

TMC'S ADVISOR

Covering IT and Telecom from a Canadian Viewpoint

Disaster Response By Peter Aggus

The world is reeling from what disaster planners feared: a viral pandemic. So, how are those “best laid plans” faring? Is everything working like clockwork, as it was planned to? Are we learning from the challenges we face? Disasters do not wait for a more convenient time. Are we ready for a second disaster that could strike while we are still trying to deal with the first? They said “smile—things could be worse. So I smiled ... and things got worse.”



COVID-19

The doomsayers (i.e. those of us in disaster planning) said we could get a pandemic viral outbreak—and so we have. However, this is not the time to be smug and say “told you,” but rather it is the time to say “look, the plans we made work” ... but do they?

Disaster plans need to be flexible. We may know the basics of how disasters start, but we can rarely control how or when they will end.

Teleworking

Are you one of the many companies whose disaster plan called for teleworking? If so, you are in good company. However, if the plan was not fully tested in advance, you may be in for some surprises.

Here are some of the issues faced:

Insufficient VPN ports

Most IT departments set up inbound VPN servers to cope with approximately 10% of key workers connecting from off-site. What happens when management says 100% need to?

Too little datacentre bandwidth

Many organisations run cloud or virtualised applications where the



data traffic between client and network can be quite high. If you only tested VPN access using local applications you may be in for a shock with bandwidth demands. A VPN connecting offsite is not the same as a 1Gbps local connection.

Too few remote licenses

Do your application licenses cover enough off-premises users? All too often the answer is no.

Laptops not up to the job

We saw several companies who use laptops for portability with desktop docking stations or port extenders in the office. The employee can take the processor home and VPN back to the office for access to application and data—but what about screens? That

port extender often has two 27” screens attached that are normally used for all the windows needed at work. The laptop alone may be fine for email and word processing but not the whole job. And without admin rights, the employee can’t install the drivers for their own port extender.

Domestic internet service has too little bandwidth

Home users’ network speeds may work well for personal email, but are often overburdened by corporate needs.

Nested Disasters

Have you considered that we could have another disaster before COVID-19 ends? Earthquakes strike with no warning. Does your disaster plan cope with the fact that you might already be in “disaster mode”? Staff may be working remotely, so will they be able to respond as the plan expects?

Ongoing Adaptation

As the crisis develops, you need to monitor how well your disaster plans are working and adapt as needed.

This article is reproduced from the March 2020 edition of [TMC's Advisor](#)

©2020 TMC IT and Telecom Consulting Inc.

Peter, as an engineer & technology management consultant, has developed innovative & cost-effective solutions for clients in many industries.