



# Rethinking BCP post-Covid-19

## How the BCP response to Covid-19 will adapt operations to the ‘new normal’

As the world reels from the massive impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Business Continuity Planning (BCP) has become one of the most pressing topics that organisations have to revisit. Although the importance of BCP was well understood even before this pandemic, this time around, global business disruptions caused by a series of travel bans, national lockdowns and, in some cases, employee infections, have stress tested it way beyond its pre-set parameters.

The impact of Covid-19 on the global workforce is unprecedented. Rather than the old mindset of ‘getting the organisation back to what it had before’, a new approach to BCP is needed. An effective BCP should now reflect a longer-term view, becoming the practical tool to guide the organisation and its operations beyond the immediate crisis and through recovery.

By looking at the three stages of the crisis, we can better understand the need for a broader, more strategic BCP and the importance of the inclusion of transformational change management in taking the organisation’s operations forward.



### Phase 1 Emergency

#### Business Continuity Planning With Basic Change Focus

##### Typical ‘Disaster/ Critical Failure’ BCP (Or Ad Hoc Continuity Activities)

- Safety First- Protect (& Contain)
- Activate Pre-Set Processes
- Secure the Assets
- Replicate and Resume Operations (Quickly)
- Change Management by Directive
- Short-Term Operational & Tactical Response to Emergency / Disaster

#### ‘Beyond the Curve’

### Phase 2

#### Recovery in a Changed Global Context

### Phase 3

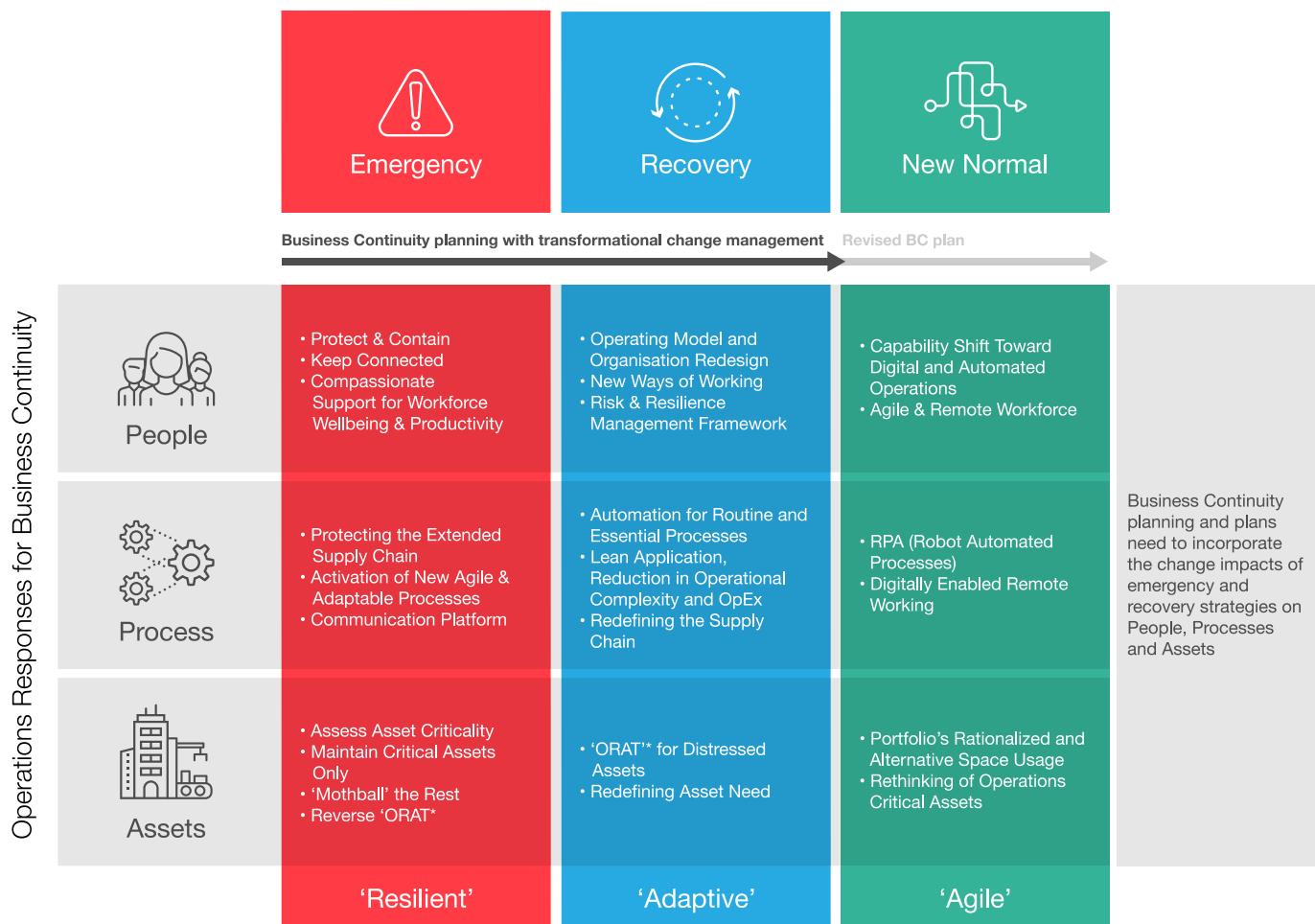
#### The ‘New Normal’



