# The Definitive Guide for Business Continuity Program Success

**LEARN FROM THE TOP 5 ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL BC PROGRAMS**

# Insights to Success

Business Continuity (BC) is a priority for many executives, but creating, implementing, and sustaining a successful BC program comes with challenges.

In our recent Business Continuity Benchmark Study, we surveyed more than 1,100 Business Continuity leaders, practitioners, and sponsors from around the globe and asked them about challenges that affect Business Continuity program success.

In this guide, we've outlined some of the key findings from that study so you can take a closer look at what other organizations are doing well, including recommendations you can adopt to make your BC program stronger and more successful.

**YOU WILL LEARN:**

→ 5 high priority objectives

→ Challenges organizations face

→ Top 5 attributes of successful BC programs

→ How you can improve your BC program
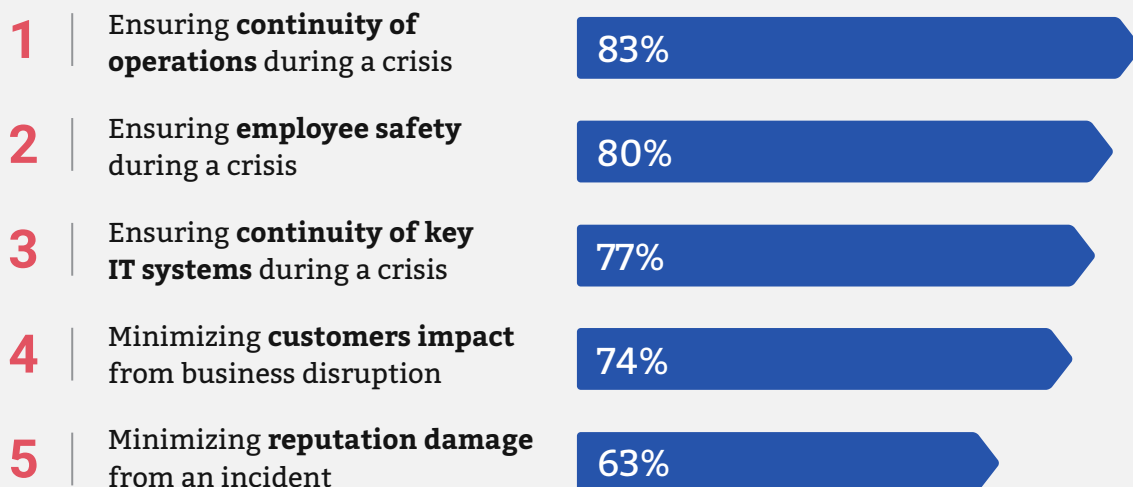
# 5 High Priority Objectives for BC Programs

When it comes to priorities for Business Continuity programs, most practitioners agree that crisis response is key.

We'll take a deeper dive into some of these a little later, but first, let's take a look at which objectives benchmark study respondents said were priorities for their organizations.

In addition to ranking their priority objectives, respondents also rated their level of success with each priority. In our analysis, the average success rating achieved for these top objectives determined the criteria for overall program success.

**HOW RESPONDENTS RANKED OBJECTIVES:**

**1** | Ensuring **continuity of operations** during a crisis — 83%

**2** | Ensuring **employee safety** during a crisis — 80%

**3** | Ensuring **continuity of key IT systems** during a crisis — 77%

**4** | Minimizing **customers impact** from business disruption — 74%

**5** | Minimizing **reputation damage** from an incident — 63%

# Top Challenges

While many organizations are poised for BC program success, many face challenges they are working to overcome.

Leading the way at the top of the challenge list is lack of organizational engagement. Some 61% of organizations say this is an obstacle. Another 46% of organizations say lack of executive support is a roadblock, too.

