

## What is a Business Continuity Program Developer?

### *Defining the Role of the Business Continuity Program Developer in Organizations*

*By Robert Takemura*

#### **Abstract**

*The role of the Business Continuity Program Developer within an organization is often taken for granted as self-evident but upon closer examination is not well defined. Expectations and Accountabilities form the basis for defining roles. A complete understanding of one's role leads to an awareness of the competencies required. A thoroughly knowledgeable Business Continuity Program Developer has a grasp of all dimensions of Business Continuity planning (i.e., Emergency Response, Disaster Recovery, Information Technology Recovery, Business Resumption, Crisis Management, and Emergency Operations Center organization and functioning as well as essential knowledge of political systems and influence).*

*In the future, the increasing pressures created by a 24/7 workforce and 24/7 consumers will continue to drive the requirements for Business Continuity Programs. The Business Continuity Program Developer's role will be to: anticipate the organizations needs, meet management's expectations, form inter-organizational partnerships, develop intra-organizational cooperation, and obtain financing to meet or exceed the organization's requirements for continuity of essential business operations. In what is now a foreseeable future, business continuity will be a required element of the design of organizations from the outset. Those that fail to build resilience into the basic design of an organization will fail to survive in an unforgiving marketplace.*

#### **Introduction**

How many of you have been asked the question, "What is a Business Continuity Program Developer?". During the pause before answering, have you ever hesitated and asked yourself the same question? To avoid lengthy explanations, many of us fall back on the simple explanations such as, "We do life/safety and evacuation programs" or "We ensure ongoing Data Center and computer operations". While these responses are partially accurate, a Business Continuity Program Developer is much more.

So what is a Business Continuity Program Developer (BCPD)? As the person responsible for developing and maintaining a business continuity program, it is important to have an understanding of your role within your organization. The role is unlike any other and contains elements of many. It calls for a broad array of skills both intellectual and organizational. The true program developer emerges from many points of origin in an organization. The role may have begun as that of emergency response coordinator, facilities manager, information systems specialist, operations specialist, security specialist or human resources management specialist. With such a diverse set of beginnings, it is not surprising that Business Continuity Program Developers travel under so many different banners.

As with many things in life it is of no real importance what the origins of the BCPD happen to be. What is important is the path to professionalism that must be taken for the role to realize its potential for contribution to organizational success. Successful travel along that path calls for a basic competence in a number of disciplines. The BCPD may be the most broadly knowledgeable and skilled professional in the organization outside of general managers.

## **Points of Confusion**

The term “Business Continuity” itself is a relatively new construct that has replaced in some (but not all) organizations previous labels such as: “Disaster Planning”, “Emergency Response Coordination”, “Business Resumption Planning”, et al. The generally accepted explanation is that *Continuity* implies an uninterrupted flow of operations versus *Recovery* that implies return from an outage or other disruption to operations. The continuing increase in the pace of change and shrinking customer tolerance for down time and unavailability of service are making recovery an unacceptable option for organizations in time competitive markets. And more and more markets have become time competitive.

Furthermore, separate job titles or departments with “Business Continuity” as their primary function are still not ubiquitous in the business world today. In the past (more often than not), Disaster Planning, Business Resumption, or Business Continuity has been considered a “special project” or as an adjunct responsibility to security, facilities management, or information systems. For example, Floor Warden and evacuation programs may come under the responsibility of Security in one organization or Facilities in another. Likewise First Aid/CPR training may come under the responsibility of Human Resources or Safety. The staff professionals who have the various program responsibilities as and additional duty are unlikely to shed their primary identity for a job without an organizational home. Conventional wisdom holds that careers are seldom build on special projects and additional duties.

To further complicate matters, the “Contingency Planning” industry is comprised of a variety of semi-related and unrelated fields. These fields range from life and safety programs, to facilities recovery, to information technology restoration. There is enough specialized knowledge in each of these fields to justify drawing a boundary around one's accountabilities to include only those program elements that fall within the specialty. What would make an information technologist want to learn about facilities construction factors or natural hazards or posttraumatic stress?

The resistance is a natural phenomenon for it is quite normal for people to dislike role confusion. The degree of one's happiness in a role is, in part, dependent upon the clarity and acceptance of the accountabilities and expectations that go along with that role. When the role begins to expand outside the comfort zone of familiar knowledge and skills people will often resist the role and perform in a manner that falls short of their true potential.

