

Business Continuity Amid COVID-19 Shutdown: Lessons from Past Disasters and Catastrophes

INTRODUCTION

A series of global pandemics, manmade disasters, and natural catastrophes have characterized the first two decades of the current millennium.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic are the most vivid examples. Each of these has posed a unique challenge to the business continuity culture of both small businesses and large corporations. Over 40% of small businesses don't open after a disaster and 25% more fail in under a year from the event according to [FEMA](#).

Your business doesn't have to become a part of this statistic when the COVID-19 crisis finally goes away!

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WINDWARD GIVES YOU THE EDGE

Besides engaging communication and collaboration tools like Office 365, Skype, Trello, Google Drive, making use of [document automation](#) software like Windward can make creating documents even by an individual employee simple.

Your employees working at home (indefinitely for now) don't have to rely on other team members or a programmer to create important documents. It's incredibly easy to design templates and create documents in just a few clicks and share them in multiple formats in just a matter of minutes!

The best part—all of this can be done on familiar platforms like Microsoft Word or Excel just by a single employee.

We understand the sudden nature of catastrophes and natural disasters makes it hard to come up with immediate solutions as events are unfolding. There are, however, some organizations that have exemplified ingenuity in implementing business continuity solutions during catastrophic events.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY SOLUTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT DURING RECENT CATASTROPHES AND DISASTERS

The following examples illustrate the innovativeness of companies dealing with business continuity issues in situations similar to the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of online document generation tools like Windward is a crucial strategy in such responses.

Gaille Media Survives Hurricane Harvey's Havoc via Innovative Cloud Services

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused widespread havoc across Southeast Texas. By

the time the storm and deluge level rains had cleared, the damages across the state reached \$125 billion. Many businesses across the storm's path were either devastated or had to close up altogether.

Gaille Media, a small internet-marketing firm, managed to stay afloat by [adopting innovative business continuity methods](#). While its offices were inaccessible for three months due to flooding, not a single operation of the company was affected. This is because the company used cloud-based services for essential processes like database management, document creation, and file sharing.

You too can stay afloat and ensure business continuity during the current COVID-19 outbreak by taking advantage of document generation tools like Windward and let your employees (working from their homes) create and [share documents](#) right online.

Merrill Lynch Struggles After 9/11 Terror Attacks

The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks brought Merrill Lynch's core IT and reporting infrastructure to its knees. The wealth management financial firm could access neither its primary IT infrastructure nor the backup system. Both of them were in Manhattan, cut off from the power grid.

Merrill Lynch has since [moved its primary data center](#) to Staten Island, leaving just a backup system in New York. As both data centers rely on different electrical grids, any disastrous power cut in one area no longer cripples operations.

Data plays a crucial role in every modern-day business, securing it is crucial during a crisis. Ensure you have the right data security systems in place and engage a document automation system like Windward as it can integrate with an extensive range of [datasources](#) to create documents in just a few clicks.

Morgan Stanley Focuses on Staff Awareness in their Business Continuity Plans

Disruptions in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks taught companies the importance of including staff in business continuity plans. [Morgan Stanley](#) is a good example of how to think about people, not just processes and equipment in disaster preparedness.

Every year over the Easter weekend, Morgan Stanley powers down its data centers at Canary Wharf. This makes it possible to run simulations to train staff on what to do in case of a crippling disaster.

With COVID-19 virus pandemic hogging the headlines worldwide it is more important than ever to ensure your employees stay safe at their homes.

Also, you can make their job easy by having them run Windward on their systems to generate dozens of documents in just a few minutes all on their own and [save time](#) considerably in the process. Even if one of your employees becomes sick, another can start generating documents immediately and you don't have to wait a couple of weeks for the work to resume.

In short, empower your employees working from home by engaging [Windward](#).

“Data plays a crucial role in every modern-day business, securing it is crucial during a crisis.”

BAD BUSINESS STRATEGIES

The examples above provide a mix of both good and bad business continuity plans. Don't get your business crippled by poor planning and ensure business continuity in moments of crisis. Here are some issues to watch out for:

Lack of a Business Continuity Plan

A business continuity plan is an essential element of any business. The plan must include an outline of possible threats. Each threat must have a set of prevention and mitigation protocols outlined too.

No Risk Assessment

Every business continuity plan begins with an assessment of the risk. This assessment identifies the nature of risks facing your business in different disaster scenarios.

Not Carrying Out a Business Impact Analysis

A risk assessment is only the first step to fixing the problem. A business impact analysis goes further as it defines how various events disrupt business operations and the costs involved.

Failure to Implement Mitigation Strategies

It is one thing to plan for risks to business processes and another to act proactively. The technologies and protocols identified in the planning stage must be implemented to deal with the risks as they emerge.

Lack of Recovery Plan

After managing to steer your business through the disaster period, there's a lot more to do. Having the right protocols in place will ensure the recovery process is as short and painless as possible.

Don't let the current emergency bring your company down, stand above it by implementing the right business continuity plans.

Take advantage of Windward—both cost-effective and powerful to generate documents and turn the tables.