cleaning materials to be used in the event of a pandemic.
- It is envisaged that staff will be instructed to follow the Department of Health's guidelines on respiratory hygiene in the event of a pandemic. In addition, staff will be instructed to use only their own desks, and not to use each others' telephones, computers or chairs.
- Face-to-face contact between staff will be reduced to some extent, although there are limits to what is possible in a small, mainly open plan office.

- Cleaning will be stepped up during a pandemic, with office cleaners being asked to focus more on areas such as door handles and light switches.
- In the event of a pandemic, the Partners will watch for guidance on air conditioning and air circulation systems. The systems will be serviced in the immediate future, to ensure that the filters are in good working order and advice will be obtained as to how frequently they should be serviced in future.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

The key challenge in planning for a pandemic is with the possibility of staff absences, and with uncertainty as to how many will be absent, and whether everyone with a specialist skill might be unavailable at once.

A further challenge is that the amount of work to be done will not decrease with a pandemic. Accounts have to be prepared and audited, and returns have to be made, even if the volume of business done by client companies falls. Indeed, the demand for work could increase if any clients are driven into financial difficulties by a pandemic.

Planning had to be done in a way that reinforced confidence among staff, while avoiding understating or overstating the risks, and refraining from making commitments that might be difficult to live up to.

Conclusion

Accountancy is a people intensive business, in which a practice's capability to operate depends directly on its staff being available. This will be threatened directly by an influenza pandemic. An effective response to a pandemic will focus on minimising the risks to staff, and maximising their availability for work.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Milling/Animal Feed Company

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for a 'flu pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

- Tirhomin Milling Limited was a traditional mill. It now produces a variety of animal food products. It employs 80 staff.
- Products are distributed via a network of wholesalers throughout Ireland using an in house fleet of 10 lorries.
- As an animal food producer, the company has coped with the consequences of 'mad cow' disease on animal food production and distribution and has been alert to the potential risks of an avian 'flu outbreak in Ireland and the associated risk of a 'flu pandemic.
- As a company in the food sector, it is also aware of the need for business continuity planning to address potential food specific issues such as product contamination and recall, as well as common issues such as computer failure and factory or warehouse fire or flood.
- Including preparation for a 'flu pandemic as part of Tirhomin Milling Limited's business continuity planning has been a priority for the Finance Manager. He has undertaken the planning process as set out in the steps below.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The Finance Manager has developed a planning schedule with action steps, deadlines and associated responsibilities. He has assembled a small project team.
2. He has identified various sources of information e.g. Department of Health and Children, World Health Organisation, about the pandemic threat and impact, and collected relevant information.
3. Employee representatives were contacted and made aware of the issues and their cooperation and involvement sought for the planning process.

4. Tirhomin Milling's suppliers include numerous farmers supplying grain on a seasonal basis, a supplement ingredients supplier and a packaging supplier. The supplement ingredients supplier and the packaging supplier were contacted to gain an understanding of their business continuity plans to cope with a 'flu pandemic. Farmers' representative bodies were contacted to understand what planning was proposed for this sector.
5. Based on the WHO 'Alert Framework' the finance manager identified trigger points to be included in the plan.

2: Issues to be Addressed

The finance manager identified critical activities within Tirhomin Milling's business, essential for business continuity. These included:

1. Raw material and packaging supplies
2. Production including production maintenance
3. Quality Control and Laboratory Testing
4. Logistics
5. Cleaning

The project team assessed the possible impact of these critical activities suffering around 40% absences.

- Tirhomin Milling has many suppliers of raw materials, and single suppliers of supplement ingredients and packaging. As stated above, farmers representative bodies were contacted as well as the suppliers of ingredients and packaging. The company would be vulnerable to an interruption in supplies from the ingredients supplier or the packaging supplier.
- Milling is now largely an automated process with a minimum of human involvement. Tirhomin Milling employs two full-time maintenance engineers who respond to particular maintenance issues and also undertake a continuous maintenance programme. While the operation of the mill should not be a major issue in the event of a pandemic, and adequate cover for operating the mill is in place, maintenance could be an issue if both maintenance engineers were absent. The Finance Manager is investigating the possibility of sourcing alternative maintenance cover, possibly using a sister company to provide cover in an emergency.
- As in any food company, quality control and laboratory testing cannot be compromised, even in a situation of significant employee absences. The project team have started a process to identify staff who could be cross trained to undertake some of this work.
- Tirhomin Milling's logistics is largely an internal activity with only a very small element handled by third parties. This creates exposure in the face of significant employee shortages. The Logistics Manager has been asked to prepare a contingency plan to cater for a pandemic, with the possibility of using third party hauliers of whom there are many in the locality.
- Tirhomin Milling's cleaning is conducted by internal staff. The Finance Manager has identified an agency which can provide the cleaners with appropriate training to cater for a pandemic situation. Other staff who could be used for this purpose in an emergency situation have been identified and will also be given training.

