

## Just when you thought it was safe...

By [Fred W. Holzager](#)

As we witnessed the horrors of September 11, 2001 unfolding on the news, a testimony was being played out to those who were enshrined at Ground Zero and The Pentagon—contingency plans were being implemented to allow for The City, Washington and Our Nation, as a whole, to continue living with the least disruption possible. We experienced a disaster on a scale which was unfathomable to most, yet to some, the unimaginable had been anticipated and addressed. ***Who could have thought...! ?***

Let's scale this down for a minute. You are working on a spreadsheet in the office or with your finances at home on the computer. Do you have a backup of your files? How would you recover and access your documents if you had a flood or a fire? ***What if...?***

Remember back to the time when you were in school and you had monthly fire drills. Did you ever have to evacuate for a *true* emergency? Hopefully, your answer is "No," but what might have happened if you didn't drill and a fire did occur? What then?

This is the foundation for disaster recovery or contingency planning. Large companies have entire departments dedicated to focus on this aspect of business. Now, ask yourself, "What would I do if I had respond to such a catastrophe?" or "What would I do if my computer were affected by a power strike?" How long were you planning to wait before attending to this matter?

Consider the following factors in your answer:

<b>Communications</b>	<i>The channels through which you conduct business:</i> Telephone, Fax, E-mail, Website, Credit/Order Processing and other advertised contact points (e.g., One WTC, 83 <sup>rd</sup> floor). How will you notify your correspondents of a new address? Will you have their address handy?
<b>Data</b>	<i>The information that you have stored on your computer.</i> This represents files, images, recordings, documents, records & databases that you have created and are <i>NOT</i> commercially available. Do you have reliable backup and/or off-site storage? Don't forget your <i>paper</i> filing cabinets!
<b>Equipment</b>	<i>The devices you use in your daily operation of the business.</i> This represents phones, faxes, and the machinery needed to create your products. Will the equipment need to be repaired or replaced? Do you have any contingency arrangements with your vendors or alliances?
<b>Hardware</b>	<i>The computer equipment that you use to perform many aspects of your business.</i> This represents the PC, monitor, printer, scanner and servers (e.g., e-mail or file server). Do you have any functional redundancy?
<b>Location</b>	<i>The building or neighborhood where you have established your business.</i> This represents the building or office where you work. Will relocation affect how many people will fit in a new or temporary office? Will a move trigger high staff turnover? Is there a turn-key office space facility nearby? Could you co-locate with another business?

<b>Personnel</b>	<i>The people who perform the work in the company.</i> This represents all employees from the President and key officers through to the least critical staff member. Can you keep all employees productive immediately or must you take interim measures to maintain the company's financial stability? Do you have all production roles defined?
<b>Recovery Time</b>	<i>Now that "it" happened, how long it will take you to restore the company to minimal/functional, stable and profitable levels?</i> Do you need to "rebuild" or "fix" the foundation of the business? Did you have arrangements at an off-site or shared site to use temporarily?
<b>Relationships</b>	When you worked in the "old location," you had a special arrangement with vendors, neighbors, clients et al. <i>How long will it take to reestablish those bonds, if they still exist?</i> Will a new location introduce more alliances or competition?
<b>Resources / Utilities</b>	<i>If you relocate, are the same amenities available to your operation?</i> Do you need to invest additional capital to modify your new place? Is funding available? Is your credit good? Can you still store your servers in a large air conditioned space? Can you get "clean" electricity?
<b>Software</b>	<i>The applications that you use to operate your business.</i> This represents the commercially available software <i>and</i> licenses, the custom-built software, and the downloaded & configured utilities from the Internet. Did you track your licenses and maintain a current inventory?

Keep in mind that there are different degrees of inconvenience. This article is intended to get you thinking about what you might do if "IT" happened to you. Everybody has perfect 20/20 hindsight, but the prize goes to those who conceive of the possibilities and address them in a realistic fashion. If you think ahead, you won't be the one standing when the music stops.

When it comes to preparing for potential disaster, give Holzsager Technology Services a call. We can help you identify weaknesses and formulate a plan that will address these issues and more. Let us show you how to change your mode from "Disaster Recovery" to "Business Continuance". By preparing your establishment for the possibilities, you may be able to mitigate the affect of an untimely event and deal with it in a more controlled and less stressful manner.

If you have a question or would like to have a concept explained, please feel free to send an email to [support@tech4now.com](mailto:support@tech4now.com). If you feel you have an urgent issue that needs immediate attention, you may indicate that in your email or call us at (201) 797-5050 for service. Holzsager Technology Services provides FREE technical articles on its website — <http://www.tech4now.com> under News & Articles.

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*This article is dedicated to the memory of those who perished on September 11, 2001 and to those who so unselfishly gave of themselves in the rescue effort that followed.*

*God Bless America.*

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