**Other key challenges organizations face are:**

→ Supply chain and third-party risks

→ Increasing and constantly evolving risk landscape

→ Increasing and constantly evolving cyber risks

▸ **61%**

*of organizations say organizational engagement is an obstacle*

▸ **46%**

*of organizations say lack of executive support is a roadblock*

# What Makes BC Programs Successful?

So what attributes correlate most with success for BC programs? Let's look at five core areas:

**1** Organizational Engagement

**2** Executive Support

**3** Adequate Resources

**4** Team Dedication

**5** Program Maturity

## What Makes BC Programs Successful?

## 1 | Organizational Engagement

Organizations that have fully addressed organizational engagement are more than four times more likely to report a high degree of Business Continuity program success.

Business Continuity engagement is a challenge for organizations of all sizes. Because work units are often siloed, getting departments to work together is difficult. When employees have day-to-day responsibilities and other goals and metrics they're responsible for, getting further buy-in for their roles in BC and disaster recovery (DR) planning can sometimes feel like a no-win situation.

As demonstrated by the results of the study, cross-departmental buy-in is imperative in Business Continuity success. Programs with strong and far-reaching organizational engagement tend to be more successful than organizations without similar support because it often leads to improved and increased BC communication and plan understanding, as well as access to important resources and financial support.

**SUCCESS TIP**

*Work with your HR department to develop BC education programs.*

*Organizational Engagement*

# Test your organizational awareness

There are a couple of ways you can build company-wide engagement. Awareness is key.

✔ *Do employees understand what Business Continuity is and why it's important?*

✔ *Do they understand the role Business Continuity plays in overall company success?*

✔ *Do they understand their team and individual roles in ensuring BC and DR plans function as they're intended?*

Everyone plays an important role in creating a Business Continuity culture—one where all employees are engaged to continually analyze risks, create safeguards, and respond appropriately to incidents. For this to happen, response plans and tactics should be understood by everyone who needs to be empowered to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to organizational disruption.

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**SUCCESS TIP**

*Build an awareness campaign that utilizes input from multiple departments.*

# Key Recommendations

This is where awareness campaigns can help. Here are some core recommendations for a Business Continuity Awareness Campaign:

→ **Include BC in employee on-boarding**
so these terms and their importance are part of your enterprise vocabulary from day one.

→ **Work with your HR team**
to post news or information on your corporate intranet or through your other company-wide communication methods

→ **Sponsor educational events**
with other departments, such as lunch-and-learns, to encourage widespread knowledge and participation.

→ **Include department representatives**
in your Business Continuity planning, testing, and evaluation. Follow up routinely.

→ **Have BC champions in each department**
throughout your organization and ensure they're routinely sharing information from your BC team outward. But don't forget to encourage them to solicit feedback from employees to find out what's working, concerns they have, and what can be done better.

→ **Empower your mid-level managers**
These managers usually work with employees on a daily basis. They understand team goals and objectives and can be valuable influencers for employee morale. Mid-level managers can help educate employees about the importance of your BC and DR plans.

# **2** | Executive Support

From the benchmark study, we learned that organizations with strong executive support are almost three times more likely to have successful BC programs than those that do not.

There are several ways you can tackle executive-level buy-in. One way is to get an executive sponsor, or a key leader, who is engaged with your BC program.

An executive sponsor can help you navigate your business environment to facilitate and encourage engagement among your C-Suite leadership team and other key stakeholders, such as board members. Organizations with executive support are better poised to facilitate process and policy changes because there is a better understanding of BC program goals and how BC programs can make businesses stronger.

Executive support can also further facilitate access to needed resources and staff, including financial support to scale and improve your BC program as it matures.

Another way to bring executives on board is to include quality metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in your BCP. This is a great way to show executives the value of your BC program so they understand why the investment of time, money, and resources will help keep the organization safe and resilient in the face of disruptions.

# Key Recommendations

Here are a few other ways you can work with your executive team to build support for your BC program:

→ **Provide your team with reports**
and share analytics that are easy-to-understand (clear data visualization is a bonus) and tie directly to organizational goals and objectives.

