

Planning for a Pandemic

*Oxford Libero Consulting LP – Business Improvement Briefing
Volume 1, Issue 1*

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Pandemic Planning

Please accept this briefing and the attached "*Influenza Pandemic Planning Business Continuity Guide*" prepared by our consultant M. Monica Robinson ABCP, Senior Consultant, Business Continuity and Relationship Management, with our compliments.

While the H1N1 has had a minor impact on Canadians to date this is a time to consider your preparedness for a pandemic event. We have been lucky that this event occurred near the end of the flu season and incidents will likely begin to reduce over the next few weeks. As Monica points out in her article and the attached guide, the real concern should be for the next adaptation of the virus as it continues to evolve. Early next flu season will likely identify the potential impacts of this new strain of flu virus.

This warning gives us the opportunity to properly plan for the next incident of a potential pandemic. Most authorities don't concern themselves with whether this will happen but rather when it will happen. As part of a comprehensive business continuity plan and crisis management plan, organizations should be planning for specific potential risks to your organization. Included in this list should be pandemic planning.

Pandemic plans should be a subset of a comprehensive business continuity plan (BCP). It works best in concert with a BCP and the fully developed communications strategy inherent in a crisis management plan. It also works best when it is developed with the involvement of representatives of all areas of your organization. A pandemic or business continuity plan is only a document until it forms part of the fabric of your organization.

Oxford Libero Consulting LP provides business continuity services as part of our comprehensive organizational design practice. If we can provide assistance in adapting the attached plan for your organization or can provide assistance in developing or improving your business continuity plan and/or crisis management plan, please let us know.

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How do you operate an Organization without Resources?

By M. Monica Robinson ABCP, Senior Consultant, Business Continuity and Relationship Management

As the current swine flu threatens to become the next pandemic, the biggest questions are whether its transmission from human to human will be sustained, and, if so, how virulent it might become. But even if this virus were to peter out soon, there is a strong possibility it would only go underground, quietly continuing to infect some people while becoming better adapted to humans, and then explode once more around the world. Perhaps it will mutate to a more deadly strain, the second or third time around.

Are you prepared?

What happens next is chiefly up to the virus. But it is up to us to create plans to mitigate the risks to our organizations.

What do you do if 10% of your organization was gone today? 20%? For two weeks? How about 30% for 2-3 months?

The level of staff absence from work during a pandemic will depend significantly on the nature of the pandemic virus. Organizations should ensure that their business continuity plans have the flexibility to accommodate several ranges, for significant lengths of time.

During a pandemic, staff will be absent from work if:

- A. They are ill with flu. Numbers in this category will depend on the clinical attack rate. If the attack rate is 25%, a quarter of staff in total will be sick, and will be absent from the office for a period of time, over the whole course of the pandemic. If a pandemic occurs over one wave, this level of cumulative absence could be experienced by employers over a period of 3-4 months. But there may be more than one wave, with absence of work being spread across those waves;
- B. They need to care for children or other family members who are ill with flu;
- C. They need to care for (well) children because of the closure of schools and childcare settings; and
- D. They have non-flu medical problems.

As a rough working guide, organizations employing large numbers of people, with flexibility of staff redeployment, should ensure that their plans are capable of handling staff absence rates of up to 15-20% (in addition to the usual absenteeism levels). Small businesses, or larger organizations, with small critical teams, should plan for level of absence rising to 30-35% at peak, perhaps higher for very small businesses with only a handful of employees.



Pandemic Planning

In carrying out business continuity planning, organizations will wish to consider how best to reduce the impact of a pandemic by:

- ◇ Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that employees who are ill, or think they may be ill during a pandemic are positively encouraged not to come to work;
- ◇ Ensuring that employees are made aware of the advice on how to reduce the risk of infection during a pandemic;
- ◇ Ensuring that adequate hygiene (i.e. hand washing) facilities are routinely available;
- ◇ Put in place measures to maintain core business activities for several weeks at high levels of absenteeism, including options for remote working ;
- ◇ Identify those essential functions and individuals whose absence would place business continuity at particular risk;
- ◇ Identify which services could be curtailed or closed down during all or the most intense period of the pandemic;
- ◇ Ensure that health and safety responsibilities to employees continue to be fully discharged;
- ◇ Identify inter-dependencies between organizations and ensure they are resilient, by ensuring that supplier organizations delivering services under contract have appropriate arrangements in place to sustain their service provision; and
- ◇ Factor into your planning that medical counter-measure will not solve business continuity requirements because antiviral drugs for treatment will only lessen the severity of the illness. They will neither cure it, nor significantly reduce absenteeism.

Who is Oxford Libero Consulting LP?

The vision of the Oxford Libero Coalition is: **“To be sought out to solve the most difficult problems in the World”**.

Oxford Libero is a consultancy founded in Oxford, UK by a number of graduates of the University of Oxford. Our primary focus has been in the developing world with specific focuses on child poverty, agriculture, governance and capacity building. We have teams in Oxford, London, New York, Johannesburg and Regina.

The focus of the Regina operation is in complete organizational design. We have skills in both business and technical architecture development that allow for high quality service delivery that is both adaptable and sustainable.

Mr. Michael Dumelie, Partner, has experience in the redesign of over three dozen organizations. He has assembled a team of professionals with experience in enterprise architecture, quality program development, project management and project management office development, business continuity, business analysis and business process management. In addition, we have unique skills in information management and decision system design.



Pandemic Planning

We would be pleased to discuss how we might be able to assist in meeting your organizational needs.

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