

A REGROUP WHITE PAPER

Communications for Operational Resilience

Your guide to business continuity, avoiding disruptions and using communication to keep your business strong.



Regroup Mass Notification

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Introduction

Achieving consistent successes in business requires exacting attention to a number of important details. Whether a business seeks loyal customers in consumers or long-term relationships with client companies and corporate partners, attaining resilience serves to keep those affiliations strong and enduring.

Resilience is often defined as the ability to readily adjust and recover in the event of adversity. However, in business, we also think of resilience as harnessing a more proactive approach to preparedness, thereby mitigating risk factors that can hobble production and operations. Just as continuity of operations is critical to business success, so is overall resilience.

Every enterprise model has its own set of concerns in relation to resilience. For manufacturing, keeping production lines running smoothly is integral. For logistics, meeting deadlines is typically the focus. And, for financial institutions, securing operations from malicious cyber attacks is a key continuity concern.

And, while each enterprise model has different concerns and different approaches to business continuity, there are some actionable measures that remain constant.

In this paper, we will take a closer look at how an intelligent communications plan — and the ability to reach large numbers of people quickly — can help solidify business continuity, preparedness and resilience.



Common Challenges in Operations

Operational resilience is defined (by Gartner Glossary) as initiatives that expand business continuity management programs to focus on the impacts, connected risk appetite and tolerance levels for disruption of product or service delivery to internal and external stakeholders.

Different industries face different challenges in their day-to-day operations. While manufacturers and logistics companies can be negatively impacted by supply chain disruptions and increased prices in raw materials, tech and finance sectors may be more concerned about network infrastructure and security.

However, there are also common challenges, faced by all enterprises, that can threaten operational resilience.

Severe weather, natural disasters, threats to property, civil unrest, materials shortages and cyber attacks can mean a loss of business continuity and lead to the loss of customers and profits. No industry is immune to the disruptions these events can bring about. Therefore, it is crucial to have the proper planning and communications in place to minimize their impact.

This means taking stock in physical assets, people assets, safeguards and potential vulnerabilities. It also requires planning and annual review of business continuity plans.

Potential Business Disruptions by Industry

MANUFACTURING
Supply chain failures

FINANCE
Cyber attacks

LOGISTICS
Fleet interruptions

RETAILERS
Product shortages

MISCELLANEOUS
Emergencies and crisis events





A Plan for Preparedness

Putting a business continuity plan into practice is a proactive approach to minimizing operational disruptions and loss of revenue. Since it is impossible to identify every potential emergency or critical event, preparedness planning starts with broad considerations. Industry-specific threats can then be addressed as the planning process progresses.

The following guidelines can help businesses create a continuity plan for operations.

Establish the Team

Identify the managers, individuals and stakeholders who will be responsible for carrying out action plans when emergencies and other disruptions occur. From these, it is smart to form a preparedness committee who can coordinate efforts for emergency response. One person should lead the process, but input from all areas of operations should be considered throughout the planning process.

Identify Necessary Functions

If your business is disrupted, what specific functions — if interrupted — could lead to a loss of revenue? Which functions must be performed to satisfy regulatory requirements? It's important to identify these functions and how they can be affected by critical events. Your business will need to establish how essential functions will be carried out in specific emergencies, such as natural disasters or severe weather.

Identify Vulnerabilities

In virtually every facility, vulnerabilities can create potential issues during emergencies and routine operations. Additionally, organizations with dispersed or hybrid workforces can be particularly vulnerable if staff members are difficult to contact or traveling. From lack of first aid to poorly marked exits and from insufficient computer virus protection to outdated equipment, vulnerabilities need to be identified and action plans put into place to address these weaknesses.

Establish a Communication Plan

When planning emergency preparedness for operational resilience, you will need to identify the responsible parties as well as how teams are contacted. Since coordination is vital for best outcomes during critical events, having a solid communication plan (and the technology to support it) is imperative for business continuity.

Inventory Assets

Having an up-to-date inventory of assets can make emergency recovery faster and simpler. Because insurance response may be delayed following a disaster, an updated inventory of assets and property can help speed the reimbursement process. If you're not already conducting an annual inventory of corporate assets, your operational resilience is at greater risk.

