INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS AND BOOKKEEPERS

Business Continuity Planning Summary

- Business Continuity Planning (BCP) may initially seem irrelevant, but think back to 2020, who thought that would happen?
- Legal and regulatory requirements, such as secure record retention, are covered in continuity planning.
- Continuity planning ensures minimal disruption to your practice in the face of disasters.
- It doesn't necessarily require extra expenses or complex solutions like standby office space.
- A well-prepared plan enables quick reaction to significant disruptions.
- Advanced planning helps avoid unintended consequences during disasters.
- Documented strategy across various disaster categories provides a head start in resuming normal business operations.
- Trust from clients relies on the ability to continue business as normal even in crises.
- Remember the importance of preparation in business continuity to prevent failure.

Examples of BCP

BC issue	Example Solution	Considerations
Data loss	Backup data from the computer on a thumb drive/external hard drive stored in the same office.	-Solves backup issues from data corruption **BUT** overlooks risk associated with data loss surrounding theft/fire/property disruption. -Data duplication risks virus/corruption being passed on to the backup drives - depending on periods between backups, loss of significant periods of data. -Consider backing up data live in the cloud with data security guarantees. -Consider physically backing up data at a separate secure location using multiple staged backups for added security.

Loss of office space through service outage	Work from home (where a separate primary office location exists).	-Solves the physical location issue and suitable if all office aspects can be
(e.g. burst pipes, electrical/internet outage).		recreated adequately **BUT** some employees may lack sufficient space, reliable internet, or a suitable work environment at home. -Assess whether resources can be relocated to home or if multiple employees need access to hard copy files -Check if all programs function on different IP addresses or if certain ones are tied to the office IP for data security -Testing and discussing the workability of solutions is crucial for reliability -Consider if a suitable location is needed to meet clients during outages and if meetings can switch to client addresses or virtual platforms -Explore alternatives when home working is not feasible

Continuity of Practice	In the event of the practice owner dying or being incapacitated and needing to close practice (CoP)/return records, records will be either returned to clients or passed to an agreed third-party accountancy practice in the first instance.	-Where a practice has multiple employees, their existing knowledge and access can facilitate a shutdown transfer of client data -Alternatively CoP plan may involve existing employees maintaining the practice in the absence of the owner, if suitable -Ensuring that employees understand and accept the expectation prior to the event is crucial -In sole practitioner setups, CoP may involve passing files back to the client by a family member or named third party -Basic considerations must be outlined: physical access to the office, files, systems; understanding of file locations, IT systems; ensuring data accuracy for clients -Informing clients of the need to return data and terminate services is vital -Ensure active clients and their contact details are easily accessible to the relevant person.