



# How the Cloud and Mobile Technology Can Help Organizations Develop a Stronger Business Continuity Strategy

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## How the Cloud and Mobile Technology Can Help Organizations Develop a Stronger Business Continuity Strategy

**Many companies, particularly small and midsize ones, aren't making business continuity and preservation of their communications networks enough of a priority. Natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time. Are you prepared?**

An efficient and reliable business continuity (BC) plan is critical for enterprises today. When an event interrupts business activity, the loss of access to systems and data can cost companies millions of dollars in lost revenue.

The potential harm from a lapse in business continuity goes well beyond direct financial losses, however. Companies can suffer immeasurable damage to their reputation and brand, and lose their customers' confidence and loyalty. These developments can have a significant long-term negative effect.

The loss of the communication infrastructure because of a disaster, power outage or some other business-interrupting event can be especially devastating for organizations. If managers and employees are not able to communicate with one another or with customers or business partners, the negative effects can be severe. Imagine key employees being out of touch for hours or days, and what impact that could have on others in the organization.

Cloud-based services can be ideal components of a business continuity strategy, providing a number of benefits, such as enabling flexibility and cost-efficient access to communications and data backup systems when a business interruption strikes.

In addition to the cloud, companies need to consider the significant role mobile technology can play in the business continuity plan. Employees can use devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops to work from home or other locations in the event that their regular work facilities are not available.

### **Why a Strong Business Continuity Plan Is Vital for Businesses**

In addition to the devastating financial, customer relations and brand reputation costs of business downtime, many organizations operate under government and industry regulations that require business continuity plans. For example:

- In health care, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act requires a data backup plan, disaster recovery plan and emergency mode operation plan.
- In government, the Federal Information Security Management Act requires electronic data to be available in a crisis, and the National Institute of Standards & Technology SP800-34 requires electronic data to be available during a crisis, as well as business continuity and disaster recovery plans.
- In financial services, the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council specifies that the board of directors is responsible for ensuring that a comprehensive business continuity plan is implemented at firms regulated by the federal government.

Organizations are relying more than ever on all types of information and on being able to access that information all the time. The increase in information resources has become even greater with the rising use of social media for marketing, collaboration and other applications, as well as with the growing use of mobile devices.

Meanwhile, businesses are under the constant threat of natural and man-made disasters that can



***During Hurricane Sandy, 71 percent of small businesses experienced power outages that likely led to business disruptions, according to The Hartford.***

shut down operations. They need to be prepared not only for events such as hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes, but also for the security breaches, system failures and human errors that can bring down systems or affect access to data.

As Hurricane Sandy so dramatically demonstrated in late October 2012, storms can have a tremendous impact on organizations as well as communities. The storm and the widespread power outages and flooding that it caused affected multiple utilities and their infrastructures in the Northeastern United States, leaving many businesses without electricity for weeks.

According to a survey of small business owners in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, released in March 2013 by insurer The Hartford, 71 percent of affected small businesses experienced power outages that likely led to temporary disruptions in business operations. About three-fourths of affected owners had to close their doors for an average of seven days. About half experienced loss of sales or revenue as a result of Sandy. The research showed that loss of connectivity had a big impact on small business owners, because it affected their ability to contact customers and keep their businesses open.

Many natural or man-made events could affect business operations. For example:

- Flooded main roads render a key data center unreachable for several days, affecting a company's ability to physically get to servers and storage systems.
- A regional power failure knocks out electricity in the main office and several branch offices, forcing thousands of employees to find alternative locations from which to work.
- A fire destroys a key regional sales facility, forcing a company to find an alternative site to carry out this function.
- Human error causes an internal communications system or database to be nonoperational for several hours, rendering these key resources unavailable to many business users.

### **Cloud's Role in Business Continuity and Systems Availability**

A comprehensive business continuity plan ensures that companies can continue operating in these and similar situations. Cloud-based services

should be a key component of the business continuity plan because they give organizations a way to efficiently maintain systems availability in the event of a disaster or outage.

**Better continuity.** Because cloud environments, particularly public clouds, are typically maintained by service providers and software vendors, the responsibility falls on those providers to ensure continuity. The risk of failure is so great for the cloud providers that they must do all they can to ensure that their infrastructure remains operational in the event of a disaster. Many of these providers operate geographically distributed data centers, as well as fully redundant and resilient systems, including power generation.

Indeed, business continuity provided via the cloud is generally much stronger than if it's provided only internally by a company, because cloud providers have invested huge amounts of money in their infrastructures in order to provide services to multiple customers. Their entire business is on the line.

**Cost efficiency.** Another reason the cloud is appealing for business continuity is the efficiency of the cloud model. Organizations can experience significant cost savings using cloud services for business continuity compared with building and regularly testing their own solutions. That's because the provider's cost to create the business continuity infrastructure is spread across thousands of clients. In addition, having specialized skills in-house often is not feasible.

**Ubiquity.** Organizations can use cloud services in multiple regions, so there is less likelihood of a business interruption in the event of a disaster in a particular area.

**Flexibility.** One of the challenges of developing a business continuity plan is that things change after the plan is created. The cloud is defined by flexibility, which gives organizations the opportunity to make adjustments to meet changing conditions. For example, capacity can be increased or decreased based on shifts in demand.

