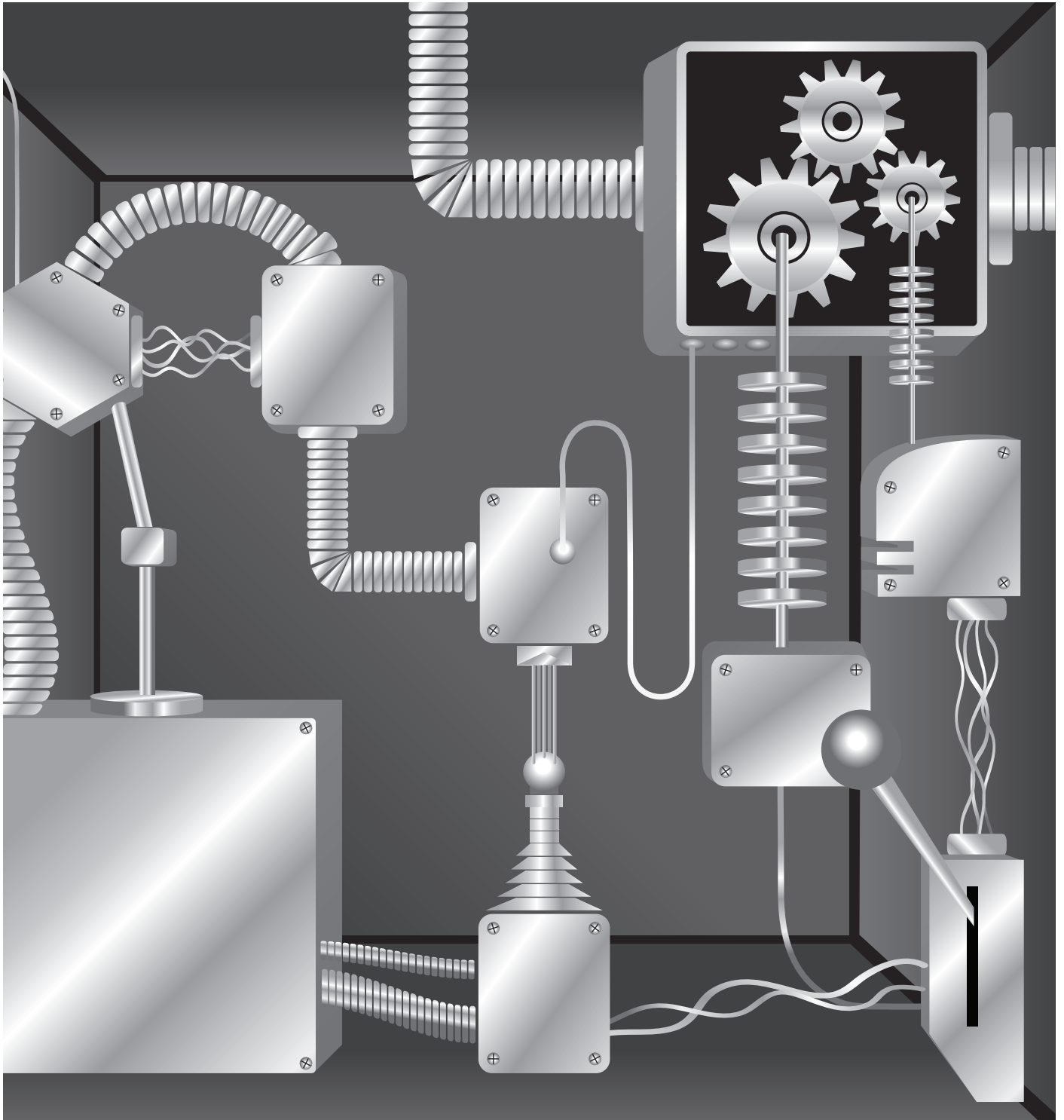


IT'S **TIME TO AUTOMATE**

BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY

BY LEE MILLIGAN



Sometimes, technology progress is steady, growing slowly over time.

Sometimes it goes through marked phases, and occasionally, a key threshold is reached that moves the technology rapidly forward.

Business continuity (BC) software has been around for several decades, and many improvements have been made. However, the increasing costs and risks associated with business disruptions have significantly heightened the need for effective BC management programs in recent years. To keep pace with today's 24/7, global business delivery model, BC software tools have undergone significant changes – and continue to progress rapidly.

The key word is integration. As operating systems like Windows have integrated internet browsers, security systems, and other components; likewise, BC software is seeing integration of business impact analysis (BIA), testing, incident management, risk and vendor assessment and other tools. Beyond that, BC software is on the threshold of integration into companies' operations systems, encompassing facilities management, configuration management, and other systems used for day-to-day IT and business operations.

These levels of integration take a big step towards ensuring the information in continuity strategies and plans is up to date and accurate. Organizations not using these integrated tools can waste hours of data entry work just keeping their plans updated, only to have to revise them again. BC software allows companies to make changes once, and then automatically applies these changes to the entire plan – eliminating the need for dual data entry between tools. This significantly reduces time and administrative costs and is especially important for disaster recovery (DR).

Why is this important, particularly at this time? There are a number of reasons.

The Economy – and the Effect of Downsizing

During this current period of economic uncertainty, many organizations are looking at ways to reduce costs. Information technology expenditures are not exempt from this; in fact, surveys show that business continuity is often at the top of the cut list.

Unfortunately, many of the executives I've worked with consider business continuity a program they can afford to take risks with. However, information availability needs do not slow down even though the economy does.