**BCP Replicates  
Current Operational  
Model & Remains  
Vulnerable to  
Changed Conditions**

**BCP ‘Completed’ :  
Organisation  
Attempts to Revert to  
Business As Usual  
(BAU)**

*Typical business continuity planning has played its part but has not been exhaustive enough to orchestrate recovery in this unique global crisis*



\*ORAT – Operations, Readiness, Activation & Transition

To Recover Means Adapting our Business Operations to Changed External Demands –  
Replicating our Operations Pre-Covid 19 may No Longer be Viable



## Phase 1: Emergency

Organisations often overlook the importance of communication channels. The BCP should initially set the protocols for communicating during the crisis ensuring that employees are well-informed, protected and fully conversant with the unfolding situation. Timely communication from the business is vital.

### PEOPLE:

The emphasis is ‘protection and containment’. Thus far, BCPs have focused upon short-term immediate action to protect workforces from catching and spreading the virus. The BCP must also be cognisant of the influence of people behaviours. The staggered working hours, staff rotations, enforced flexi-working practices, isolation and social/working distancing have a direct impact on the occupational psychology and general well-being of the workforce, which in turn impacts productivity.

#### **PROCESSES:**

For many organisations, the BCP has achieved the goal of keeping their core operational processes running through this crisis, but the BCP needs to address the continued strain on the organisation's operations, and, importantly, the value chain impact. The challenge has been the speed of a changing situation compounded by safety protocols and lockdown restrictions. The BCP needs to look beyond the organisation's own staff and the physical assets it owns and to incorporate the requirements of the organisations it transacts with. Within this emergency phase the focus of the BCP should be on protecting the extended supply chains.

#### **ASSETS:**

In this stage, resources should be directed towards maintaining critical assets and supporting infrastructure, such as water supply, hospitals, food logistics, distribution and other supply chain assets. The target is to keep assets operational whilst minimising human intervention.

With the lingering of the pandemic, we have witnessed widespread closures of offices and many other facilities. Despite the shutdowns, however, the 'work' can in many cases be migrated and conducted remotely, and the facility managed with a 'skeleton' workforce, or even 'mothballed' until the pandemic is controlled.

Targeting the reduction of operational expenditure associated with these physical assets is a critical response for surviving the impending global recession and should form part of the continuity planning.





## Phase 2: Recovery

The BCP should not end once the emergency has abated and the organisation starts seeing the green shoots of recovery. With recovery comes readjustment and transformational change management is a critical component of the continuity planning response. The wrong approach is to duplicate what we had previously.

### PEOPLE:

Organisations should see recovery as the catalyst to adapt to changes in the global market, customer and consumer needs, and their own financial position and economic outlook.