- Most of Tirhomin Milling's raw material supplies come from farmers at harvest time, and are held in grain stores for use when required. Unless the pandemic hits in the middle of harvest, Tirhomin Milling does not expect it to disrupt these supplies.
- Tirhomin Milling's sales are through wholesalers. Because there are a manageable number of these, the Finance Manager has contacted each of them with assistance from the sales manager, asking how they are planning to cope with a 'flu pandemic. He does not expect there will be any major disruption to the business, as the farming community will certainly need animal feed, and will arrange to collect it if necessary (as most do in any case).
- Based on the information received to date, and on the assumptions made, the Finance Manager has prepared a financial impact statement for the business for review by his management colleagues. This assessment does not envision any significant disruption to the business because of the nature of its supplies and the channel of distribution for its products.
- In relation to administrative employees, the Finance Manager has identified those tasks which could be managed from home (e.g. administrative, finance and some IT work), and has identified the IT resources required to make this happen. Sales contact with wholesalers will be essential during a pandemic to keep customers advised of the status of supplies. This contact can be by telephone or e-mail only. Delivery staff cannot avoid contact with customers but will be trained to minimise the risk of infection and will be supplied with hygiene kits (including handwipes), for their vehicles.
- The Finance Manager has identified a small number of employees potentially at high risk to receive medical advice in the event that an influenza pandemic appears imminent.
- The Finance Manager has developed a plan to manage day to day financial requirements.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. Based on medical advice, the Finance Manager has developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for those showing symptoms while at work.
2. He has also developed policies to facilitate working from home where this is appropriate, including expenses related to telephone.
3. A contingency plan for key employee replacement in event of illness has been prepared.
4. A communications plan has been developed. This includes:
 - Obtaining, with employee representative approval, all contact details for all staff including home and mobile numbers (and e-mail addresses where available) for use in an emergency only.
 - A briefing package to inform and educate employees in the event of a pandemic including information for individual employees and their families to be circulated in the event of a pandemic, on topics including: hygiene; identification of symptoms; and policies on absence from work.
5. Tirhomin Milling's insurance company has been asked to review all policies and to advise on any necessary amendments to cater for a pandemic.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. Hygiene notices have been drafted for printing, using suggested wording drawn from various informed agencies.
2. Tirhomin Milling's cleaning is conducted by internal employees. These staff, together with additional back-up resources, will receive appropriate training in advance of any pandemic.
3. Stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and other necessary materials have been ordered.
4. Based on advice from the various information sources, policies to reduce face-to-face contact internally, particularly in Tirhomin Milling's open plan administrative office, have been developed.

Challenges of Planning for a 'Flu Pandemic

1. Should a pandemic strike during the harvest period, this could represent a serious problem for Tirhomin Milling, as it could disrupt harvesting and processing of grain.
2. Food, including animal food, will be an essential commodity during a pandemic. Ensuring continuity of supply will be important.
3. Planning without creating unnecessary panic has been another challenge.

Conclusion

Tirhomin Milling operates in a sector where disease (albeit among livestock) is a familiar business issue, as it has been affected by BSE and foot & mouth disease in recent years.

It is also a sector where supplies of raw materials are held in stock on an annual basis which is an unusual situation and one which helps greatly in ensuring business continuity.

Tirhomin Milling's distribution is concentrated in a relatively few wholesalers making the supply chain manageable. The ultimate customer is typically used to collecting the product and has suitable transport for this purpose.

Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Study from a Third Party Logistics Service Provider (3PL)

Introduction

This case study is one of ten written as a part of a study undertaken on *Business Continuity Planning for an Influenza Pandemic*. The objective is to raise awareness among business enterprises in Ireland of the need for business continuity planning (BCP) for the possible arrival of a 'flu pandemic in Ireland.