Success in the role then calls for a decision to be a learner. Continuous learning is an essential part of the job. An expert BCPD is a renaissance person who has a broad base of knowledge and may be deeply skilled in only one or two areas, but can converse with experts and consider important factors in a wide variety of functions. In the late 1960's there was an article in a well-known business journal that predicted that a new kind of role would emerge in organizations. This person would be an “integrator” whose value-added function was to bring together diverse functional elements in the organization to work together on common goals and to help create synergies where there were once silos and barriers. We are beginning to see people emerge in organizations with just such roles. The role is as much political as it is technical - perhaps more. It is also not easy. Such people must have unusual trustworthiness and integrity in order to be able to facilitate communication, coordination and collaboration across functional barriers. He or she must have a visible dedication to the organization as a whole. Those who play favorites or curry favor rather than consider the authentic needs of the organization will soon find themselves unable to create a fully integrated program. This is no walk in the park.

Nonetheless a Business Continuity Program Developer must have a working knowledge of all these fields and be all of these things to be considered as a true “expert”. These fields or *knowledge bases* can be grouped into several general categories:

| Category                    | Knowledge Bases  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Emergency Response          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee Safety Programs</li> <li>First Aid/CPR</li> <li>Triage</li> <li>Evacuation Teams/Floor Wardens/Floor Marshals</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hazardous Materials Release Response</li> <li>Light Urban Search &amp; Rescue</li> <li>Psychological Stress Management Programs</li> </ul> |
| Disaster Recovery           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities Damage Assessment</li> <li>Facilities Disaster Recovery</li> <li>Facilities Restoration</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records Restoration</li> <li>Insurance</li> </ul>  |
| Information Technology      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IT Disaster Recovery</li> <li>Backup Generation</li> <li>RAID/Internal Mirroring</li> <li>Hot Sites/Cold Sites</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parallel Processing/Offsite Mirroring</li> <li>Data Warehousing</li> <li>Data Security</li> </ul>  |
| Business Resumption         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Operations Recovery</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Management Responsibilities</li> </ul>   |
| Crisis Management           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media Response</li> <li>Public Relations</li> <li>Investor Relations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Communications</li> <li>Marketing and Advertising</li> <li>Consumer Affairs</li> <li>Legal</li> </ul>                            |
| Emergency Operations Center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization</li> <li>Communication</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision-making</li> </ul>   |
| Organizational Politics     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive Political Skills</li> <li>Influence Skills</li> <li>Facilitation Skills</li> <li>Leadership Without the Benefit of Position Power</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning</li> <li>Connecting</li> <li>Selecting</li> <li>Tuning</li> <li>Monitoring</li> </ul>   |

While most of these categories are somewhat easy to define, Business Resumption is by far the most difficult to classify. Why is this? In the past, many organizations have developed a position or function related to "Business Resumption" but have not thoroughly defined the accountabilities or expectations required. Even within the *Disaster Recovery* industry, the term is not well defined and in fact, definitions are often non-informative or circular, i.e., "a business resumption planner is a person that is responsible for coordinating the recovery process". The problem with this definition is that it does not establish a set of criteria or accountabilities to measure performance.

The same thing is true in the realm of organizational politics. While we all might say that we understand what this is all about, we can seldom point to living positive examples of what it looks like. Most references to characters in organizations that possess political savvy are somewhat negative, as if politics and good character were mutually exclusive. In truth such people are fairly rare, but even in the realm of public politics we find the occasional "statesman." That is the challenge for you who would be expert in Business Continuity Program Development. Develop yourself as a learner, as a leader, and as an integrator and you will be well on the way to being an exemplary performer in this sometimes-confusing role.

Perhaps we can help to make some of the role definition a bit more clear by looking at some of the core elements within it. Though they vary by organization to some degree, it is the configuration of accountabilities and expectations that shapes the role for each professional.