→ **Discuss your security goals**
as they pertain to your business goals and how they can make your business more successful.

→ **Explain the business risks**
of not having a BC program. For example, one disruption could damage your brand, make you lose customers and revenue, and in some cases, put your organization out of business altogether.

→ **Explain how your BC program**
helps the organization meet compliance and regulation standards and also provides a clear path for audit preparation and success.

**SUCCESS TIP**

*Get an executive sponsor who is engaged with your BC program!*

# **3** │ Adequate Resources

Once you have successfully engaged your executive leadership and key stakeholders there is a greater chance they will understand—and positively respond—to your requests for resources.

We learned in our study that organizations with adequate BC program resources are more than twice as likely to have a high degree of BC program success than those that don't.

BC program management is challenging, especially if you're taking a decentralized approach and your team members must split their time and attention between their day-to-day priorities and BC program success.

Adequate resources ensures your BC program gets the attention it needs—not just to keep it operational, but to continuously test, review, and update it to scale and grow as your company changes over time.

When evaluating resources for your program—people, time, money, resources, and tools including Business Continuity Management software—begin by focusing on three core components—*data health, system health, and program health.*

# Test your data quality:

→ *Do you have adequate resources to capture, maintain, and update all data related to your BC and DR programs?*

→ *Do you have the resources to ensure your system is agile and is updated on a regular basis?*

→ *Does your program cover all the processes and applications that are important to your operations?*

→ *Do you have the ability to test, review, and update your plans on a routine basis?*

→ *Are you able to review analytics and share those with your teams to ensure continual organization engagement and executive buy-in?*

A healthy system means the critical information you need is accurately captured and individual components like workflows and plans work the way they're supposed to. This should include orchestrated incident response plans, based on Recovery Time Objectives (RTO), for all of your organization's key processes, applications, vendors, supply chain components, organization locations, and employees.

> **SUCCESS TIP**
>
> *Focus on data health, system health, and program health.*

# 4 | Team Dedication

Managing a robust and resilient BC program is challenging. Because of diverse needs, there isn't a single Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) that fits every organization.

To ensure success, it's important to clearly identify if your organization is utilizing a centralized or decentralized BC program.

Centralized BC programs are often guided by a single BC manager or team of BC professionals who are responsible for constructing and owning all BC planning and program building.

Conversely, a decentralized BC program shares BC plan-building responsibility throughout the organization, with the help of plan owners from each department who are responsible for owning and updating their unit's plans. A decentralized approach allows BC professionals to spend more time on other important tasks such as maturing the program, assessing third-party vendors, administering exercises, and promoting internal awareness.

**SUCCESS TIP**

*A team that is dedicated full-time to BC can lead to a more successful program.*

# Team Dedication

## Centralized or Decentralized?

While there is no right or wrong choice here—centralized or decentralized—our benchmark study looked beyond plan-building and into wider BC program dedication.

The results revealed that organizations with a person or team whose role is fully focused on Business Continuity are about 30% more likely to report a high degree of BC program success than those individuals or teams that are not solely BC-focused and have other job responsibilities.

Further, the study found organizations with a dedicated BC team are 100% more focused and 1.3 times more successful than programs managed by individuals who are only dedicated to BC part time.

**KEY STATS**

▸ **40%**

*of programs managed by a dedicated BC team indicate a high degree of success*

▸ **54%**

*of programs managed by the executive suite or BODs indicate a high degree of success*

# **5** | Program Maturity

The study uncovered another attribute related to BC program success: program maturity. As one might expect, the study revealed a high correlation between program maturity and success.

Highly mature BC programs are almost 4.9 times more successful than early stage or immature programs. Almost 80% of programs rated "very mature" correlate with program success.

While the practice of Business Continuity has been around for about 40 years, unfortunately, a lot of organizations don't rank their BC programs as mature. Only 9% of participants said their Programs as "very mature," with 27% saying their Programs are "mature," and 33% saying "reasonably mature."

