BCP Technology Used During the COVID-19 Crisis – Survey Results

*Survey results are as of April 28, 2020; 13 responses

The IIAC issued a survey to members on Business Continuity Planning (BCP) Technology used during the COVID-19 crisis. This is part of a series of surveys the IIAC is conducting to assess the unique needs of specific divisions of the investment industry, in order to better facilitate assistance for those needs.

IIAC is committed to working with members, the CSA, IIROC, the TMX Group, MFDA, the Canadian Bankers Association, multiple levels of government, regulators and others to ensure the wellbeing of the economy and the investment industry community at this time.

The results of the survey can be found below. Some responses have been moderated to ensure anonymity.

Executive Summary

Many firms found the execution of their BCP and/or conversion to work-from-home arrangements to be rapidly functional, yet obstacles still had to be overcome. Difficulties arose in regards to the speed in which their firm and others had to transition; bandwidth and platform providers struggled under the sudden deluge of use, and some employees were not properly equipped at home with hardware and tools such as monitors when the lockdown was swiftly put into place. The other issue that arose was cultural adaptation to the work from home arrangements, and again the rapidity and totality of the conversion appears to be a significant factor in causing difficulties. Small tweaks like eliminating background noise on conference calls seem to make a considerable difference.

The choice of technology and platforms for various business functions is diverse, with functionality and security of the technology being prioritized.

How would you best describe your firm?

- Discounter, OEO - **7.69%**
- Institutional Introducers - **15.38%**
- Introducers (Retail) - **15.38%**
- Retail Full-Service (Self-Clearers) - **46.15%**
- Software specialized in wealth management - **7.69%**

Was it easy to enact your Business Continuity Plan (BCP) from a technology perspective?

- **Yes - 69.23%** Comments:
    - We have been a "work from home" environment for several years.
    - The work from home recordings or voice communications was a challenge.
    - Managing where a partner/spouse/child was working for another financial institution.
    - We have made extensive progress with work from home from a technology and cultural perspective (vs. pre-covid-19).
    - We mobilized over 650 employees to work remotely in a span of less than one week. This scenario was tested as part of our annual BCP test in 2019.
- **No - 15.38%** Comments:
    - Not at this scale - Easy to get to 75% of employees working from home. We finally got to 100%, but it was not easy.
    - We did not enact our BCP - we just work from home.
- **Somewhat - 15.38%** Comments:
    - There were some connectivity issues for trading, but otherwise it was smooth.
    - We had a solid base to build on, but was made more difficult by suppliers and resellers.

What were some of the surprises about enacting your Business Continuity Plan from a technology perspective? Please describe.

- Bandwidth and server speed.
- Biggest challenge was supporting employees without monitors, headsets at home and enabling VPN connectivity for those employees in regions such as Manilla.
- Delivery of massive amounts of hardware into firm, putting into inventory, tagging and then delivering to employees.
- Hiring and training of new hires using systems instead of in-person.
- Everything surprisingly went smoothly
- No surprises, really more of a people issue.
- Technology platform is unchanged, but a lot more people connecting remotely.
- None.
- Sharing bandwidth with other members of the family when working in a home-based environment.
- Using VPN was very cumbersome as the speed provided through VPN was significantly lower than without VPN.
- The efficiencies of our IT department.
- The efficiency.
- The technology performed as designed and tested with little disruption to the business processes (positive surprise).
- Some of the technology available to some employees at home were not sufficient. For example, a few had no internet access and no computer (only phone or tablet).

- In the initial days of remote work, 3rd party audio/video tools were experiencing volume/capacity issues for employees joining audio/video meetings.
- We went from no work at home policy to everyone at home overnight. With all the purchasing and provisioning that goes with it. New laptops, new fiber link, expand VPN technology, new MFA system, etc.
- WiFi demands for remote connectivity.

What technology are you using for internal workflow and communication and would you recommend this technology?

- **Zoom (2/13) - 15.38%**: **Did not recommend**. <u>Comment</u>: There must be a more secure solution.
- **Microsoft Teams (1/13) - 7.69%**: **Recommended.**
- **Zoom and Microsoft Teams (1/13) - 7.69%: Did not recommend.** <u>Comment</u>: Yes and no; definitely helpful, but wide ranging in impact if fully integrated (Teams).
- **Microsoft Teams and Other (4/13) - 30.77%: Recommended**. <u>Other</u>: Other approved vendors such as MS Outlook, Skype, Bloomberg, Cloud9, Ecco, etc. Conference Call Facilities. Skype. Exchange, SharePoint. <u>Comments</u>: Microsoft Teams video quality is not consistent and not effective with over five callers.
- **Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Other (1/13) - 7.69%: Recommended**. Other: Skype for Business. <u>Comment</u>: Each tool has audio/video capabilities which work well. Depending on your requirement, each tool has its strengths.
- **Other (4/13) - 30.77%: Recommended.** Other: G-mail, Google Chat, Google Docs, Salesforce, DocuSign. Google hangout meet. Google. Webex and Jabber. <u>Comment</u>: Thank goodness we made this change. Google is 100% mobile and reliable.

