



## **Prioritising Business Continuity – The Post-Pandemic Dilemma**

For those businesses that had the foresight to invest in one, Covid-19 has highlighted the extraordinary benefits that a well-resourced Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) can deliver during times of crisis. For those who were prepared, a functioning BCMS will have helped mitigate at least some of the effects, intensity and duration of the disruption. Conversely, those who weren't prepared, will have suffered commensurately more.

However, the unprecedented duration of the global pandemic has also brought with it a dilemma: namely, as businesses marshal their efforts and resources to work through the immediate and on-going impacts, what priority will they give to learning the lessons of the present and preparing for the next disruptive event? How do businesses balance their cashflows and resources between their short-term recovery priorities and investing in their longer-term resilience preparations?

Recent analysis (published September 2020) by the Business Continuity Institute shows that, globally, around 70% of businesses fear that a second wave of the pandemic will impact their operations; 82% report that they have suffered disruption from country-wide lockdowns; 76% report that they have suffered supply chain disruptions; 56% have been negatively impacted by delays at the border; 32% report inadequate home working arrangements and outcomes, and a whopping 92% have experienced an increase in cyber-attacks. Unsurprisingly, and given the global nature of the pandemic, 50% say that, six months into the crisis and on the cusp of a second lockdown, their supply chain resilience remains wanting. The future remains very much uncertain.

When I share these statistics with businesses, they capture the attention of senior leaders but at the same time I almost invariably detect a sense of 'battle weariness' amongst them – most just wish the crisis away and as many as 65% of my clients tell me that they 'have had it with the pandemic' and just want to move on. Of those, 80% have indicated that their resources are uniquely focused on just getting through the current phase intact and that there is nothing left in the tank for future planning...

Quite understandably, businesses will want to move on. Looking back into the 'abyss' of a major disruption like Covid-19 is a challenge and many are not intrinsically 'hard wired' to carry out after-action reviews and learn lessons in a structured and disciplined manner. What is clear is that the world will not only have to live with the on-going and longer-term effects of the pandemic, we will also have to be prepared for the next disruptive event, whatever its nature. The only certainty about the future is uncertainty, and the challenge of our times for business continuity professionals and business leaders alike is how to square the competing demands between short-term recovery priorities and the essential need to continue to invest in long-term resilience planning.

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