

LEARN / APPLY / REFLECT

Business Continuity: A Practical Plan for Disruption

A free introductory course on protecting critical business activities. Understand impact, recovery priorities, continuity options and how to exercise a plan.

Your practical learning workbook

Follow the estimated study times shown for each lesson. Course totals include the external videos, notes, activities, a 10-minute understanding check and a 20-30-minute practical assignment. Reading the optional presenter scripts may take extra time.

Use fictional or non-confidential examples. Write on a printed copy or keep your answers in your own document. Online lesson pages also let you save activity notes on your current browser.

Your name: _____

Start date: _____

By the end, you can

- Identify critical activities and dependencies.
- Explain recovery time and data recovery objectives.
- Draft and exercise a basic continuity response.

Learning route

1. Continuity as a business responsibility
2. Business impact and priorities
3. Recovery objectives
4. Options and dependencies
5. A usable continuity plan
6. Exercises and improvement

Complete the online understanding check and use the final assignment rubric to review practical application. This workbook is introductory learning, not a professional qualification.

LESSON 01 / PRACTICE

Continuity as a business responsibility

Explain why continuity involves more than recovering IT.

Begin with the service the customer needs, then identify the activities that keep it running. Work backwards to people, information, facilities, suppliers and systems. A backup server cannot replace an absent authorised approver or a blocked access road. Decide which business owner can prioritise limited resources during a disruption.

Workplace example

A company restores its server but still cannot dispatch orders because its only courier is unavailable. Continuity planning must include that dependency.

Your activity

List a disruption that could stop your business even if every computer still works.

Self-check

Which statement best describes business continuity?

- A. Restoring IT is the whole plan
- B. Maintaining or recovering critical business activities
- C. Buying insurance without planning

LESSON 02 / PRACTICE

Business impact and priorities

Identify how the impact of a disruption grows over time.

A business impact analysis asks how consequences change as interruption continues. Do not rank activities only by department size or seniority. Consider deadlines, customer commitments, cash flow, safety and dependencies. Describe the minimum level of service needed, then agree priorities with the accountable business owners. Numbers in an exercise are assumptions to validate, not universal recovery targets.

Workplace example

A four-hour outage has different consequences for a payroll run on pay day and for a routine internal report. Business impact helps distinguish their priorities.

Your activity

Choose two activities. Describe the effect of a two-hour, one-day and three-day interruption.

Self-check

What is the main purpose of a business impact analysis?

- A. Rank employees by seniority
- B. Understand disruption impacts and recovery priorities
- C. Predict the exact date of the next incident

LESSON 03 / PRACTICE

Recovery objectives

Distinguish how soon an activity must resume from acceptable data loss.

Keep downtime and data loss separate. RTO is the recovery-time target; RPO is the acceptable age of recoverable data, expressed as time. A four-hour RTO does not mean four hours of data loss is acceptable. Recovery targets should fit within the business's tolerable disruption and be supported by tested arrangements, including reconciliation after service returns.

Workplace example

An order system has a four-hour recovery target and a one-hour data-loss tolerance. A daily backup alone may not meet the data recovery requirement.

Your activity

For one critical system, discuss a recovery-time target and the maximum tolerable gap in transaction records.

Self-check

A one-hour recovery point objective concerns what?

- A. Data loss measured in time
- B. The number of staff on a shift
- C. The time needed to issue a press release

LESSON 04 / PRACTICE

Options and dependencies

Choose workable alternatives for critical resource failures.

An alternative must be available when the original fails. Two suppliers may depend on the same warehouse or transport route. Test capacity, access, lead time and necessary approvals. Specify the maximum duration or volume a workaround can support. Manual work needs numbering, approval and later reconciliation so continuity does not create uncontrolled records.

Workplace example

A service team agrees an alternative contact number and manual request log for an outage. Staff know who can approve urgent work and how records will later be reconciled.

Your activity

Select one dependency and define an alternative plus the limit of what it can support.

Self-check

A manual workaround should include which control?

- A. No record keeping until systems return
- B. Clear approval and later reconciliation of records
- C. Automatic approval of every request

LESSON 05 / PRACTICE

A usable continuity plan

Create concise instructions that remain accessible during disruption.

Design the plan for a stressed colleague, not for a shelf. Put activation triggers, decision authority, alternate contacts and first actions near the front. Ensure authorised staff can access a copy when normal systems fail. Use verified contact details, identify who updates them, and separate staff safety actions from service recovery decisions.

Workplace example

A continuity plan names the decision-maker, an alternate and the first five actions. An accessible offline copy prevents the plan being trapped in an unavailable system.

Your activity

Draft a one-page plan for one disruption, including activation, contacts and the first actions.

