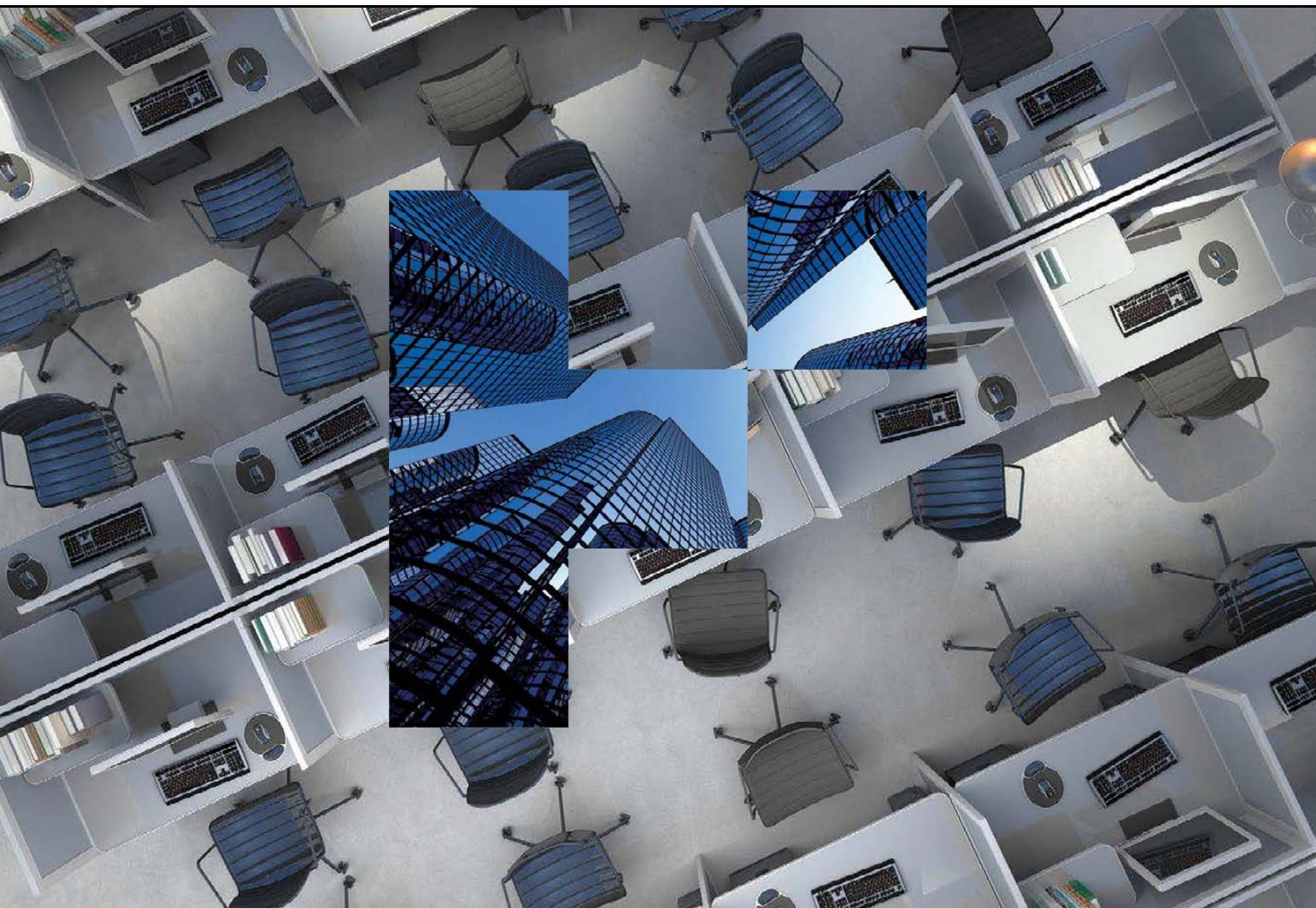


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▶ **The recovery position** - *The modus operandi of many firms has changed from physical office space to a much more fluid, remote and online existence. Martin Allen Smith asks what this means for work area recovery and the need for back-up facilities should the worst happen*

▶ **Building resilience** - *We all know that teams work better in engaging work environments, making more profitable decisions when physically working together. This dynamic does not need to change in times of crisis. Andrew Lawton explains how*

Work area recovery



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The traditional cornerstone of any organisation's business continuity planning has always been premises – specifically, what to do in the event that a key location is put out of action for any one of a multitude of reasons, and, crucially, how quickly normal service can be resumed.

