

## “Crack the Code”

### Part 2 – Pandemic Planning - Approach

In my first e-mail on pandemic planning for Swine Flu, I said “The first step to having a **real** pandemic solution is determining a successful approach for **maintaining** the plan”. The struggle most companies have isn’t creating the plan, but having enough time to keep the plan current. I believe there are three (3) significant challenges to understand and overcome in order to “Crack the Code” to successfully maintaining a pandemic plan. They are:

1. **Core activities have priority over non-core activities:** Even though pandemic planning is vital to protecting your people and maintaining critical operations during a pandemic disaster, managing any BCP plan is a non-core activity to most businesses.

Companies typically manage a pandemic plan internally with available resources – key word is “available”. The real issue is when your “available” resources must prioritize their time, core activities will always win out over non-core work. Even if the updates are done to the plan, often they suffer in quality from lack of time.

*The key to overcoming this challenge is to shift core activities to other resources when pandemic plan testing and updating is required. If you have no “available” resources and do not want to add staff to accommodate non-core work, consider outsourcing so that you can focus on what you do best. Outsourcing is often a more cost effective option.*

2. **Understanding the speed your organization moves:** Most will agree that businesses move rapidly every day, if not every minute, especially in the information age. With this rapid movement comes rapid change in people, technology, processes and facilities.

The small percentage of time a person devotes to testing and updating a pandemic plan is not enough to keep pace with the speed of your business. By the time a person gets the plan updated, your business has it in the dust.

*When assigning internal resources for managing a pandemic plan, make sure they match the speed your organization is moving. Understand how often your plan must be up-dated and tested, calculate the hours estimated and then balance that against the available resources. Keep in mind that spreading the work across too many resources is a recipe for disaster. There must be a process owner! If your business is moving too fast or too many people must be involved, consider outsourcing.*

3. **“We just need to get a pandemic plan done and then we will be OK”:** You must realize that creating a pandemic plan is a continuous process of updating and testing the plan, one that can only stop once your business ceases to exist. To simply document a plan and then stop is like saying “When we’re finished conducting business in a couple of months we’ll stop working to improve our business and everything will be fine” – it doesn’t make sense, nor will it work.

*A pandemic plan, or any other business interruption plan, must be viewed as a necessary process. Processes are always changing and adapting to meet customer demand and corporate objectives. A pandemic plan must do the same. Is your plan part of your required processes, or is it an afterthought? If it is an afterthought, outsource.*

Stay tuned for my final e-mail in the series “Crack the Code” for successful pandemic planning – content & structure.

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