

THE DISASTER EXPERIENCE

Presented at the ALA Conference & Exposition

by Bob Mellinger, President - Attainium Corp.

Summarized by Sherry Hurst

May 2008

How many of you have actually drafted your Continuity Plan? How many of you have tested your Continuity Plan? Let's be honest. I attended a session at the ALA National Conference in Seattle that was an eye-opening experience. "**The Disaster Experience**" was put on by Bob Mellinger, President of Attainium Corp. Attendees were split up into tables of 8-10 people and each table acted as a different law firm. We were given a few facts about a disastrous scenario our "firm" was to experience, that would unfold during the session. Our "firm" was to solve the problems as the information became known.

The exercise was tremendous! We did not have all of the details in the beginning – we were given the details piece by piece as they happened – much like a real disaster. Our table had individuals from several different backgrounds – IT, HR, Facilities, etc., so we were able to make decisions that affected all aspects of our firm. **Disaster Experience** is what is referred to as "tabletop exercises delivered as role play simulations."

To assist you in developing a Continuity Plan, Mellinger gave us the following guide to use for those in the drafting stages or for those, like me, who went through the above exercise and want to make sure we have covered all the bases.

1. Project Initiation

- Define goals, objectives, scope, cost and management
- Select the Project Team

2. Risk Assessment

- Identify threats and hazards
- Determine the probability and impact

3. Impact Analysis

- Identify critical functions and the infrastructure that supports them
- Develop Recovery Time Objectives (RTO)
- Determine weak links and critical paths

4. Emergency Response

- Preserve life and personal safety

- Evacuation or shelter in place strategy
 - Communication – internal and external
5. Recovery Strategies
 - What does it take to get “back to normal?”
 6. Formal Plan Development
 - Write it all down
 - Layout should be easy to use
 7. Training & Awareness
 - Make sure ALL stakeholders are aware and understand the plan
 8. Exercise the Plan
 - Conduct regular drills and exercises
 - “What would we do if?”
 9. Keeping the Plan Current
 - Scheduled reviews and ongoing maintenance

For more information on disaster planning and recovery, Mellinger recommended we contact the following organizations:

American Bar Association – www.abanet.org –

- Disaster Recovery: www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/slc02051.html

Federal Emergency Management Agency – www.fema.gov

- Emergency Management Guide for Business & Industry:
www.fema.gov/business/guide/index.shtm

Department of Homeland Security – www.dhs.gov

- READY America: www.ready.gov/business/index.html

American Red Cross – www.redcross.org

- Preparing Your Business for the Unthinkable:
www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/busi_industry.html

National Weather Service – www.nws.noaa.gov

Institute for Business and Home Safety – www.ibhs.org

- Open for Business Brochure (PDF): www.ibhs.org/docs/openforbusiness.pdf
- Getting Back to Business (PDF): www.ibhs.org/docs/GBB.pdf

Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) – www.riskinstitute.org

Contingency Planning and Management – www.contingencyplanning.com

Information on Attainium Corp.'s Business Continuity NewsBriefs, along with back issues, is available on their web site at www.attainium.net/newsbriefs. Watch for updates on ALA programs to be offered in St. Louis in the near future – “The Disaster Experience” may be coming to your area. Please contact me at shurst@foxgalvin.com if you would like complete handouts from this exercise.