

# — Business continuity management —

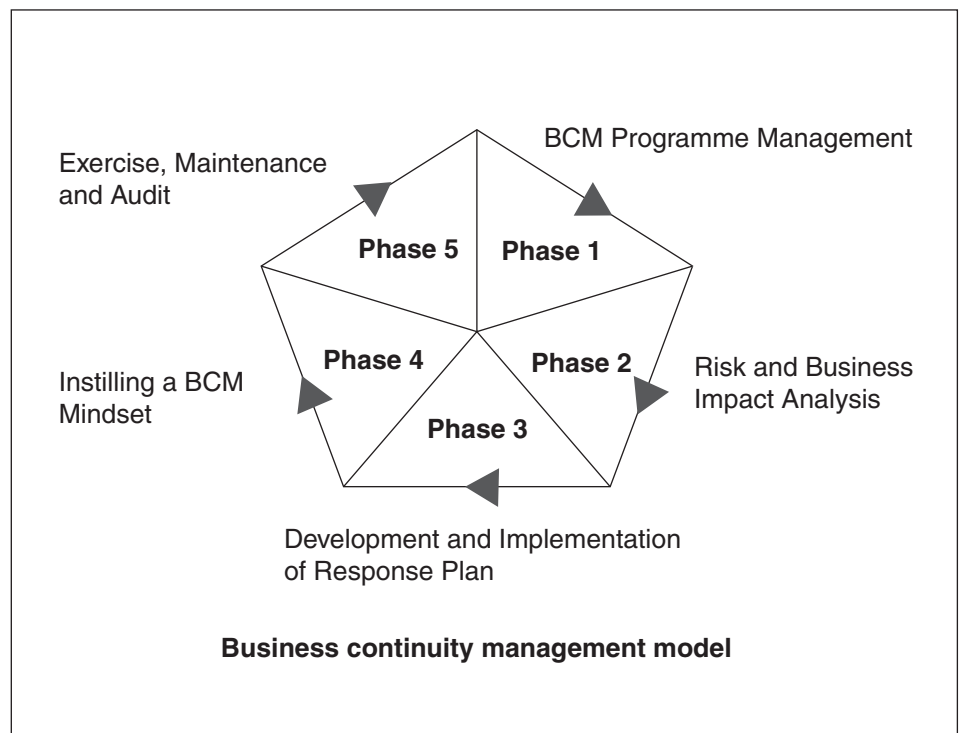
*The past few years have witnessed the outbreaks of the SARS and avian flu epidemics, the Iraqi war, social and political unrest in many countries, and natural disasters like earthquakes, droughts, and floods. They caused serious disruptions to lives, properties, and businesses. Many enterprises, especially SMEs, were ill prepared for such crisis management.*

**T**he adverse incidents mentioned above have underlined the importance for companies wishing to remain viable and competitive in the event of such disruptions to build a business continuity management (BCM) capability. BCM has been described as a “holistic management process that identifies and analyzes potential incidents that threaten an organization and the development of response plans to minimize their impact on the business. It covers a broad range of business and management disciplines, including risk management, disaster recovery, and supply chain management” (*Requirements for Business Continuity Management* published by SPRING Singapore). Among the benefits attributed to BCM are: being better prepared for major business disruptions; enhanced competitiveness; less potential economic loss; better asset protection; improved corporate governance; favorable corporate image as a “well-prepared” organization; and greater customer and shareholder confidence in the corporation.

Although BCM has been widely practiced by multinational companies, it is a relatively new concept for local industries in Asia and the Pacific. It is felt that they too need to know and develop BCM capability. Recognizing this need, the APO organized a study meeting on BCM in Singapore hosted by the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING) of Singapore, 23–25 March 2004. The program provided an in-depth understanding of BCM, an examination of the methodologies for developing BCM capability, and ways to promote its widespread use within an organization. Eighteen participants from 14 member countries took part. A highlight of the program was an exposition on SPRING Singapore’s BCM standard, guidelines, and assurance audit process.

The study meeting attendees recognized the urgent need to promote BCM and its role in a global market in their respective countries, and that this should embrace public- and private-sector organizations at local, national, and regional levels. It should become an integral part of a business management process. SMEs were singled out for special mention as they constitute an important economic sector in APO member countries and they will need financial and technical support to implement BCM. Governmental assistance was suggested. Another key issue raised was the creation of a mechanism for

the sharing of information on BCM among APO member countries. In this regard, participants expressed appreciation to SPRING Singapore for sharing its BCM model (Figure). Most felt that it provides a good starting point for them to plan and implement BCM.



SPRING Singapore’s BCM model is described in its publication *Requirements for Business Continuity Management*. Established in 2003, it provides a standard that specifies the requirements for BCM and the model for the BCM process. It is not prescriptive and can be applied by any organization. As explained by SPRING Director for External Relations Low Choo Tuck, the BCM standard is targeted at industries and enterprises that support or provide components or services to larger, export-oriented companies. The BCM process has five phases: 1) BCM program management; 2) risk and business impact analysis; 3) development and implementation of a response plan; 4) instilling a BCM mindset; and 5) maintenance and auditing. SPRING Singapore offers training programs to help organizations implement BCM. Those who do can apply to SPRING Singapore for certification, which is an assurance to their customers of continuity in the supply of goods and services, even in the event of a business disruption. 