

Water Direct's approach to business continuity

ISO 23001 Case Study

When Water Direct's head office lost power during a major storm, it maintained its service levels thanks to a robust business continuity management system.

When the UK escaped the worst of a great storm predicted in late October 2013, people may have thought that it was business as usual, but this was far from the truth for everyone.

In parts of Colchester and surrounding villages, homes and businesses faced misery. Blocked roads meant employees faced a difficult journey into work, local schools were closed and, to compound the problem, power supplies were out. It is a picture that has become too familiar over the last few years with unpredictable weather becoming increasingly a feature of British life.

One Colchester-based business, WaterDirect, was just one of the affected organisations facing disruption. Along with its neighbours in the business park, power and telecommunications were down and two of its employees were unable to travel into work.

"We immediately invoked our business management plan," explained Managing Director, Keith Silcock. "This plan stipulates we should meet at our Operations Manager's house, but he was on annual leave. We therefore moved to Plan C and met at a local hotel which had both power and internet facilities.

Critical staff were contacted and asked to meet at the hotel where we were able to set up a temporary base until power was back."

Telecoms were quickly restored with the help of its provider who was able to transfer incoming calls to a mobile number on a cascade system. This meant all calls were answered by staff who had previously been contacted.

"Our customers remained unaware of our situation. The calls were answered immediately and it really was business as usual, just from a different location," comments Keith.

"Since the incident, we have had clients visiting to look over our business continuity plans and when we talk them through the incident, and the aftermath, it gives them more confidence in using us as a supplier."

Implementing the BCMS

The nature of Water Direct's business, as a supplier of emergency water to many of the UK's utility companies, is based on helping people out in a disaster. Therefore, it felt appropriate for Water Direct to ensure its own house was in order.



The company first looked at developing a management system to align with BS 25999, the predecessor to ISO 22301. In late 2011, with the help of specialist business continuity consultancy, award winning PlanB Consulting, work began on implementing the Business Continuity Management System.

When Water Direct was successful in a bid to supply the Olympics, it needed to put its plans on hold for six months and started again in late 2012, ensuring certification to ISO 22301 was a business priority.

LRQA assessor, Lyn Browne advised changes were needed to build greater resilience into its IT systems. Keith picks up the point. "Lyn had said at the initial assessment that IT was our biggest risk.



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As a result of her comments, we now have internet-based databases and our most critical files, that we need access to on a daily basis, are held in two different cloud systems, updated instantly as we edit and accessible from any location.

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Managing Director, Water Direct

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Water Direct achieved certification in April 2013.

“The process of certification made us look again at the resilience of our IT systems which, when disaster struck in October 2013, meant we were able to maintain the service levels our clients have come to expect. We are proud to say that despite the situation, we answered all calls and fulfilled all orders.”

Within just a few hours Water Direct was fully functioning, having relocated to a nearby hotel, with remote access to all critical data.

The organisation’s resilience did not come about as a matter of chance but because of many months of hard work in implementing a robust business continuity management system certified to the international standard, ISO 22301.

Keith explains the chain of events that led to him bringing the Business Continuity Plan into play. “We lost power overnight at home which led me to check the situation at Head Office first thing.

“The office houses our main computer server and prior to certification it was our only means of accessing data. However, because of the changes to our IT system brought about as a direct result of comments from our LRQA assessor during our assessment, we were able to relocate and gain access to all critical data.

Keith concludes, “What could have caused significant disruption, turned out to be more a case of inconvenience,” he concluded.

How can LRQA help?

LRQA recognises that every organisation and its business continuity management systems are unique. At LRQA, we take time to understand the needs and unique circumstances of our clients and their businesses, to act with judgement, sensitivity and care.

Training

We provide practical ISO 22301 training courses, led by trained and qualified tutors. Many of our courses are endorsed by relevant professional bodies and based on our experience of assessing management systems. We offer face-to-face, in-house and customised training.





Gap analysis

This assessor-delivered activity enables you to focus on critical, high risk or weak areas of your BCMS prior to your formal assessment visit.

Whether you are in the early stages of implementing your BCMS or are looking for a 'dry run', the scope can be decided by you.

Assessment and certification

We specialise in management systems compliance, all underpinned with expert advice designed to meet the needs of your industry. We explore every problem thoroughly with exact, analytical precision. We leave no stone unturned and no questions unanswered, to draw accurate conclusions.

Impartiality

We maintain our impartiality by proactively managing conflicts of interest across all LRQA businesses including those which may exist between consultancy and third-party certification services.

Why choose LRQA?

We're here to help negotiate a rapidly changing world, by working with you to manage and mitigate the risks you face. From compliance to data-driven supply chain transformation, it's our job to help you shape the future, rather than letting it shape you. We do this by delivering:

Strategic vision

Our technical know-how, sector expertise and innovative, forward-thinking approach will help you meet the challenges of today – and become a safer, more secure, and sustainable organisation tomorrow.

Technical expertise

Our people are sector experts. They bring with them a clear understanding of your specific challenges, standards and requirements – then deploy deep knowledge of certification, brand assurance, food safety, cybersecurity, inspection and training to help you meet them.

Global capability

Operating in more than 120 countries, recognised by over 30 accreditation bodies worldwide, and covering almost every sector, we can help you manage risk, drive improvement and build credibility with stakeholders around the globe.

Effective partnership

Every business is unique. That's why our experts work with you, to fully understand your needs and goals, and work out how we can best support them.

Fresh perspective

We have led the way in shaping our industry and continue to take every opportunity to collaborate with clients and pioneer new ideas, services and innovation.

Get in touch

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