The operating model and organisational structures should reflect new ways of efficient working. Transformational change programmes, such as asset rationalisation, the implementation of new technology platforms, or the embedding of formalised risk management frameworks, can be considered to improve business processes and develop new capabilities.

Some employees may be less willing to return to their former workplace, and flexible home working will become more widespread. Others however will strive for reconnection and organisations will need to be more flexible to accommodate both. The operating model for many organisations should be redefined if they want to survive the changed external forces that shape them.

## PROCESSES:

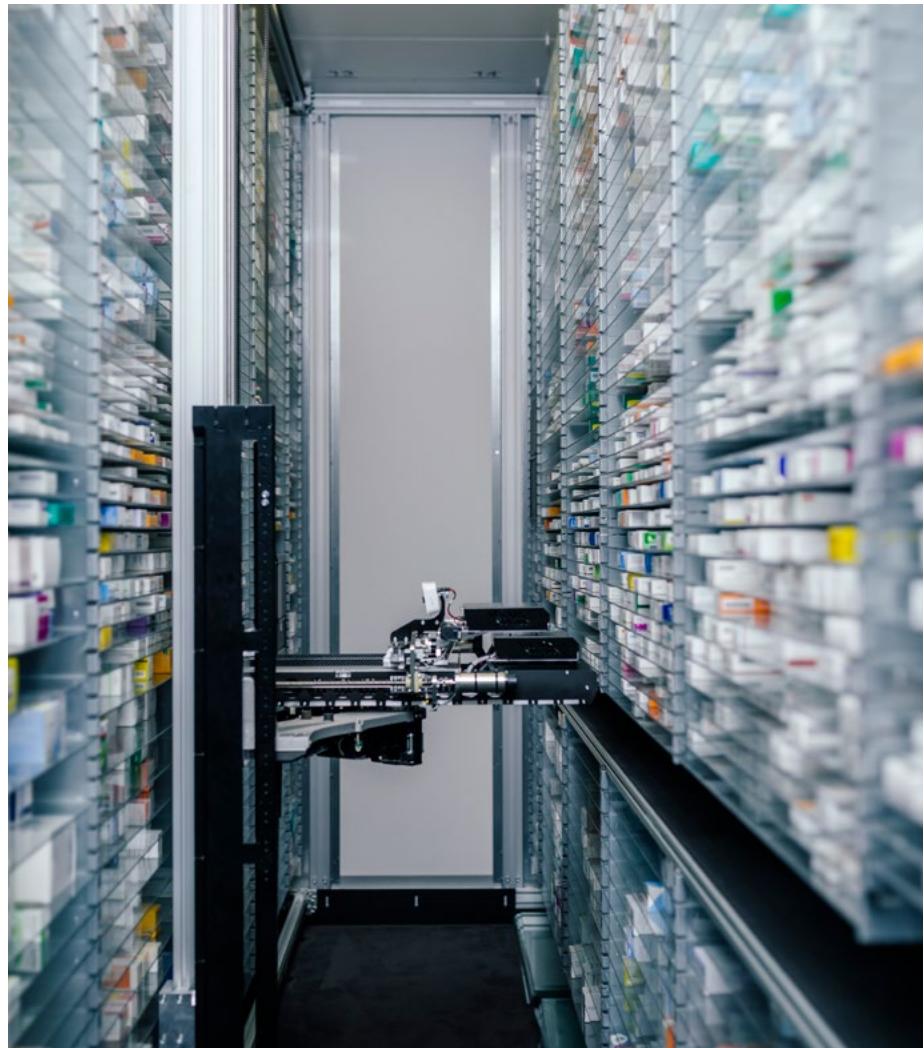
A resurgence of a lean approach to stimulate a streamlining of operational processes and reduction of business complexities will aid recovery. Organisations should conduct reviews to identify the processes and activities ‘you didn’t know you didn’t need’.

In the recovery phase, stop doing the Non-Value Adding activities, and strip back overly complex, resource intensive processes whilst maintaining newly defined and tempered business performance targets and drive down operating costs.