What technology are you using for client onboarding? Please describe. Would you recommend these tools?

- Exchange (email) for documentation and telephone. **- Recommend**
- Finergo **- Recommend**
- Google hangouts meet, team viewer **- Recommend**
- Paper based forms, but we allow electronic signatures to be applied. **- Recommend**
  - An electronic onboarding application would benefit workflows and approvals.
- Salesforce & Docusign **- Recommend**
- Submission via our portal - **Recommend**
- Various tools including: Existing web technology, New digital account opening and maintenance platform (currently in pilot) and various use of DocuSign combined with Advisor/Client video conferencing. **- Recommend**
  - Docusign is best in class, easy to adopt and leverage.
- We use a combination of third party and inhouse built technologies for client onboarding. eSignature and straight through processing into the back office system is supported.

- The third-party onboarding system is from our back office provider and I would recommend it if you are using the back office platform. - **Recommend**

What technology are you using for client/trade monitoring? And would you recommend these?

- Automation tools, Bond One – **Recommend**
  - Our trading system is fully integrated and as such gives us a clear picture of our risk stature. The automation tools are continuously being fine-tuned to react to market volatility.
- Portfolio Aid - R**ecommend**
- In house. But Smarts is on my wish list.
- Smarts Broker, In-house machine learning surveillance tools - **Recommend**
  - Except Smarts Broker is old technology. New technology solutions using machine learning and AI are the future and we are fully invested
- Broadridge reporting and PositionWatch - **Recommend**
- PositionWatch Dataphile - **Recommend**
- Smarts Broker, Portfolio Aid - **Recommend**
- Manual review process given low volume of trading - **does not recommend**
  - Not practicable for high volume trading
- Manual - **Recommend**
- SS&C Risk & Compliance Intelligence (formerly Subserveo) - **Recommend**
- PositionWatch - **Recommend**

What technology are you using for client communication?

- Email - **92.31%**
- Google meets - 250 max participants - clear video always; Google Chat; Bloomberg - **38.46%**
- Messaging through an app/platform - **46.15%**
- Phone - **84.62%**
- Skype - **38.46%**
- Zoom - **38.46%**

Would you recommend those tools (from the above question) for client communication?
- Yes - **100%**:
  - Each individual client may require a different approach and while most of them can be reached by the main ones, it's vital to use a variety of tools to interact with our clients.
  - Email is the most readily available technology which our stakeholders have access to whether at work or home.

Any other technology used during the COVID-19 crisis? Please describe.

- Earphones with mic are necessary for all video chats. I can't believe how much environmental noise is eliminated. Now wishing for wireless!
- GlobalProtect VPN Client.
- Padlet for file sharing, GOTOMYPC, NETEXTENDER, BLOOMBERG.
- Security security security (scan, scan, scan every day).

What were some lessons learned about technology regarding your Business Continuity Plan? Please describe.

- Bandwidth, need for more powerful laptops.
- Dependencies on bandwidth and external vendors is a challenge.
- Despite the nature of the crisis our Business Continuity helped our initial rollout of technology and permitted a rapid distancing of our workforce.
- Firms that focused on the end-goal of supplying everyone with what they needed to do their jobs well from home were most successful. Those who penny pinched, nickeled and dimed, were not successful and have seen loss of productivity.
- I am glad we are doing an annual test.
- Issues with internet service, VPN, laptop issues with respect to WiFi and Bluetooth cards.
- None.
- Our BCP had a certain level of reliance on redundancy from other locations within which the firm has operations support. We had to adapt to working from home fairly quickly from all locations.
- Our biggest challenge related to the secure working from home enablement of employees overseas. This was resolved once we were able to deliver laptops and hard tokens for VPN and an area where we will further refine BCP plans based on these learnings.
- Strong IT Department.
- Testing scenarios with the technology is a key lesson learned as a variety of parameters and use cases presented themselves in this work remotely environment.
- That connectivity is the lifeline to productivity.