

The Business Manager's QuickStart Guide to ISO 22301

The ISO 22301 standard can provide benefits for your business continuity planning, even if your organization chooses not to pursue certification.

"Certification is nice, but not required," says Mart Rovers of InterProm. "First, seek compliance. That way, you know that your business continuity management practices are in better shape." You can start to create a solid business continuity plan with just a few simple steps:



Check If You Already Have Continuity Plans

Find out if your organization already has business continuity plans. Search through your document management system and ask management or long-time employees. Organizations sometimes create and quickly forget about resources, or store responses locally in an informal system.

As Andrew Nichols of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center suggests, if your organization already implements other ISO standards, such as ISO 9001 or ISO 27000, you can leverage some of the common requirement elements for your 22301 plan.



Identify Missing Components

Conduct a gap analysis of existing policies and processes to see what business continuity resources you need. According to Mart Rovers, one way to conduct a self-assessment is to copy into a spreadsheet each phrase of the ISO 22301 standard that contains the word "shall." Then, determine gaps between your company and the standard. "Use the standard as your guide to establishing a coherent set of practices to address business continuity management for your organization," says Rovers. You can also use Smartsheet's ISO 22301 Self-Assessment Checklist and ISO 22301 Simplified Cheatsheet for your gap analysis.



Keep It Simple

Having binders full of perfectly formatted procedures won't help in an emergency. Create easy-to-follow guidelines and checklists and, more importantly, build "muscle memory" in your employees through training and drills. That way, in a panic, people understand what to do without having to be told.



Make Your Plan a Living Document

Ticking off items on an audit checklist doesn't mean you're prepared. Frequently read, revise, and practice your plan to keep it relevant and to train new staff.



Focus on Recovery Actions

According to business continuity consultant Alex Fullick, "Too often, continuity plans are built around a specific scenario." Don't obsess over whether the disruptive incident is a fire, a flood, or any number of other unforeseeable crises. Instead, focus on what actions can prevent or mitigate damage and what processes and infrastructure you need in order to continue business as usual, no matter the crisis.



Communicate Your Plan to Staff and Other Stakeholders

Even the most well-written plan is useless if the people who can benefit from it don't know about it. Inform everyone covered by the plan that it exists, including your supply chain and other outside stakeholders.