



Think Like A Coward

By THEJENDRA B.S

The business world has changed significantly and rapidly in the last decade. Regardless of the industry, more and more businesses are operating on a 24x7 global basis. Even tiny organizations with less than a dozen employees depend on several modern technologies and worldwide competition to remain in business.

Nowadays, it is not possible to run any business using the same methods and processes that were used five or 10 years ago. To stay in business, alive and breathing, is of paramount importance to every modern organization.

Less than a decade ago concepts like disaster recovery and business continuity were almost unknown or just considered as optional academic subjects. The only traditional method organizations followed for disaster recovery (DR) or business continuity (BC) was to enroll into some insurance for their key equipment along with a few optional covers. But protecting today's business is beyond having some insurance covers and keeping your fingers crossed.

An important question facing organizations today is how to protect their business from various predictable disasters that can strike at any time? Secondly, who are the best persons to protect your business? What sort of qualification and mindset does one need to work in a DR and BC department? Where and how can you find or identify such persons?

You may argue that my questions are actually stupid because DR/BC is almost a mature science, and there are umpteen numbers of consultants, templates, certifications, and best practices available to everyone.

If organizations need to establish DR/BC it is easily possible to get competent resumes by the hundreds within hours of posting a job advertisement. So what is the big deal?

Agreed, there are ample sources qualified candidates, books, resources, etc., on DR/BC issues. However, in spite of all such available resources, what is that unique skill that is essential to become a successful DR/BC manager or a team member in any complex modern organization? It is a skill that no training program or certification can teach. How exactly should a DR/BC manager be different and unique from the rest of the employees in an organization?

If you are eagerly expecting me to describe that unique skill you are probably going to be a trifle disappointed. This is because I am going to describe a skill that history and society has never been kind to, something that most people feel uncomfortable or despise to be one. The kind of people I am recommending for DR/BC departments are those who can think like cowards, talk like cowards, plan like cowards, and constantly spread a healthy dose of cowardice around the organization.

Every organization that is serious about

risk management should nurture, promote, and respect cowards in their DR/BC departments to protect their businesses from countless risks. Now you may loudly argue why does any organization need cowards? Nobody has ever erected a statue honoring a coward. No management guru or a business school professor drools over a coward.

Everyone insists on the need for brave leaders everywhere, someone who can make tough decisions, are flamboyant, lead, motivate, inspire employees, thrill customers, and boldly take the road less travelled. Nobody has ever heard of a coward who does all that.

True, braveness, toughness, and all those groovy and flamboyant leadership skills are required to run and grow a business. But if you can think a bit warped and out of the box, such people are not exactly suitable to protect the business because of what they are and what they don't want to be. Let me begin my argument in favor of cowards with a simple joke:

A ship's captain wanted some sailors for his ship. So he called a dozen hefty-looking chaps and asked who in the group were brave and excellent swimmers. About five of them lifted their hands. To everyone's surprise, the captain selected the remaining seven as his sailors. When asked why he chose the cowards he replied, "The chaps I selected do not know how to swim and are not very brave. So they will try the hardest to keep the ship afloat."

Now let us see how someone who thinks like a coward could be a perfect candidate for protecting your business.

1 Investing in cowards could be the best business decision you can take to save your business from predictable and even unpredictable disasters. A Chinese proverb says, "Only a coward can create the best defenses." This method should be your approach to protect your business. A brave man usually does not bother to create many defenses because he is always confident that he has the power and strength to withstand and tackle any danger. Also they are incapable of seeing risks the way a coward can. But a coward knows there are always countless dangers all around that he cannot tackle, so he tries to build the best possible defenses.

He sees risks and dangers in practically anything that normal people cannot. Applied to your business he or she can smell and see a risk in an instant like a shark that is able to smell blood from miles away.

2 Cowards have a special advantage that nobody has. They have no limits in their ability to seek and cover risks. They see that things ordinary people cannot. They always think in an extreme, paranoid fashion. Fear controls his imagination. A coward trusts no one, not even himself fully. Cowards have an “I will believe it when I see it” and “prove it to me” attitude and do not visualize their workplace from behind fancy status reports and colorful metrics. They don’t believe anything they have not personally seen working to their absolute satisfaction. They can get into nitpicking details and views from countless directions.

3 Cowards think beyond technology. They go beyond just data protection, backups, and standby servers. Today with the amount of computers, software, communications equipment, etc., DR/BC is often assumed as an IT thing. But risk prevention is beyond IT. They see a slave-sized tech support team managed by a clueless IT manager as a bigger risk to the organization than losing all its data due to a server crash or a virus attack.

4 For a coward everything is viewed as a risk. Fear helps a coward build fantastic fences. A brave leader will not hesitate to go to war. But a coward will prevent war from happening as long as possible. For example, a brash and brave manager may take a quick decision to fire an employee on flimsy grounds. But a coward will think of how this incident could affect the business, what safeguards are currently available, and how the situation could take shape. A coward thinks in terms of lawsuits, or the political contacts the employee may have, or the indirect damages an aggrieved employee could do to the organization.

5 Cowards think like ants. In case you did not know, ants think winter all the time. Ants collect food throughout the summer, as they know winter will set in fast. So they collect the maximum amount of food and other useful material to survive the winter. They know when winter sets in they will not be able to move out or get food easily. Hence they do not waste their summers by enjoying the sun and loafing around. When winter sets in they enjoy the fruits of their summer labour. Similarly a coward

knows good times never last long enough nor come often. So they take the maximum precaution to see that the organization has saved enough for a rainy day by not being extravagant in the first place.

6 A coward knows that there are no such things like a best approach, best managers, best employees, or a best strategy. He only knows what is possible or not possible within the constraints and limitations of his organization. Cowards always take a moderate approach. They avoid hype, flamboyance, and big bang approaches in all business functions, projects, deals, etc., as they know the reputation, financial, and other risks involved in melodrama and the obvious spectacular failures ahead.

7 Brave leaders claim they see the horizon clearly, but a coward is more worried about the pothole near his leg. A coward has a 360-degree vision and many eyes and ears. They think small, medium, and big and see the world through a combination of a magnifying glass, microscope and a telescope. He is someone who will look in eight directions while crossing a one way street.

Just when you thought there was no hope for cowards on this planet, you can now see an entire DR/BC industry eagerly waiting to grab and nurture them. Now that we have seen how a coward can be of use to every organization, when can we see a job advertisement that goes like this?

Wanted: XYZ Corporation, a reputed global company, is seeking suitable candidates for its disaster recovery and business continuity department. The right candidate must think like a coward, talk like a coward, and must be brave enough to admit they are cowards. They should be capable of seeing risks in a manner that regular employees cannot, and must have a paranoid personality.



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