How to form an effective disaster recovery plan & improve compliance

Future-proof and protect your business
with these essential steps

Support tree

Can you guarantee your business data would be safe if the worst happened?

Every business is required to adhere to strict data protection regulations to keep their customers' and employees' information secure. It's your responsibility to have a plan in place to keep data safe, even against unexpected crises.

In their very nature, disasters are unexpected, unplanned and inconvenient, to say the least. They come in all shapes and sizes, which means that every business, large or small, is at risk.

Disaster recovery plans help businesses to:

- **Save money**
- **Keep data safe**
- **Increase productivity**
- **Minimise downtime**
- **Stay compliant**

Read on to learn how to create a disaster recovery plan that will set your business up for success.

> **"Over half of all global companies experience extended downtime due to an unexpected disaster."**
> Data core

> **"Yet only 1 in 5 have disaster recovery plans in place."**
> FEMA

What is a disaster recovery plan, and why do I need one?

Do you know what would happen if your servers went down and you suddenly lost access to your data? **Without a disaster recovery plan, this scenario is a nightmare.**

Disaster recovery plans are implemented to protect businesses from costly downtime caused by anything from a cyber-attack to theft or human error resulting in data loss.

Here's why it's worth getting one...
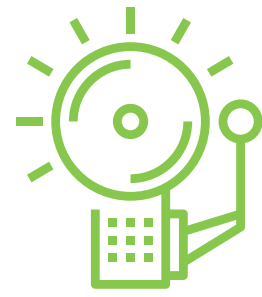
No business is immune

You'd be forgiven for thinking that disaster recovery plans are only useful for large corporations with valuable data.

But every business with personal data is at risk of losing it. SMEs often have fewer policies in place to protect their data despite suffering the most from data loss.

It's important to remember that data loss can occur from any number of disasters, not just cyber-attacks. All it takes is one faulty piece of equipment or accidental deletion to wreak havoc on a business.

Reduce downtime

Unplanned downtime costs UK businesses an average of £65,000 - £83,000 per hour (CYFORSECURE).

Not only does downtime cost financially, but it also costs productivity, efficiency and motivation.

Ensuring that your IT systems are backed up and easy to recover will mean that your business can get up and running faster.

Data security

Cybercriminals look for vulnerabilities in companies. They're not fussy when it comes to which business to target.

To cybercriminals, all personal data is valuable no matter where it's from.

If data is held ransom or stolen, a disaster recovery plan can help you avoid long-term damage.

Save money

The last thing you want to be worrying about in a crisis is how much money you need to spend to recover.

Disaster recovery plans take all of this into account with detailed processes and procedures designed to keep things running smoothly without any sudden costs.

The inconvenience of planning and budgeting for potential disasters is nothing compared to suddenly needing to source thousands for new office space, new equipment or additional security.

Build trust

Creating a robust disaster recovery plan will demonstrate to staff and customers alike that you take their data seriously.

Loss of reputation following a disaster of some kind can make it very hard for businesses to recover fully.

If the worst does happen, a disaster recovery plan will ensure you've done everything you can to look after sensitive data responsibly.

Stay compliant

Since GDPR came into force in 2018, every business has had to meet a higher standard of data security requirements.

If any personal data belonging to customers, partners or employees is lost or stolen, you could be in trouble without a disaster recovery plan.

Some disasters are unavoidable. But creating a comprehensive contingency plan demonstrates that your business has done everything it can to mitigate risk and protect data from threats.

Six steps **to creating your fool-proof** disaster recovery plan

1 Create a risk assessment

With so many threats out there, it's important to brainstorm which risks realistically face your business.

There are three key steps for conducting a thorough risk assessment:
A) highlight potential hazards/risks
B) identify who and what will be affected
C) Document what your action will be for each risk

This isn't just an exercise to induce panic about the future! It's a practical step to ensure that potential risks can be mitigated effectively.

2 Agree on objectives

There are two main elements to consider before you formulate your plan.

1. Recovery time objective (RTO)
How long you expect it to take your business to get up and running post-disaster.

2. Recovery point objective (RPO)
The age of the data that you would need to be recovered to resume normal operations, e.g. how much of your file history do you need to backup?

3 Determine requirements

Based on your objectives, will you need a complete system recovery? Or, to be operational, are the files you would need more recent, localised, or in the Cloud?

Don't forget to also consider any physical requirements your business might have, e.g. a certain number of computers, a physical workspace of specific software.

4 Assign roles

This might sound like the simplest step so far but assigning responsibility in advance could significantly minimise chaos.

Ensure that you have assigned roles to decision-makers and team members alike and that these are recorded.

Roles need to be communicated clearly so that everyone knows what they need to do if a crisis comes.

5 Get a disaster recovery site

This step is essential and cannot be skipped. Your disaster recovery site needs to be able to sustain your critical workloads.

It can be a temporary location, such as work from home or bring your own device (BYOD) plan. Whatever you choose, this step must account for all necessary files being backed up and accessible even if your usual devices or servers are down.

If you're not sure how to accomplish this, look into Cloud backup solutions ASAP.

6 Test, update & repeat

The digital landscape is constantly changing, and new threats are emerging all the time. It would be remiss to maintain the same disaster recovery plan year after year.

To ensure you don't miss out on any critical updates or oversights in your previous plan, regularly test and refine your processes.

Creating an effective disaster recovery plan now will save you numerous IT and compliance headaches in the future.

Equip your business to stay productive, operational and successful no matter what challenges lay ahead of you.

Your next steps

Our team of disaster recovery and compliance experts at Support Tree are on hand to help your business every step of the way. While it can seem like a daunting process initially, it doesn't have to be when your partner with us. You can trust that we know what we're doing.

We'll work with you to create a bespoke disaster recovery plan that fits your specific IT requirements and business goals.

Book your free consultation

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