For most organisations in financial distress, capital investment is put on hold and the most effective lever for recovery is through their operations. Recovery provides the opportunity to review and change those activities and actions previously thought essential for managing the business operations.

Recovery will also see a reduction in the reliance on human interventions to conduct routine but critical operational activities and whilst controversial, should become a key component of the longer-term BCP.

Recent trends have been toward the use of automated solutions, such as Autonomous Mobile Robots and Automated Guided Vehicles, for carrying out delivery of essential supplies in, for example, hospitals and hotels and more recently deployed in healthcare and quarantine facilities. Applied to promote efficiency, productivity and cost savings the automated delivery solution also facilitates continuity and will become a more widespread application in a wider range of business and industry settings.



## ASSETS:

Operations Readiness Activation and Transition (ORAT) is a multiple modular approach for transitioning capital assets and complex operational systems from the static state of construction to a dynamic state of operational readiness.

Through the recovery phase, organisations will need to firstly evaluate the new demand for their facilities and then take a holistic approach to transition them back to operational readiness. Turning the lights back on, powering up the generators and starting again where you left off may now not be economically or operationally viable amid a global economic downturn.

The BCP needs to address the criticality of these assets and whether in fact they are now fully needed to facilitate business recovery.



## Phase 3: New normal – integrated and holistic BCP for people, processes and assets

The ‘new normal’ is about planning for and mitigating the adverse impacts of uncertainty. It is about resilience and being prepared for change, but it is also about seizing the opportunities.



The perilous journey through the Covid-19 crisis using an effective BCP with transformational change management will lead to more resilient, adaptive and remotely structured workforces, underpinned by automated and digitally enabled core processes. This is not about a like-for-like replacement of people with automation, but it will require different skill sets and capabilities, working patterns, operating models and organisation designs and a workforce realignment to facilitate new ways of operating and altered value chains for many organisations.

Businesses will look to Robot Process Automation for the answer to improve overall operational efficiency, increased accuracy and security, standardisation of services, reduced costs and ensure 24/7 operational continuity with limited

human intervention. The reliance on physical assets for supporting the tertiary industry may diminish considerably, with assets for secondary industries becoming automation hubs. Organisations will need support in reassessing their workplace strategies.

Going forward, businesses will look to alternative supply chain options. Businesses that source parts or materials from particular suppliers hard hit and unable to provide supply continuity may look for alternatives. Businesses will need to better understand the impact of uncertainty on the supply chain and third-party providers. The strength of the Business Continuity Plan will become a commodity for many organisations when determining who they want to transact with.

# Lessons learned

Lessons are being learned daily as we progress through emergency towards the recovery phase of the Covid-19 crisis. These lessons will further inform how to devise and implement successful BCPs that take a longer-term view that incorporate a more holistic operational response and transformational change management.

Engaging the right expert to work out an effective BCP can help your organisation adapt towards the new normal. The goal is to establish all the critical processes that your organisation cannot run without in order to survive and thrive in a new age of uncertainty and mitigate the threats to your organisation's people, processes and assets.

## ABOUT ARUP

Arup is the creative force at the heart of many of the world's most prominent projects in the built environment and across industry. Working in more than 140 countries, the firm's designers, engineers, architects, planners, consultants and technical specialists work with our clients on innovative projects of the highest quality and impact.

Since its founding in 1946, Arup has pioneered ground-breaking strategies and technical excellence with social purposes. Today, by combining innate knowledge of the built environment with new technologies, we apply our expertise, diversity of thinking and independence in the quest for a safe, sustainable and resilient future – for all.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Based in Hong Kong, Christopher Graham is Arup's Operations Consulting Leader for East Asia. Over his 25-year career, he has provided transformational strategic and operational advice to global organizations and supports clients in all aspects of operations from the application of automated solutions to facilitate patient care in hospitals to redesigning organizations to better prepare them for future challenges. He is currently helping Organizations use Operations as the best lever for expediting business recovery Post COVID-19.

# We shape a better world