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Rebound: Facility Resilience

The Internet of Things is getting a great deal of attention. The term speaks to our connectedness through an internet platform.

Through the internet and various technologies — networks, cloud-based services, remote service providers, cell phones, computers, printers, and other smart appliances — we are more interconnected than ever. But what happens to our organizations if the system is disrupted? Alternatively, what happens if institutional and commercial facilities and their core systems' infrastructure is interrupted and the building is hot, cold, dark, or without running water? What if we can't even get to or into our buildings?

While the maintenance and engineering department might not own the intricacies of every system, managers do have purview over the built environment, maintaining operations to support the essential functions of organizations. Regardless of their causes, facilities disruptions can have a significant impact on an organization's ability to function.

The probability of a large disruption might be low, but these events draw our eyes to results that can occur. How can managers reduce the likelihood of ending up on the losing side of a crisis? After all, the job of maintenance and engineering is to keep facilities operational while managing the resources it takes to do so.

In facilities, managers traditionally focus on security, risk assessment, and emergency preparedness. While the primary focus is on keeping people safe, managers also need to address the broader aspects of the businesses they support to ensure not just safety but productivity and profitability.

Managers need to think in terms of resilience. They need to take a long-term view from a business perspective. In some ways, that is not new. What is new is the way the facilities profession is tying it together under the umbrella of business resilience.

Think resilience

Business resilience describes the ability to rapidly adapt and respond to business disruptions while maintaining continuity of operations. It is more than just being prepared to respond to an emergency. It involves setting up systems and training people so facilities remain operational, despite inevitable disruptions and regardless of the source.

A national standard provides a framework organizations can use. ISO 22301, *Societal Security — Preparedness and Continuity*

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Management Systems — Requirements, identifies the requirements for developing and maintaining a business continuity management system (BCMS). It addresses requirements for planning, operating, monitoring and reviewing a BCMS. Its goal is to ensure organizations have a system to reduce the likelihood or extent of disruptions to business activities.

The key benefits of resilience planning include: improved performance through a focus on processes and planning; reduced corporate risk of business interruption and negative financial impacts; and enhanced reputation and mission delivery. Organizations can earn certification under ISO 22301. For managers wondering why an organization would pursue certification, I can tell you from first-hand experience that it engages key stakeholders in the resilience process.

The business continuity plan becomes more than a static document. It becomes a reference for ongoing operations and integrates itself into larger decisions. Employees practice the ways they will respond to events in training exercises. A common language and understanding develops, and it becomes easier to get buy-in for actions related to business resilience. The process also creates a robust validation effort that demands dedication all the way up through the organization's most senior levels.

In business resilience planning, organizations identify possible impacts of potential threats and deploy a plan to reduce the impacts, decreasing overall corporate risk due to related failures. That is the proactive element. In the reactive element, business resilience planning provides guidance for ensuring the ability of personnel to respond, resume and restore to a predetermined level of operation following a disruption.

Facilities are changing rapidly. More than ever, the facilities profession has the opportunity to impact productivity and profitability organizationwide through business resilience planning and execution. Now is the time for managers to bring their experience to bear in ways that help their organizations weather future crises. ■