Guide

Intranet for Business Continuity.

How to ensure business resilience and sustainability with a cloud-based intranet

Over the past 20 years, major global events from 9/11 to the Great Recession to Brexit, and now the COVID-19 pandemic, have had a devastating effect on business activity worldwide. During such trying economic times, it's imperative for companies to have a plan that ensures business continuity. Below you'll find a guide on how to steer your company through any crisis to ensure resiliency and fast recovery.

What is a business continuity plan?

A business continuity plan is a set of procedures and instructions a company will enact during times of crisis in order to remain operational. **Typical reasons a company would execute their business continuity plan include:**

◆ Dramatic global market downturns driven by significant events ranging from terrorist acts to major economic policy changes.
◆ Civil unrest such as protests that affect a business' day-to-day operations.
◆ Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornados or wildfires that damage infrastructure or displace workers.
◆ Security threats such as ransomware that compromise business critical data.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of small businesses never reopen after a large-scale crisis. Therefore, having a plan in place during emergencies could literally save your business.

What if my business doesn't have a business continuity plan?

If you don't have a business continuity plan, establish one as soon as possible so you can adapt to the next crisis. Pandemic situations like COVID-19 are slightly different from common disasters in that physical infrastructure has remained intact. However, the workforce displacement caused by the virus has been unprecedented. This has resulted in a unique set of circumstances, which has left many businesses unprepared, even those firms that had business continuity plans. The key is to preempt such events by having a sound business continuity plan in place.

Maintaining business continuity using cloud technology.

Here are a few recommendations to help you navigate any current and future crises.

1 Embrace a digital workplace to maximize productivity & engagement

Work-from-home policies are going to be important for the foreseeable future. That's why it's so important to cultivate a "business as usual" approach during the crisis by ensuring all of your employees can be productive and fully engaged when working from home.

How can leaders accelerate remote productivity and engagement?

One of the most effective ways to keep engagement high for remote workers is to **invest in high-quality digital workplace tools.** These include everything from office cloud suites such as G Suite and Microsoft Office 365 to best-in-breed technologies such as Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams.

But growing your stack of applications can also create challenges. Asking employees to manage a number of applications can create fatigue. The answer to this problem is to invest in an intranet that can serve as the backbone of all of these applications, workflows and communications. An intranet also provides customization options to reflect your brand. This can be especially important in maintaining your company's culture, tone and voice while employees are working remotely.

2 Take advantage of personal devices to communicate with employees

Personal devices combined with cloud technologies can help minimize disruption to operations by keeping employees connected and engaged regardless of where they're working. As such, companies should create or modify policies to allow employees to leverage their own laptops, mobile phones and tablets to fulfill their daily duties. Any company without such a policy should reconsider as it can not only increase productivity, but instill trust between management and employees.

The advent of cloud technologies mentioned in the previous section — G Suite, Microsoft Office 365, Slack, Zoom, etc. — have given employees the freedom to work on their own terms. Thanks to cloud solutions, there's no need to set up or maintain company networks, or set up VPN for remote work. Since they're hosted on external servers with access to many resources, cloud solutions should keep running even if your operations are disrupted.

Allowing employees to use their own devices will require modification in security policies. Luckily, remote work isn't a new concept, and there are **best practices available that your company can quickly embrace to get up and running:**

- Use corporate services for email, messaging, and all other work.
- Enable a SSO (single-sign-on) protocol so employees can access all their tools at once.
- If employees don't have adequate personal devices, set up a loan system from the office.

3 Provide user-friendly cloud solutions that are easy to deploy

Your company will have some tech-savvy employees that will embrace new work-at-home policies and catch on quickly. Others, however, may not be as familiar with more modern applications. Even tech-minded workers are probably missing out on key information that would make them more productive. As such, ensure you provision user-friendly solutions and applications that employees can deploy out of the box.

When you deploy a social intranet, the bonus on training shouldn't be put squarely on your shoulders. Look for a **solution that offers comprehensive, easy-to-follow training materials that can get employees up to speed quickly and effectively.**

4 Communicate with employees

Open communication is the key to a productive workplace. As such, outline guidelines and best practices that employees can follow.

What types of communications are important to convey across an organization?