The case study is based on a real company, but is fictionalised in some respects. Key details, including the company's name, have been altered to protect its identity.

As this company, like many in Ireland, is only beginning to appreciate the need to plan for an influenza pandemic, its plan is not yet complete. The case study necessarily reflects this continuing planning process.

Background

- Anywhere Logistics Limited (ALL) is a 'third party logistics service company' (3PL) i.e. a company which provides logistics services to companies including: inbound logistics; warehousing; order picking; and customer delivery services.
- Its clients include a number of well known food and consumer goods suppliers for which it brings stock from locations in UK and Continental Europe. It holds stock in 3 warehouses, processes orders and delivers to over 5,000 delivery locations throughout Ireland.
- While ALL employs the staff who manage and operate the warehouses and order processing directly, it subcontracts deliveries to various transport companies, involving over 500 vehicles.
- ALL already has a detailed business continuity plan in place to address situations such as total computer failure, warehouse fire, major traffic accident involving a subcontracted vehicle or other similar disaster situations. However, planning for a 'flu pandemic was not, until now, seen as a real threat.
- ALL's CEO asked the internal Project Manager to prepare an initial report on the potential impact of a 'flu pandemic on the company, and to recommend plans to ensure the company is adequately prepared.
- The Project Manager's initial research and assessment indicated the following:
 1. Information sourced indicated that:
 - 40% of staff could be absent as a result of a 'flu pandemic for various reasons related to the pandemic.
 - History suggests the pandemic comes in waves of several weeks in duration.
 2. This level of absence among ALL's staff and among transport subcontractors would cause ALL to have difficulty meeting its service commitments.
 3. If ALL's customers were affected similarly, causing disruption to supplies, then, based on current stock levels, ALL would have access to ambient stock (i.e. stock such as canned goods that can be held at ambient temperature) for 6 weeks and chill stock just for 1-2 weeks.

4. In the event that work dried up a few weeks into a pandemic because of a lack of supplies, ALL would have to consider suspending operations to minimise financial exposure. The fact that the major part of ALL's work is subcontracted would mitigate the financial exposure. However, suspending operations could place contracts with customers at risk, and could make it difficult to re-engage subcontractors (who might have obtained work elsewhere) after the pandemic.
 5. The initial impact assessment also suggested that, without being alarmist, the pandemic could affect a number of ALL's key management team. Planning for deputies and succession would be required.
- Inclusion of plans for an influenza pandemic within ALL's Business Continuity Planning became a clear priority. A project team was established. Using the *Business Continuity Planning for Influenza Pandemic* published by Forfás, the team began the planning process as set out in the steps below.

1: Planning Activities

Planning involved the following steps:

1. The project team developed a planning process, including a provisional budget for the preparation and implementation of the plan, for approval by the CEO and Senior Management.
2. The project team identified various sources of information (e.g. Department of Health and Children, Health Service Executive, World Health Organisation), about the pandemic threat and impact, and collected and disseminated this information among the team.
3. Logistics professional bodies in Ireland and UK were contacted to establish the availability of any planning guidelines particular to the industry.
4. Employee representatives were contacted and made aware of the issues. Their cooperation sought for the planning process.
5. ALL's customers were contacted to request details of their business continuity plans in the event of a 'flu pandemic.
6. Based on the WHO 'Alert Framework' the project team identified trigger points to be included in the plan.
7. The project team considered a 'test exercise' for the plan, but, to avoid unnecessary panic, agreed to postpone the test until the threat became more imminent.

2: Issues to be Addressed

1. The project team identified critical activities within ALL's business, essential for business continuity. These included:
 1. Goods inwards vehicles and drivers
 2. Warehouse 'put away' and 'picking' staff
 3. Order processing staff
 4. Delivery vehicles and drivers

