

CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR KEY PERSONNEL

YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY CHECKLIST

This checklist can help you systematically develop and maintain robust contingency plans for critical roles within your organization, ensuring operational stability even in the face of unexpected departures.

PHASE 1: IDENTIFY CRITICAL ROLES BEYOND TOP LEADERSHIP

- Conduct an assessment to identify “single points of failure” within your operations.
- Determine which roles, if suddenly absent, would immediately impact revenue, client relationships, or compliance.
- Identify positions holding unique institutional knowledge, critical relationships, or specialized skills.
- Engage department heads and senior managers in the identification process for their insights.
- Consider roles across all departments: finance, operations, sales, IT, HR, production, and service delivery.

PHASE 2: DEVELOP SPECIFIC BACKUP PLANS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

- For each identified critical role, outline the precise steps required to transition responsibilities.
- Document job duties, access credentials, ongoing projects, and key contacts for each critical position.
- Identify one or more potential internal successors for each critical role.
- Create tailored training programs for potential successors (e.g., mentorship, rotational assignments, external training, shadowing).
- Ensure proactive development of internal talent to step into roles with minimal disruption.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENT CROSS-TRAINING AND PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

- Cross-train employees in different roles to perform aspects of each other’s jobs for short-term coverage.
- Capture “how-to” guides for critical tasks, systems, and procedures.
- Document step-by-step instructions for software operations, client onboarding, vendor management, and technical processes.
- Create a living knowledge base that reduces reliance on individual memory.
- Verify that documented processes are accessible and understandable to authorized personnel.



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PHASE 4: ESTABLISH A CLEAR CHAIN OF COMMAND FOR INTERIM LEADERSHIP

- Define who is next in line to take over specific responsibilities in an emergency.
- Clearly state the level of decision-making authority for each interim leader.
- Establish clear communication protocols for interim leadership, both internally and externally.
- Implement a tiered approach where appropriate (e.g., department head steps up, senior leader takes broader responsibilities).
- Ensure these pathways are pre-defined to remove uncertainty and enable swift action.

PHASE 5: REGULARLY REVIEW AND UPDATE CONTINGENCY PLANS

- Schedule annual reviews of all contingency plans.
- Conduct reviews more frequently if there are significant organizational changes.
- Update plans immediately following major hires, departures, mergers, or restructuring.
- Revise plans to reflect changes in technology, systems, and operational tools.
- Adjust plans based on new regulatory requirements or shifts in business strategy.

This checklist provides a framework. Tailor each step to your specific business context. Consulting with CPAs, HR professionals, organizational development experts, and legal counsel is highly recommended to ensure your contingency plans are comprehensive and effective.



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