As continuity staffs continue to shrink and programs become seriously jeopardized, BC software can help alleviate the pain, for these reasons:

- **BC software systems reduce work.** Because today's systems are usually based on relational data management systems, and because they support delegation of BIA, planning, testing, and other continuity activities, they reduce the need for a large continuity staff. A big plus with this delegation is that it improves the quality of the program, through increased involvement and knowledge.
- **These systems improve the integrity of information that's collected.** Since the best systems in the marketplace are relational-based, information is more effectively managed. In addition, these systems have strong security features that isolate access to data, decreasing the potential for data corruption or destruction.

Increased Customer Expectations – Decreased Tolerance

The current economy has sharpened consumers' expectations about goods and services, and is driving intolerance for less than satisfactory results. People want timely, valuable goods and services, and companies that don't meet those needs go out of business. Business continuity is a major part of this equation. The overall objective of a BC program is to keep the company running effectively, while meeting the customers'

needs and desires. Today's BC software plays a key role in achieving this.

Use of a BC software system strengthens the hand of the BC leader. First, newer versions of these systems integrate information about business processes, applications and infrastructure into common shared databases. Information gathered during the initial or annual BIA is directly linked to critical processes, applications, or technology infrastructure recovery plans. Recovery plan information is directly available to the incident management component so actual plans can be tracked and managed. The ability to collect, organize and track the readiness of critical vendors is immediately linked to their importance to critical business processes that enable the business to operate.

How does this affect customer expectations? When an organization knows there are threats that can affect groups of customers, it can proactively address issues to improve quality and availability of goods and services. Because BC systems improve the quality of information and provide greater visibility into the relationships between processes, applications, and infrastructure, the company is better positioned to address any irregularities or shortcomings.

Meeting the Standards

Today, regulations and standards drive the awareness of business continuity up to the highest management and board levels of the organization. Whether it's NFPA1600, ISO 27001, BS 25999, or FFIEC, these emerging guidelines are establishing baseline expectations for BC programs. By defining the "standard of excellence" for business continuity, their presence is being adopted as the norm for businesses. Title IX of Public Law 110 recommends certification or accreditation of private sector preparedness. While still voluntary, it may define the standard of care that companies, public and private, will have to meet in the future.

Today's emerging BC software systems are being built to support these standards efforts, and to integrate their concepts into the way the software is

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organized, used and managed. Whether it's integrated scripts that lead a plan builder to the correct screens and data areas to meet the standard, or structuring of BIA content to ensure that questions within the survey meet the standard, the result is the same: the BC system is leading the user to adhere to the company's program requirements, and also satisfy the requirements of the specific standard the company chooses to base their program on.

Preparing for Complex Technology Recovery

Recovery of technology is not accomplished with a plan, but rather with a series of plans working together to provide management and recovery over defined timeframes. Today's BC systems are built to support these complexities, making it possible to construct plans that are unique to specific recovery

actions, whether the object is network, data store recovery, or logical servers in a virtual environment. It is not a one size fits all; BC systems of today provide total flexibility in setting up these recovery structures, so they can be tailored to meet the individual needs of each organization.

More importantly though, is the recognition of relationships between technology and the business. An organization's BC program should make it possible to understand the impact of losing an application or technology service by providing visibility to the company areas that will feel the greatest operational or financial impact.

Getting Ready For Tomorrow

Today's BC software systems will play an increasingly large role in data center and business operations because of their ability to integrate with the operational

technology frameworks organizations depend on. BC software systems encompass every aspect of a continuity plan – from planning, analysis, risk, vendors, employees, hardware, application and process – enabling them to work together to help ensure organizations are prepared to respond to and recover from unplanned outages and disasters.

As we've explored, these very real advantages can significantly improve recoverability and the overall quality of a BC program. Furthermore, these systems form the base for greater enhancements and ease of integration in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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PLANNING & MANAGEMENT NUGGETS

FROM EMFORUM

WMD Prevention and Preparedness Act Introduced in the Senate

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2009 responds to a statement by the Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, in December 2008 and the findings of a Congressionally-mandated WMD commission that a WMD terrorist attack is more likely than not to occur by 2013 and that a biological attack is more likely than a nuclear attack.

The bill would strengthen security at labs using the most dangerous pathogens, improve capabilities to assess the threat of terrorists acquiring WMD, ensure that citizens get critical safety information, and develop a means for quickly delivering life-saving drugs to areas that have been attacked.

GAO Releases Report on Effective Collaboration for Disaster Recovery

The U.S. Government Accountability Office released its report to the Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, GAO-09-811, Disaster Recovery: Experiences from Past Disasters Offer Insights for Effective Collaboration after Catastrophic Events. GAO has identified four collaborative practices that may help communities rebuild from the Gulf Coast hurricanes as well as future catastrophic events:

- Develop and communicate common goals to guide recovery.
- Leverage resources to facilitate recovery.
- Use recovery plans to agree on roles and responsibilities.
- Monitor, evaluate, and report on progress made toward recovery.

The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Homeland Security direct the Administrator of FEMA to establish a mechanism for sharing information and best practices focused on disaster recovery, including practices that promote effective collaboration, such as the Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) Web site.

Visit www.GUIDErequest.com/PM to link to these and other excellent resources from Emforum.

FROM BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

Business Roundtable, a membership organization of nearly 160 CEOs from leading U.S. companies, launched the Partnership for Disaster Response in 2005, following the Asian tsunami. The mission: to expand corporate commitment to disaster response beyond financial contributions.

The Partnership for Disaster Response works to:

- Enhance the efficiency of the private sector's disaster response
- Foster public-private collaborations to prepare for the health, social and economic burdens that disasters can create
- Ensure that the business community's response efforts address the most critical needs
- Mobilize the technologies and resources of Business Roundtable's member companies

Top Ten Myths of Disaster Relief

The top ten most common myths of disaster relief