Test Your Plan

Conducting regular drills can be beneficial for establishing your business continuity plans. Announced and unannounced drills will help you identify areas of concern, employee readiness and flaws in your emergency response. By conducting drills and testing your response plan, you will be better able to revise as needed and review areas of weaknesses for each critical business function.



Communications for Crisis

A streamlined communications strategy is key to bolstering your business' operational resilience. When faced with the unexpected, the flow of information is vital to response and recovery. In business continuity, communication is the cornerstone of a successful preparedness plan.

When establishing a communications strategy for business continuity, consider using an all-hazards approach. This is a more comprehensive approach to preparedness and response and can make your operational resilience planning more flexible. Using communication or alert templates can make this task easier when moments count.

In communicating during business disruptions or emergencies, it is important to clearly identify audience groups. Those who will be required to take action will need clear and concise direction from leadership. This may include employees, vendors and other stakeholders. Trickle-down communication can only be effective when the right individuals are provided accurate information.

Being prepared, through your communication plan, for best- and worst-case scenarios can help save valuable time and ensure optimal operational resilience. This requires post-crisis communication planning and identifying vulnerabilities.

As with preparedness planning, communication planning can be more effectively accomplished by following a strategy.

- 1 Identify team members, roles and responsibilities
- 2 Coordinate with local officials, emergency services and police
- 3 Conduct announced and unannounced drills
- 4 Simulate atypical situations that could arise during a crisis
- 5 Test and improve emergency warning procedures and systems
- 6 Conduct post-drill review and ask for feedback

Improving Communication for Operational Resilience

- ✓ Use multiple channels of communication
- ✓ Identify audience and stakeholders
- ✓ Use communication templates for clarity
- ✓ Use an all-hazards approach during crises
- ✓ Conduct communications drills
- ✓ Include post-crisis communication plan



The Right Communication Tools

Because disruptions to routine business can directly affect the bottom line, it's important that companies have the right communication tools everyday and before, during and after a critical event. And, as businesses evolve over time, tools that are scalable and flexible are essential.

Mass notification - a technology utilized by many organizations for routine business - has its genesis in emergency alerting. Because of its multi-channel architecture, mass notification makes it possible to reach large numbers of people, on their preferred devices, no matter where they are.

Because teams have become more dispersed or hybrid, relying on email alone has become an insufficient means of communicating. Adding a mass notification platform to the mix can better manage business-critical communications day to day and during disruptions.

Not all mass notification platforms are alike. For a system to provide the best tools for emergency alerting needs, one must consider the platform's features and capabilities. Before committing to any mass notification provider, make certain it provides the following:

What Makes Mass Notification Different

- ✔ Multi-channel delivery
- ✔ Cloud-based and encrypted
- ✔ Unaffected by power outages
- ✔ Reaches people anywhere
- ✔ Enables two-way communication



Easy to use interface

During times of emergency, sending and receiving important notifications must be simple and quick.

Cloud-Based Fail-Safe Features

Your platform should operate reliably even during power outages or cellular tower disruptions.

Automated Alerts

Mass notification systems that integrate with the National Weather Service, NOAA and IPAWS can alert automatically during severe weather events.

Two-Way Communications

The right solution allows two-way communications for advising others and getting updates from affected areas.

Notification Templates

Predefined templates can help save time during emergencies and serve to ensure messages are accurate.

Mobile Apps

The right solution should include a companion mobile app that allows people to receive alerts wherever they are located.

Desktop Notifications

Desktop notifications can be pushed out, instantly, to team members who are on-site or working remotely.