2. The project team assessed the likely impact of 40% absences in these critical areas.
 - With warehouse management and order processing tasks, which are staffed with ALL employees, the impact would be to reduce productivity in proportion to the numbers absent. However, as they anticipated that supplies of products might be reduced, it was felt that the warehouse and order processing processes could handle remaining workloads in normal working hours. Where they could not, staff could be required to work overtime.
 - For goods inwards and delivery activities, the project team asked larger subcontractors to indicate their business continuity plans to cope with a pandemic. However, the nature of the transport sector, which has many small operators with limited administrative management support, has meant that little useful information has been forthcoming. Accordingly, the project team has made its own assessment of the possible impact. It has assumed that, with 40% absences, the availability of transport resources would be reduced by a like proportion. And, as with internal resources, the project team has assumed that the available transport resources would be capable of dealing with the reduced volume.
3. The project team has contacted major customers and asked them for their business continuity plans in relation to continuity of supply. To date, two major customers have responded. One is a major multinational with a range of products which would not be considered 'critical' during a pandemic. This company could cope with a reduction in sales and distribution for its products during a pandemic, and has undertaken to keep ALL advised of its plans. The second company is also a major multinational, but in this case with food products which would be considered essential. It is currently assessing market priorities and options such as stock building and has also undertaken to involve ALL in its planning process. A third major customer is also a food company; the project team is still seeking a response to its request for information.
4. Based on the information received to date and on the assumptions made, the project team has prepared financial impact statements for the business for review by the senior management team, in order to agree points at which business might have to be suspended and the financial and business risks associated with such a decision.
5. ALL's employees have limited direct contact with suppliers or delivery customers with orders being processed on-line. Most of this contact is with the inbound and delivery drivers. Accordingly, the need to further limit face-to-face contact is limited. In relation to administrative employees, the project team has identified those tasks which could be managed from home, and has identified the IT resources required to make this happen.
6. The project team has identified employees with special needs (e.g. older or asthmatic) to receive special medical advice.
7. The team has analysed business related travel for the last year as a guide to action steps required. Most travel related to visits to customers for regular management and coordination meetings. It has been agreed that in the event of a pandemic, such meetings would be held through teleconferencing.
8. The financial controller has been asked to develop a plan to manage day to day financial matters. This plan will be submitted to the project team for review and inclusion in the overall plan.

3: Measures to Underpin Continuity

1. With appropriate medical advice, the project team has developed policies for returning to work after infection, and for those showing symptoms while at work.
2. It has also developed policies to facilitate working from home, including expenses related to telephone calls and installation of broadband.
3. A contingency plan for key employee replacement in event of illness has been prepared.
4. As the operation of the warehouse is based on flexible working practices, with all employees qualified to use forklifts and capable of performing other warehouse tasks, no plans for cross-training were required.
5. A communications plan has been developed. This includes:
 - i. Contact details have been obtained for all staff, including home and mobile numbers and e-mail addresses, for use in an emergency.
 - ii. A website designer has been briefed to prepare an internal company website which can be used to disseminate up-to-date information for employees in the event of a pandemic.
 - iii. A briefing package is being prepared to inform and educate employees in the event of a pandemic including information for individual employees and their families to be circulated in the event of a pandemic, on topics including: hygiene; identification of symptoms; and policies on absence from work.
6. ALL's insurance broker has been asked to review all policies and to advise on any necessary amendments to cater for a pandemic.

4: Response to Workplace Risk

1. ALL's cleaning is conducted by a contracted agency. The project team has contacted this agency for details of expected continuity plans in the event of a pandemic and assurances that the contract cleaners have the necessary knowledge and training to cater for a pandemic. Mindful of the fact that contract cleaners will also be affected by employee absences, just as demand for their services rises, the project team has recommended that selected internal staff be receive training in relevant cleaning skills.
2. Stocks of hand wash, towels, tissues and cleaning materials have been ordered.
3. Based on advice from the various information sources, policies to reduce face-to-face contact internally, particularly in ALL's open plan administrative office and warehouse floor, have been developed.

Challenges of Planning for an Influenza Pandemic

1. Although a logistics company is part of a complex supply chain and, therefore in theory, has multiple contact points with suppliers and delivery points, in reality, the number of face-to-face contacts is relatively few and can be controlled. The biggest challenge to developing a comprehensive business continuity plan for an influenza pandemic has been obtaining useful information from the various contacts in order to develop the plan.
2. The nature of the work of a logistics company is that the volume of work should decrease in proportion to the resources available and therefore should be manageable. The risk is that, as a service provider, any service failure could be held against ALL when the pandemic is over and normal business resumes.
3. Planning without risking unnecessary panic is a challenge.

Conclusion

ALL's managers are relieved that they have identified the need for business continuity planning for a 'flu pandemic in time to comprehensively prepare. The complexity of the planning required would not have allowed this to be a 'last minute' process.

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