Self-check

What makes a continuity plan usable during an outage?

- A. A long document only stored on the failed server
- B. Accessible instructions with clear roles and contacts
- C. A list of technical acronyms without owners

LESSON 06 / PRACTICE

Exercises and improvement

Use a scenario to test assumptions without disrupting live operations.

A tabletop tests decisions and assumptions through discussion; it does not prove technical recovery. Introduce new information in stages and ask what the team would do, who decides and what evidence is missing. Close with actions, owners, deadlines and a retest. Keep the exercise separate from live systems unless a controlled test has been specifically approved.

Workplace example

In a tabletop exercise, the backup contact number is wrong. The team corrects it, assigns an owner and adds contact verification to the review schedule.

Your activity

Run a 20-minute discussion: your main office is unavailable tomorrow. Record three decisions and one improvement.

Self-check

What is the most useful output from a continuity exercise?

- A. An attendance photo only
- B. An action list with owners and completion dates
- C. A claim that every future disruption is covered

FINAL ASSIGNMENT / 20-30 MINUTES

Your one-page continuity plan

Your main office cannot be used tomorrow. Your systems still work, but one key approver and the usual carrier are unavailable.

Prepare a one-page response addressing these five points.

1. Identify the critical activity, impact over time and minimum service.

2. List people, information, site, system and supplier dependencies.

3. Propose recovery targets and explain what evidence would validate them.

4. Define activation, deputies, first actions and communications.

5. Plan a tabletop and track improvements to closure.

Self-review rubric

For each point: 0 = missing; 1 = a relevant idea but vague or incomplete; 2 = a specific, feasible response linked to this scenario, with evidence or ownership where appropriate. Maximum 10. This is your self-rating, not an independent grade.

8-10: refine with your team. 5-7: strengthen weak areas. 0-4: revisit the relevant lessons. Any critical omission still needs attention regardless of the total.

WORKED RESPONSES / READ AFTER TRYING

Compare your reasoning

These are illustrative answers, not the only acceptable responses. Adapt them to your own context.

1. Continuity as a business responsibility

Dispatch relies on pickers, stock information, packing space and a carrier. If the carrier is unavailable, restoring the server does not restore delivery. The operations manager evaluates an alternate carrier and tells customer service what can realistically be delivered.

Knowledge check: B. Business continuity considers all the resources needed to deliver critical activities.

2. Business impact and priorities

Payroll on pay day: two hours reduces the checking window; one day may miss the pay run; three days prolongs employee impact. A routine monthly dashboard may tolerate longer interruption. Confirm payment cut-offs and dependencies before approving their relative recovery priorities.

Knowledge check: B. A BIA examines consequences over time so the organisation can choose recovery priorities.

3. Recovery objectives

Illustrative order system targets: restore minimum service within four hours, and recover data no more than one hour old. A nightly backup alone does not demonstrate the one-hour RPO. Test restoration, verify transactions and define how missing orders would be reconciled.

Knowledge check: A. RPO concerns the point in time to which data should be recoverable.

4. Options and dependencies

Alternative: accept up to twenty orders daily on controlled numbered forms while the system is unavailable. The supervisor approves each batch and safeguards the forms. Once restored, reconcile every form against the system before retiring the temporary log.

Knowledge check: B. Workarounds should maintain essential controls and support a reliable return to normal operations.

5. A usable continuity plan

Trigger: dispatch cannot operate from the main site. Operations manager or deputy activates the plan. First: confirm staff safety, assess interruption, contact the response team, establish a reliable communication channel and decide the minimum service. Record decisions and the next update time.

Knowledge check: B. Accessibility, clear ownership and practical instructions make the plan usable under pressure.

6. Exercises and improvement

Scenario: office inaccessible at 9 am; at 9:10 the alternate approver is unavailable; at 9:15 a key customer requests an update. Record the deputy decision route, minimum service and communication owner. Correct the stale contact list and verify it before the next exercise.

Knowledge check: B. Exercises create value when findings lead to specific improvements and follow-up.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT / WORKED EXAMPLE

Your one-page continuity plan

Prioritise essential dispatch commitments after confirming staff safety. The operations deputy activates the plan, checks alternate carrier capacity and authorises a controlled temporary order log. Customer service gives a realistic service update. Recovery targets remain proposed until owners validate impact and recovery capability. Exercise the missing-approver scenario and close assigned actions.

Your next 30 days

Choose one action, its owner, its due date and the evidence you will review.

Continue your learning

<https://sarah-ching-academy.ferching.chatgpt.site/learn/business-continuity.html>

Original Academy teaching notes, exercises and illustrative scenarios. External videos are credited on the online course pages. Presenter scripts are drafts; talking-presenter videos are not included in this workbook.