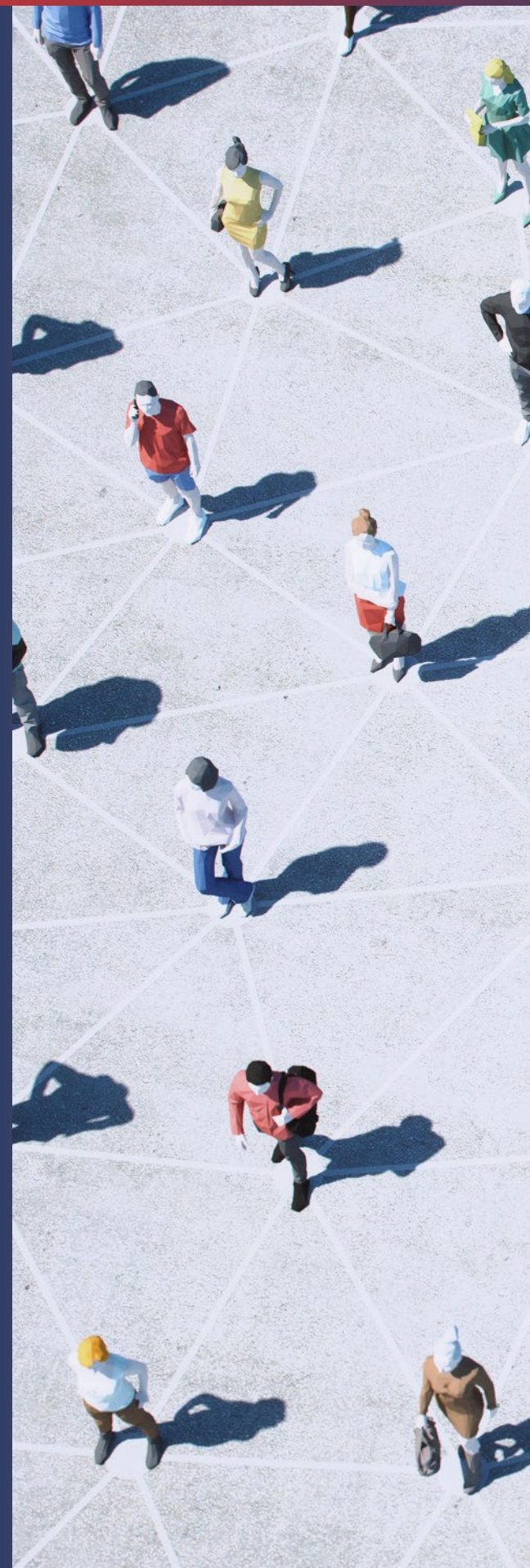
Geo-Targeting Functionality

A mass notification system that allows geo-specific alerts can help you target only those in an affected area.

Continuity Checklist

The following checklist can help your organization strengthen operational resilience during routine business and emergency situations.

- ☐ Identify an emergency coordinator and/or team with defined roles and responsibilities for preparedness and response planning. The planning process should include input from labor representatives.
- ☐ Identify essential employees and other critical inputs (e.g. raw materials, suppliers, sub-contractor services/ products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations by location and function during an emergency .
- ☐ Train and prepare ancillary workforce (e.g. contractors, employees in other job titles/descriptions, retirees).
- ☐ Develop and plan for scenarios likely to result in an increase or decrease in demand for your products and/or services during an emergency (e.g. effect of restriction on mass gatherings, need for hygiene supplies, disruptions to telecommunications or transport infrastructure).
- ☐ Determine potential impact of an emergency on company business financials using multiple possible scenarios that affect different product lines and/or production sites.
- ☐ Establish an emergency communications plan and revise periodically. This plan includes identification of key contacts (with back-ups), chain of communications (including suppliers and customers), and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.
- ☐ Implement an exercise/drill to test your plan, and revise periodically.



Final Thoughts

Disruptions to regular business can happen without warning. In order to stay resilient, organizations require a business continuity plan, improved mechanisms for communication and a willingness to implement strategies that work.

Building an effective operational resilience plan demands critical attention to vulnerabilities, trends and potential threats. It also requires a comprehensive communication protocol that keeps key players informed and people safe and productive.

Using a mass notification system to complement your continuity of operations offers a variety of real-world benefits. Mass notification helps close communication gaps by delivering to multiple channels even when power is out or cellular services are hobbled. And, with integrations to emergency alerting agencies, mass notification does far more to protect lives and assets than traditional communication methods alone.

About Regroup Mass Notification

Since 2006, Regroup Mass Notification has provided a cloud-based, multi-channel mass notification platform for emergency and routine applications.

Serving manufacturing, logistics, the educational community, enterprise, finance and government, Regroup's continual pursuit of excellence has made it the most trusted name in mass notification and a leading-edge provider of smart communications for clients throughout North America.

We provide customized solutions for every organization we serve and offer many options including desktop notifications, open API, threat intelligence and more.

Learn More

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Schedule A Demo

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