## Accountabilities

What do we mean when we say, “Accountabilities”? Accountabilities are generally considered to be the formal requirements that relate to an individual’s purpose within an organization. For example:

*The Regulatory Compliance Manager is responsible for ensuring that the organization meets external audit requirements and that the organization may only lose a maximum of 10 points during any single audit.*

Unfortunately, job descriptions seldom contain this degree of specificity. Most are vague and open-ended in their discussion of responsibilities and reporting relationships. This leaves an individual vulnerable to a disparity between their personal understanding of their accountabilities and the accountabilities required by management. Additionally, if an individual is responsible for managing a group of people, there are generally measures of accountability placed upon a manager by his or her staff. This too can lead to a potentially volatile disparity. Moreover, there are also accountability assumptions made by one’s peers. Finally, accountabilities that should be formal and clearly defined are informal and undocumented. These unspoken guidelines are very powerful, especially when an individual’s performance does not meet “expectations”.

## Expectations

Expectations can be viewed from the same three perspectives as accountabilities, i.e., your own, your boss’s (management’s), and your employees. From the individual view point:

| Expectations  |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Yours   | Your Boss’s (Management’s)   | Your Employee’s   | Your Peer’s  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your goals?</li> <li>• What do you expect to accomplish?</li> <li>• What do you expect from your boss?</li> <li>• What do you expect from your boss’s boss?</li> <li>• What do you expect from your peers?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your department’s goals?</li> <li>• What does your boss expect you to do?</li> <li>• Will you be able to work within your budget?</li> <li>• What does your boss’s boss expect?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do your employees expect from you?</li> <li>• How much power/authority do your employees perceive you to have?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do your peer’s expect from you?</li> <li>• How much power/authority do your peers perceive you to have?</li> </ul> |

The relationships among this complex array of Accountabilities and Expectations form the basis for defining the Business Continuity Program Developer’s role in an organization. To the extent that a person is conscious of their role, they will be able to develop within it and to shape it in ways that enhance their job and career satisfaction. Ultimately, though satisfaction will come from successful performance. The experience of successful performance is in the hands of the individual to a significant extent even though systems will always be more powerful than people choice is the greatest source of individual power. It is the great leveler that allows a person to maintain dignity and professional integrity. The first step to individual power is competence.

**Competencies**

A Business Continuity Program Developer must have at least a working knowledge of all categories of expertise outlined previously. Competence is the sort of knowledge that is evidence in behavior, accomplishments and outcomes. Competence is knowledge that is visible in the work. A working knowledge must display competence. Sometimes competence is in knowing the limitations of knowledge. For the BDPD knowledge acquisition is often a "build or buy decision." Wherever other internal expertise is lacking, the Business Continuity Program Developer must "fill the void" to either become an expert (build the competence) or obtain the services of an external resource (buy the competence). Above all, the Business Continuity Program Developer must be able to communicate and work with others across the entire organization as well as outside the organization. Examples of core competency include the following:

| <b>As an Implementor,<br/>to be able to:</b>   | <b>As a Manager,<br/>to be able to:</b>   | <b>As a Planner,<br/>to be able to:</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make fast but thoughtful decisions</li> <li>• Take action (when necessary)</li> <li>• Communicate what decisions or actions have been made</li> <li>• Build coalitions of functions whose interdependencies are critical factors in continuity</li> <li>• Provide leadership without legitimate status and authority</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide leadership commensurate with legitimate status and authority</li> <li>• Delegate authority</li> <li>• Optimize performance (self and others)</li> <li>• Coordinate activities</li> <li>• Organize information and activities</li> <li>• Negotiate with others</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform long range planning</li> <li>• See the connections among diverse functions</li> <li>• Select critical business factors from the mass of trivial ones</li> <li>• Bring new ideas and information to the planning process or champion others who have them</li> <li>• Budget for future expenditures</li> <li>• Obtain funding</li> </ul> |

**Conclusion**

The role of the Business Continuity Program Developer has evolved from a number of diverse disciplines. In the next 3 to 5 years this role will continue to evolve and accelerate. The increasing pressures created by a 24/7 workforce and 24/7 consumers will continue to drive the requirements for Business Continuity Programs. The Developer's role will be to: anticipate the organizations needs, meet management's expectations, form inter-organizational partnerships, develop intra-organizational cooperation, and obtain financing to meet or exceed the organization's requirements for continuity of essential business operations. It may be the most potentially exciting job in the organization, but doing it well it will challenge the best of us.