

## Article

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# Enterprise resilience: Why business continuity is a leadership problem, not only an IT one

When most organisations think about resilience, they think about technology. Backups. Disaster recovery. Cyber defences. And while those things matter, they only tell part of the story.



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The uncomfortable truth is this: when things go wrong, it's rarely just the technology that fails.

### **The real weakness is rarely the technology**

Technology failures have a habit of exposing what was already fragile. Governance structures that weren't clear. Processes that hadn't been stress-tested. Supplier dependencies nobody had fully mapped. Leadership teams that hadn't rehearsed the decisions they'd need to make under pressure.

Business resilience is a leadership challenge. An operating model challenge. A decision-making challenge. Organisations that treat it purely as an IT problem will find themselves underprepared when it matters most.

### **Stop measuring impact in downtime. Start measuring it in business outcomes.**

The real cost of an incident isn't measured in hours of downtime. It's measured in business outcomes.

What does that actually look like?

- Invoices that can't be raised, and cash that doesn't flow
- Customers who can't be served, and trust that quietly erodes
- Regulatory obligations that go unmet, and the scrutiny that follows
- Decisions that can't be made because the data isn't there
- Reputational damage that can take months, or years, to recover.

These are the consequences that keep boards awake at night. And yet, continuity planning is often designed around restoring systems rather than protecting the business services that underpin these outcomes.

Effective resilience planning starts by asking a different question: which business services must be protected and restored first? Technology and processes should be designed around those priorities. Not the other way around.

### **The business impact analysis: Where resilience planning begins**

A Business Impact Analysis (BIA) is one of the best things a leadership team can do. It moves the conversation away from technical recovery metrics and towards genuine business risk.

A well-executed BIA helps organisations:

- Identify their most critical business services - the ones that, if lost, would cause the greatest harm
- Understand acceptable thresholds: how long can you operate without a given service? How much data loss is tolerable?
- Map dependencies across people, processes, technology and third-party suppliers
- Make informed, risk-based investment decisions, so resilience spend goes where it genuinely matters.

It's not a one-off exercise. It's a foundation for ongoing, intelligent resilience planning.

### **The questions every senior leader should be able to answer**

Resilience is no longer just about asking "Are we secure?" The bar is higher than that. The questions that matter now are:

- Which business services matter most, and do we all agree on the answer?
- How long can we operate without them, realistically, not theoretically?
- What decisions would we need to make in the first 24, 48 and 72 hours, and who makes them?
- Are we confident those decisions are understood and rehearsed, or are we assuming we'll figure it out on the day?

If any of those questions give you pause, that's a gap worth closing.

### **Building resilience that goes beyond the technical**

At Waterstons, we work with organisations across sectors to build resilience that goes beyond the technical. From business impact analysis and continuity planning to governance design and leadership preparedness, we help senior teams understand their real exposure and build the confidence to respond when it counts.

Resilience isn't a project to be completed. It's a capability to be built, tested and continuously improved.

If you'd like to explore what this looks like for your organisation, we'd love to talk - drop us a line to [info@waterstons.com.au](mailto:info@waterstons.com.au)

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