It is no wonder, then, that work area recovery has become a vital part of contingency planning, and the options offered by service providers in this area have evolved significantly over the years. But what have been the factors in this evolution, and how have they ultimately affected the choices and service levels that the client receives?

Andrew Lawton, founder and CEO of Fortress Availability Services – the first new provider in this market for over a decade – says that despite changing working practices businesses still feel people work better together and so they still want their critical people together at times of disruption, particularly their crisis management team and core business functions. And with advancements in server and desktop recovery, he points out that the technology they need is ready to go before they arrive at the recovery site.

Les Price, head of business continuity operations at Daisy, agrees, adding that for customers that test the service, they will have the confidence they need that they can get up and running very quickly. This, he says, has resulted in an uptick of customers invoking not only for more devastating outages such as floods, but also for IT failures that might be resolved within a day. “Knowing they can be up and running so quickly, means it's worth their while invoking work area recovery services for smaller scale issues.”

The recovery position

 **The modus operandi of many firms has changed from physical office space to a much more fluid, remote and online existence. Martin Allen Smith asks what means for work area recovery and the need for back-up facilities should the worst happen**

Other advancements in technology mean that customers can keep more employees up and running by using remote or home working technologies, connecting them to recovered data and IT services – meaning that companies can extend the reach of recovery solutions to encompass a higher percentage of staff.

This development further polarises the relevance of work area recovery and IT recovery. Further, it is no longer essential that the two are supplied by the same provider. Lawton argues that these aspects of recovery are often managed by different teams. “IT recovery is still managed by IT, whereas work area recovery is increasingly seen as the responsibility of facilities management,” he explains.

The move towards digitisation and the ‘always on’ economy has meant that customers demand things to be deployed faster and more flexibly. The capability is now there to tailor services to specific customer requirements, to roll out different desktops for back office staff in HR and accounting, as well as desktops suitable for front end staff requiring dealer desks for trading and contact centre capabilities.

Daren Howell, senior marketing manager, at Sungard Availability Services, explains that workplace invocations have remained fairly constant over the years and are

now, due to the relative simplicity and speed of work area recovery, showing a strong upward trend. “We now see record levels of everyday routine workplace invocations, which are only surpassed when [for instance] a large scale terrorist event occurs,” Howell adds, explaining that communications failures (data and voice) are the most common cause of invocations, accounting for 19 per cent of them in 2016, closely followed by power failures.

Howell says that the headline-grabbing incidents continue to drive demand, too. “The service provider landscape has changed dramatically over the past 10 years with mergers and closures of sites; some of the bigger service providers appear to be losing interest in this market, judging by market share contraction and investments in work area recovery centres. In the past five to ten years, something of a ‘seat price war’ took place, driven by those who thought ‘people recovery’ could be commoditised.”

This is coming to an end though he says, since customers are becoming more savvy. “It's no longer sustainable when commercial property is in short supply, especially in those secondary locations where recovery centres have so often been set up,” explains Howell. “Developers are targeting these areas for greater returns which pushes up lease costs considerably. Twenty-five, 30 and



even 50 per cent increases in lease costs are not unheard of. There is also the dramatic increase in business rates which become effective in April this year and will undoubtedly hit [some] businesses quite hard.”

So are clients seeing work area recovery as an unnecessary expense? Nearly four years ago, Sungard commissioned research to understand whether work area recovery services would still be relevant in five and ten years’ time with the advent of production desktops becoming more virtual and cloud-based. A significant proportion of customers indicated they might stop using such services because their staff could work from home with a virtual desktop and softphone.

Home from home?

Indications so far, however, show that although the size of requirements for work area recovery have reduced, the approach of sending staff home in an incident has not manifested as a trend. “The realisation is that working together helps us be more creative, efficient and make better decisions – all of which are major assets at a time of crisis,” says Lawton.

An appropriate level of cover is important throughout the supply

chain, too, with demonstrable continuity planning being increasingly required by partners. Lee Casbolt, senior director at The Instant Group, says. “There can be pressure from others in the supply chain to ensure they have contingency planning well in hand, meaning that they have to demonstrate that they have a robust plan. We see this [most] commonly within the professional services sector, but we’re also getting lots of enquiries from online tech businesses that are increasingly seeing the benefits of having back-up facilities in place.”