**WHAT PEERS ARE SAYING...**

▸ **9%**

*of participants said their Programs are "very mature"*

▸ **60%**

*of participants said their Programs are "mature" or "reasonably mature"*

# How Would You Rank?

Let's take a look at BC program maturity levels. How would you rank your BC program maturity?

☑ **Very Mature**
Your BC program is governed with a comprehensive and consistent approach across all levels. Your entire organization encompasses the full BC lifecycle, which is fully integrated, embedded and optimized within other disciplines and also extends to your supply chain partners.

☑ **Mature**
Your BC program has comprehensive plans established, you conduct risk and impact assessments routinely, and you have active testing and exercise programs in place.

☑ **Reasonably Mature**
Your BC program is not yet consistent across your organization and/or you still have some components that need additional focus, such as establishing robust exercising and testing programs.

☑ **Partially Mature**
You haven't fully implemented your BC program. Your BC program basics are in place and you have a framework, but there are still key areas to address.

☑ **Early-Stage Maturity**
You are beginning to build your BC framework. You are laying the foundation of your program and have some initial elements in place and some plans created.

☑ **Immature**
You do not have a structured BC program in place, but have some ad hoc BC-related activities within your organization.

**SUCCESS TIP**

*Maturing your program can lead to BC success!*

# What Else They Are Getting Right

What are some of the other key things these organizations are doing to bolster success?

Here is an overview and recommendations you can adopt if you're not already including these in your BC program:

→ 88% of programs include risk assessments and 45% of organizations review and update these risk assessments annually.

→ 90% of respondents said a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) is an important element of their BC program.

→ 97% of respondents said their organization reviews their BC plans and almost 60% of those organizations do an annual review.

→ Frequent plan reviews, simulation and testing are important success drivers. Plan reviews are most common (95%), followed by table-top/desk-top exercises (91%), and plan simulations (84%).

Take a closer look at the frequency and variety of planning and testing methods most commonly used in the complete 2019 Business Continuity Benchmark Study.

*More then 1,100 participants worldwide!*

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# More Ways to Improve Your BC Success

In addition to the tips above, adopting BC Management software can help improve your success metrics.

About two-thirds of respondents to our survey said they use a commercial or custom Business Continuity system. You can fine-tune these systems to meet all of your specific needs, including great features like mapping dependencies, employee notification tools, and analytics and dashboards.

Additionally, more than 50% of organizations say they use one or more BC advisory or consulting services so you may also find it helpful to work closely with a Business Continuity Advisor like those at Assurance and ClearView. Working with an advisor can provide increased expertise, flexibility, and a pathway to executive buy-in for necessary improvements.

With a go-to partner for continuity and resilience, you can confidently mitigate risk, manage recovery, and safeguard your employees, customers, operations and brands.

▶ **2/3$^{rds}$**

*of respondents to our survey said they use a commercial or custom Business Continuity system*

▶ **50%**

*of organizations say they use one or more BC advisory or consulting services*

**SUCCESS TIP**

*Work with a BC advisory or consulting service for program growth.*

# Want to Remain Resilient?

Contact a Business Continuity professional to learn more about how you can better ready your organization.

**Assurance**

### ABOUT ASSURANCE

Business disruptors including cyber-attacks, natural disasters and supply chain breakdowns are now commonplace but it's difficult to measure readiness and ensure effective response. Leveraging decades of experience helping thousands of organizations, we pair expert guidance with easy-to-use software to simplify preparation and ensure quick restoration of your critical operations. Assurance customers have confidence that their people, revenue and reputations are protected, without needless distractions from their core business.

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### ABOUT CLEARVIEW

ClearView is a powerful, yet easy to use, software solution which enables organizations of all sizes to effectively manage Business Continuity. ClearView is a fully integrated package: whether you are developing plans, running exercises, managing incidents, or communicating with employees, you can manage everything quickly and efficiently within ClearView.

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