New or modified business objectives. As we've seen, ensuring business continuity during this crisis will almost undoubtedly entail a reallocation of the company's resources. Don't leave your employees in the dark, as uncertainty often results in higher stress levels.

Changing expectations. Organizational change leads to different expectations for many employees. Perhaps workloads will shift, hours will change or people will need to

assume different roles. Ensure these new expectations are presented to them in a clear, concise fashion.

New company policies. Send targeted communications to employees about any significant changes in company policy or safety guidelines. This is a good practice in general, and especially critical during a crisis.

How can I leverage technology to streamline communications?

Adopting a social intranet can help management and employees share information easily. It provides detailed options for communication, scheduling and project management while incorporating high-engagement social features like activity feeds and profiles. With these tools, users feel like they're using a social platform rather than a corporate intranet, which promotes a more cohesive, genuine company culture fostered around communication.

Intranets come in all shapes and sizes. At its core, an **intranet should enable them to create the following basic features:**

◆ Company Homepage to Communicate Globally - it's a way to display everything from urgent news to key contacts across the whole organization.
◆ Dedicated News Center - offers more specific and targeted news to keep employees informed.
◆ Virtual Town Hall - an engaging way to gather employees to communicate critical information.

Even just starting out with a basic offering that includes these three functions will drive improved communication across your company.

Consider building a specific space for FAQs so employees can get the answers they need in the moment. You can also plan ahead and create a remote work community for long-term reference, so that employees can capitalize on shared experiences and best practices.

5 Collaborate more effectively

Collaboration is as important as effective communication. Whether working from home or in the office, collaboration tools provide an easy way to get teams and individuals working on projects and documents together. It streamlines edits, updates to docs and helps ensure version control.

The key to a good intranet is the catalog of business applications it integrates with. These should include:

- Cloud collaboration suites (Office 365 and G Suite, etc.)
- Project management software. Employees need to be able to update and track progress on their projects.
- Messaging applications. This could mean integration with traditional email clients or other modern company messaging platforms such as Slack and Microsoft Teams.

Popular features to look for in an intranet include:

- Employee dashboards that simplify employees' access to their multiple daily apps in one easy-to-use interface.
- Employee directories that inform and connect your entire organization. Company directories are a central place for employees to find expertise and navigate the company structure.
- Team communities with their own team drive and calendar. This allows teams to create their own collaboration space to easily capture and share knowledge across locations.
- Project communities that can be integrated with project management software.

Make sure to craft a detailed business continuity plan as soon as possible, and invest in the resources to keep it updated. You'll want to take a yearly audit of your plan, make adjustments to areas that need them, and stay vigilant about potential blind spots.

By following these tips, your company will be set up to maintain continuity throughout this crisis. Furthermore, you'll have the experience and mindset necessary to weather future emergency situations as well. You never know what is going to happen, but with a solid continuity plan, you can mitigate the consequences of unforeseen events.
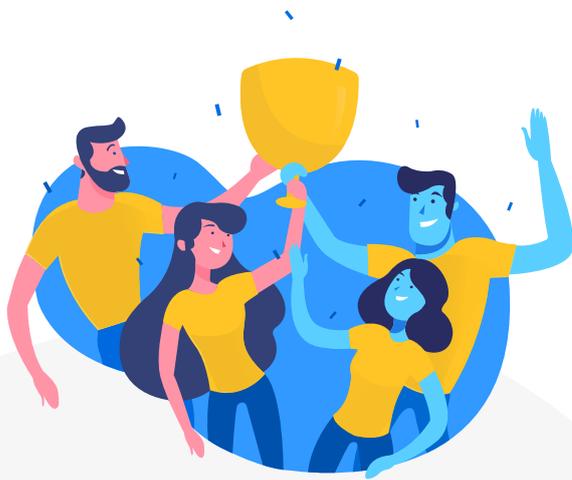
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LumApps solutions create a digital workplace that helps organizations to transform the way they communicate, collaborate, and engage with their customers, partners, and employees. Leading companies rely on our solutions — LumApps Social Collaborative Intranet and LumApps Employee Social Advocacy — to make their teams more productive. This contributes to smarter, more efficient, and better-connected workforces around the world.

Learn more at
www.lumapps.com
contact@lumapps.com

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