There is a balance to be had however, between ensuring work area recovery facilities are in place but not ‘over-providing’ for this business need. “There are some industries in which a business has to be back in action within a few hours of a problem emerging,” says Casbolt, “but for others, a next day solution – delivering real flexibility on the locations and types of facilities – is sufficient, and enables access to a very large, dynamic and flexible work space market that includes serviced office suites, co-working environments and managed solutions.”

He adds that by 2020, half of the workforce in the US is expected to

be contingent so organisations are increasingly looking to replicate this dynamic approach to working practices both in their existing portfolio and in their business continuity plan. “It also opens up new opportunities for utilising such facilities not just as a response to an emergency, but as part of a broader workplace strategy. It might be that an organisation needs to plan for some short-term project or client-specific work that requires separate working areas for a limited time. These facilities don’t have to be triggered by a terrorist event.”

Lawton agrees. “We offer our ActiveSpace service which allows customers to use the space they are contracted to at around half market rate. Every time they use it they are saving money. This is, of course, on the basis that they must leave within an hour of a real invocation. However, it provides them with a much greater return on their investment in the work area recovery service,” he explains.

There is no shortage of changes facing work area recovery providers in the years ahead. Data growth and the sheer volume of data that customers need access to continues to stretch resources. Cyber security also continues to challenge both providers and clients. Fortress also has a cyber security division helping their customers reduce the likelihood of cyber attack as well as mitigating the impacts when attacks take place.

This is a marketplace that looks set for further shifts to come. Buyers of workarea recovery will have a more varied range of options available to them, with different costs. Vendors, meanwhile, will need to show additional value to significantly more savvy buyers – particularly if price increases are in the offing for some services.

We all know that business continuity plans and resources are in place to reduce the financial, operational or brand impact to business. We also know that to deal with these events plans need to be put in place that are structured, repeatable and tested. These three attributes are critical or the plan is no more than wishful thinking.

To put the risks faced into perspective, the BCI's latest annual Horizon Scan, published last month, showed that the top three perceived threats to business today were cyber attack and data breach, closely followed by unplanned IT outage. Perception aside, in reality, the greatest impacts were from IT outages (72 events) and adverse weather (43), closely followed by interruption to utility supply (40).

What this shows is that, in reality, your business is more likely to suffer an event that will deny access to your building than to your IT. So what are businesses doing about this, and is it enough?

Why bother with the office?

The past decade has seen huge change in the way we work. Many of us can work wherever we sit – whether that is at home, in a coffee shop or in an airport. The only resources we need are our laptops and internet access through Wi-Fi or mobile networks.

Despite this flexibility and remote collaboration technology, it is still clear that people work better when physically together. In fact, some of the world's leading technology companies, even those delivering online collaboration solutions, have shown the way by developing work environments that attract staff in, and keep them there as long as possible. The workplaces have devel-

Building resilience

 We all know that teams work better in engaging work environments, making more profitable decisions when physically working together. This dynamic does not need to change in times of crisis. Andrew Lawton explains how

oped into brighter, more accommodating spaces with free services such as food, haircuts and even therapy.

Amazon, Google and Yahoo look at their offices as communication hubs, a strategic tool for growth, rather than simply being real estate. Their belief is that by creating engaging work environments they are more likely to have happy, motivated employees who will be more creative and make better decisions.

In its paper 'The New Science of Building Great Teams', MIT Research declared that "the most valuable form of communication is face to face". They found that partially engaged, remote, teams made worse (less profitable) decisions and that this failure was more prevalent in teams that only communicated via phone or email. They calculated that 35 per cent of the variation of a team's performance can be accounted for simply by the number of face-to-face exchanges among team members.

"Businesses are being smarter about recovery strategies today and are putting in place more considered, phased approaches to recovery"

So with this body of evidence so clear and our businesses spending huge sums on offices that draw employees in to improve

performance, why are we happy for our entire workforce to work from home during a crisis, the specific time when peak performance is absolutely critical?

Historic options

Traditional work area recovery services and sites have not changed since they were first brought into existence 30 years ago. Many of the recovery centres even remain unchanged in format, furniture and infrastructure with the only change being the technology on the desktop.