Furthermore, companies that have not yet fully embraced the cloud model can leverage cloud services as a backup for premises-based equipment. That way, if something happens to on-premises equipment, they can fail over to a cloud-based solution.

**Virtualization.** One of the most important technologies supporting the cloud is server virtualization, which also plays a central role in the creation of private clouds that can serve as key parts of a business continuity strategy.

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**The cloud is ideal for delivering the redundancy and resilience that businesses need in the face of any sort of outage.**

Virtualization software provides an easy way to replicate applications to a secondary site in the event of a failure at the main site.

Companies can leverage virtualization to set up their recovery and migration plans in the event of an outage. Virtualized environments such as data centers are more agile and easier to migrate than physical server environments. The technology can simplify the planning and implementation of business continuity in a private cloud setting.

Research shows that organizations benefit from the use of cloud services for business continuity. According to industry research conducted by UBM Tech and Mitel, improved business continuity/disaster recovery was cited as one of the top benefits organizations have gained from using cloud computing services.

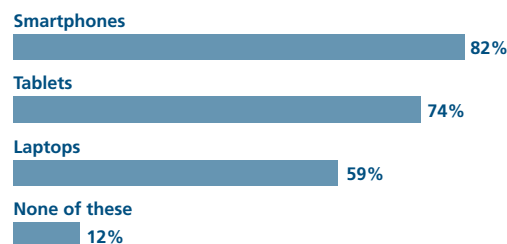
The UBM Tech/Mitel report also shows that many companies cite improved business continuity as a benefit of running unified communications (UC) in the cloud, when compared with an on-premises UC solution.

### Mobile Technology's Role in Business Continuity

Along with the cloud, mobile technology can bolster an organization's business continuity capabilities. The proliferation of mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones in the workforce provides more flexibility for workforce recovery options.

When an organization's users have mobile devices to access data and stay connected, the physical scope of the organization can expand to nearly any place where there is Internet access. It

*Which of the following employee-owned devices do you allow your employees or would consider allowing your employees to use at work, sometimes referred to as "BYOD" or "bring your own device"?*



*Data: UBM Tech survey of 331 business technology professionals with a working knowledge of Unified Communications or cloud computing, May 2013*

creates an environment where if any one location ever becomes unavailable — whether it's a single building, campus or even a city — users might still be able to gain access to what they need.

Although the bring-your-own-device trend has caused hand-wringing in some companies, the fact that workers constantly have a device that they are comfortable using can come in handy when a business interruption strikes. Using their own tablet or smartphone, employees can work from home, a library, coffee shop or another location if their main office is not available for any reason. All calls can be routed to a mobile device, and users can appear to those they are calling as if they are in the office. A user's phone number is associated with the person, not a location.

Mobile devices — and particularly those with access to unified communications capabilities — enable employees to communicate and collaborate with their managers and colleagues during and following a disaster or other event that interrupts business operations.

Mobile users can leverage UC capabilities such as presence and unified messaging to stay in touch with co-workers, customers and business partners. Workers can continue to gain access to critical systems and data from their mobile devices, so they can keep working even during a recovery period.

For example, sales representatives could continue to access cloud-based customer relationship management systems to find new customers or interact with existing clients. Engineers or technicians in the field could access and exchange documents with co-workers or business partners. Executives could access cloud-based business intelligence dashboards using their tablet devices from home or other locations.

The use of mobile devices in the workplace is becoming increasingly common. According to the UBM Tech/Mitel research, more than 80 percent of the organizations surveyed allow their employees to use smartphones for work, or would consider allowing them to use smartphones. About three-quarters of the respondents say their organizations allow or would consider allowing the use of tablets for work purposes.

### Neglect of Business Continuity Strategy Is Too Great a Risk

Business continuity is something many companies, particularly small and midsize businesses, might not think of as critical. They might put in place resources to back up data and have a vague sense of what to do if anything happens to interrupt the business.

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But they don't make it a priority to create and test a comprehensive business continuity strategy.

That's a risky proposition. Given the potential for lost revenue, the inability to deliver on service level agreements, damage to the brand, decreased customer services and other potential fallout from a business disruption, the downside of not being prepared is daunting.

Through use of the cloud and mobile technology, companies can deploy a business continuity capability that reduces their risk and at the same time keeps costs down. State-of-the-art business continuity calls for having solutions in place that will enable businesses to continue operating and providing access to critical functions such as communications, even when an unforeseen event takes down one or more of its facilities for a length of time. The cloud, with its reliable,

ubiquitous nature, is ideal for delivering that kind of redundancy and resiliency.

Business continuity also calls for the ability to keep employees connected and able to work when events render their usual working locations unavailable. Mobile technology provides that capability, enabling managers and employees to work from home or elsewhere if offices are unavailable.

With ongoing potential threats of business interruption, business continuity must become a high priority for companies, and cloud services and mobile technology should play key roles in the business continuity strategy.

Companies such as Mitel, with its MiCloud solution, can help organizations make the case for tapping into the cloud as a valuable business continuity resource. To learn more about MiCloud, visit [www.mitel.com](http://www.mitel.com). ■

## ABOUT MITEL

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