One Fortress investor, Paul Barry-Walsh, who founded Safetynet back in 1985 established one of the very first recovery centres in St Katherine's Dock back in the late 80s. He recalls that back then businesses needed space for 25 per cent of their workforce. Later, in the 90s, Safetynet built a much bigger work area recovery centre at East India Dock, which is still in operation today, albeit in different hands. It was around this time that most of today's recovery centres were originally built. These sites are large, better suited to very large organisations, rather than smaller ones.

A new site

Today, modern businesses are being smarter about their recovery strategies. They realise that it is often not imperative for all critical staff to be up and running within hours

of a disaster but a more considered, phased approach to recovery is being put in place. In fact, the percentage of staff businesses need at the recovery centre has dropped from 25 per cent to 10-15 per cent. The requirements now are for tiered services which fall into three main areas:

The Crisis Management Team

and core business functions (often administrative functions that cannot easily be undertaken from home) need fast access to well structured, physically and logically secure space. This space should be supported by expert technical teams to speed recovery. The preference is that this space is bright, modern and a place where employees will be happy and can work effectively and where important client meetings can take place.

The core functions often involve confidential company or customer data and use systems that are less easily accessed remotely. This option tends to be for 10 per cent of employees, including the CMT.

The CMT gathers immediately in the aftermath of a disaster to decide the next best course of action. This is then communicated to the remaining staff. Key clients/customers and partners are then informed of the disaster and the company's business continuity strategy.

The next day. The next phase is for the further key staff to function effectively. These individuals tend to be able to work from anywhere, including home, and so are used to less secure environments and will be dealing with less confidential data. These places do not need to be as structured or secure, but still supported by the required technical expertise.

For many who already work

remotely and from home, working from home at this point is the obvious and most effective solution to business continuity. However, consideration should be given to whether the homes used:

- Have the right resources or environment.
- Are suitable to work for extended periods (to comply with Health and Safety legislation).
- Can comply with data security and regulatory standards (FCA, PCI, GDPR for instance).

In summary, homeworking is a useful option for many staff but one that needs careful thought. The workplaces at home should be visited and tested to meet these regulations if the business is to rely on them.

If home working will not meet requirements or if you want your staff to work together then a Next Day Recovery service, such as that offered by Fortress, should be put in place.

Later. If the main site has been irreparably damaged businesses need access to available alternatives. An information bank on the currently available properties on the market needs to be kept available to enable this.

The Fortress Recovery Toolkit

Fortress had a clean sheet of paper to design services that met the requirements set out above. The aim was simple: to develop cost-effective and secure recovery services that were relevant to modern business needs.

After a year of research combined with 25 years of experience we found the set of requirements above. So, Fortress designed a toolkit of services which can be combined to provide tailored solutions. The services

include Elite (dedicated), Advanced (3 hour access), Dynamic (next day) and Market Access recovery options.

The most popular is the Fortress Advanced Service, which is designed to support the Crisis Management Team and the core business functions. The brand new Crisis Management Centre in Crossharbour provides a bright and pleasant office environment with a modern layout. The high quality fit out includes high speed Wi-Fi, physically separate LANs per suite and access to hot desking and break out areas for adhoc meetings. This means that your staff do not need to adapt to our site at an already tense time, as we have already adapted to them.

If using the Fortress Dynamic service, your CMT can decide where the next day recovery centre(s) should be dependent on the disaster being faced, allowing your staff access to recovery centres closer to their homes or to their usual place of work. A Crisis Management Room is integral to the service so the team tasked with recovering the business have all the resources and information necessary. The service is supported by our highly experienced, on site, recovery consultants who will work with you, by your side, to build the processes to speedily recover your business and support you when you need us most.

Andrew Lawton is founder and CEO of Fortress Availability Services



If you would like to find out more about the Fortress service please email: info@fortressas.com or call 020 3858 0099

Resilience

Being prepared to meet any unexpected event is key to your business survival. Fortress offers a new range of flexible, modern and relevant work area recovery solutions.

**FIND OUT MORE AT:
WWW.FORTRESSAS.COM
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Fortress Availability Services

All recovery services are not created equal



Fortress

Fortress provides access to bright and modern working environments, designed for agile and collaborative working with personal, onsite, technical support. We give you greater control. You get faster recovery.