



OUR FIRM'S CULTURE AND CONSULTATIVE APPROACH

Whether you're evaluating Avaluation Consulting as a prospective consulting partner, or as a potential employer, there are a number of questions you may have about our firm. We created this document to initially address two "categories" of questions – Culture and Methodology. We look forward to exploring each of these in detail with you, and hopefully this will aid in your initial evaluation process.

OUR CULTURE

Avalution's leadership team recently polled their employees and asked a very simple question – if you were asked to describe the culture of our firm, how would you describe it? Instead of delivering a management-created narrative on our culture, we have compiled some of their responses.

Here are their thoughts...



Definitely a place for those who want to dive in and get to work with a minimum of interference. I find the team atmosphere and lack of bureaucracy refreshing... you actually get to focus on the client.

Work hard, become professionally rewarded. We're a close knit team and we equally value a strong work-life balance.

I'm rewarded to deliver high quality solutions that make business sense.

I'm encouraged to be creative and leverage my experiences and those of my co-workers.

Avalution is a learning environment where experiences are applied to our clients' unique environments to deliver creative, efficient and cost-effective solutions that make business sense to executive managers.

Avalution is fast and smart, but also thoughtful. They find ways to draw out the full potential of their people in unique ways, but primarily by always expecting the best.

We work hard. But we work hard in a positive, supported environment.





OUR METHODOLOGY

Avalution Consulting specializes in event risk management and business continuity solution design, development, implementation and long-term maintenance. We differentiate ourselves by taking a holistic, proactive view of the business and focus on both reducing risk likelihood and limiting event impact.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

To ensure a common understanding of the desired end-state, we define the term “Business Continuity Management (BCM)” as a program focused on designing, implementing and maintaining strategies to ensure the availability of business processes and technology assets in accordance with management-approved objectives. Typically, a BCM program includes five main components:

- **Emergency Response**

Emergency Response activities are designed to protect people, property and equipment following a serious incident. Examples include: shelter-in-place, evacuation and related personnel accountability processes.

- **Crisis / Incident Management**

Crisis / Incident Management is a management-executed program designed to effectively and efficiently respond to an event, minimize impact, reassure stakeholders, and prepare for recovery. Crisis management is an enterprise-wide process to manage an event, whereas incident management is a term typically reserved for the management of an Information Technology (IT) event.

- **Crisis Communications**

Crisis Communications is typically executed as part of a crisis / incident management program. This process keeps both internal and external stakeholders informed regarding the status of an event and supports two-way dialogue.

- **IT Disaster Recovery**

IT Disaster Recovery involves restoring IT assets at a hot-site or alternate production facility following a technology disruption.

- **Business Recovery**

Business Recovery, also known as business resumption, addresses the recovery of critical business functions at an alternate location or with alternate (manual) workarounds. Part of business recovery is the establishment of manual workarounds when technology is unavailable.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY CONSULTING SOLUTIONS

PROGRAM DEFINITION

At Avalution, we assist organizations of all sizes and in nearly all industries, to design, develop, implement and mature unique business continuity programs every day. We don't feel business continuity planning is complicated or cost-prohibitive; rather, we're confident that with the right level of program planning and organization up front, a cost-effective, repeatable program is achievable.

During the project definition phase, we will develop program governance documents, and collaborate with our client stakeholders to identify the best structure for their future-state continuity capability. This shared understanding is then typically documented in a business continuity policy or framework. We will also perform a high level assessment of current-state business continuity capabilities to leverage existing capabilities and build on any foundation already established. Lastly, we work with our client's BCM program sponsor to identify a cross-functional steering committee that can provide input throughout the project. This critical action ensures enterprise-wide support and involvement.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

How do we deliver results? We understand that different corporate cultures necessitate the need for differing programs and solutions. We have worked with a variety of very unique organizations and have successfully developed and delivered sustainable programs by following industry-leading project management approaches. Our approach is simple:

1. Every project should have a project charter, plan and schedule. They should detail the exact scope of the project, key stakeholders, communications and quality assurance plans, and risk management strategies. A strong project plan is the most important tool for a shared understanding of the work to be done.
2. We, as consultants, should be able to manage the project, and our clients should not feel like full time project managers for a project they have paid someone to complete. As a result, our clients can expect us to manage the schedule, send out reminders and raise potential issues before an impact to the timeline or budget.

BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS (BIA)

A critical element of the BCM life-cycle, a BIA is a key management tool designed to establish recovery objectives, justify the objectives and begin the process of collecting business continuity plan details. Although differing definitions exist, key BIA activities include:

- Gathering data to reach conclusions regarding current state operations and identifying critical business processes that should be considered a part of the initial scope of the program
- Justifying criticality conclusions through quantifiable and intangible information, with support ranging from possible revenue exposure to reputational impairment
- Establishing recovery objectives (time, data loss and capacity)



OUR PHILOSOPHY

The BIA is important, but we also believe in balancing the time spent in this effort. Our approach delivers results quickly – results that are realistic, take into account interdependencies and are approved by executive management. Above all, our BIA process adds clarity to the scope of the business continuity planning effort and enables a renewed focus on the critical elements of the business.

Here are some general comments regarding our approach to BIA execution:

- The BIA is a critical, foundational element of a BCM program. It provides focus and enables timely, cost-effective solution development.
- We do not believe in over-analysis – the BIA is a means to an end, not the end.
- Questionnaires are not the ideal method to gather justification for recovery objectives – interviews and group facilitated sessions are more efficient and result in better information.
- Recovery is measured from the beginning of downtime, not when a disaster is declared (this is how your customers see it too!).



RISK ASSESSMENT

BCM grew out of the business leader's need to manage the risk that, at some point in the future, operations may be impacted by an unforeseen event and as a result, may be limited or inoperable. We categorize all these events as "availability related risks" because they ultimately affect the availability of critical business functions.

There are two ways to reduce availability risks: reduce likelihood and limit impact. Traditional BCM methodologies focus on limiting impact (often through recovery planning, testing and training), but they often ignore the opportunity to reduce the likelihood of a business interruption. Although risk assessment is a common component of most business continuity methodologies, the business continuity professional's involvement is normally limited to assessing the likelihood of occurrence as opposed to evaluating control operation and identifying recommendations to actually reduce likelihood. These tasks are often reserved for the business, but risk management and business continuity personnel can often add significant value in this area.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Avalution Consulting's risk assessment approach mirrors enterprise-wide risk management concepts by not only estimating the likelihood of risk occurrence but also identifying opportunities to affect the likelihood of occurrence. We meet this objective by identifying likely sources of availability risk, current-state controls to mitigate risk and options to further mitigate the likelihood of the event to a level acceptable to management.

Like our clients, we don't see the value in a "laundry list" of threats ranked by perceived likelihood and potential impact – instead, we focus our assistance by evaluating existing controls, recommending risk mitigation strategies and helping our clients prioritize these recommendations for implementation.

In addition to identifying areas to mitigate risk, the risk assessment also enables the planner to define worst-case planning scenarios. Overall, this helps focus the planning effort. Risk assessment conclusions also help business continuity professionals challenge strategy selection and planning assumptions.



STRATEGY DEFINITION

Different organizations have differing risk tolerances. Building on the results of the risk assessment and business impact analysis, strategy definition addresses the cost-benefit analysis and selection of appropriate risk reduction strategies. Of importance, risk reduction addresses both likelihood reduction and impact limitation. The latter is a common outcome of the business continuity strategy definition process, however likelihood reduction is of equal importance. A focus on preventing an event is of significant value to an organization and its stakeholders.

The strategy definition phase of a business continuity planning effort results in crisis management process designs, internal and external crisis communications process designs, and methods to recover the following:

- Facilities
- Roles, to include key personnel
- Technologies, to include systems applications, data, networks and telephony
- Vendor and business partner relationships, with a focus on critical single and sole source providers

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Avalution Consulting focuses on both aspects of risk reduction using the outcome of a business impact analysis and risk assessment. We develop strategy options, with an emphasis on risk likelihood, as well as impact limitation (crisis management, crisis communications, business recovery and IT disaster recovery). Our analysis includes implications and cost estimates, with the objective of enabling the executive manager to elect to mitigate or accept the risk.

Our strategy definition process addresses threats to and the loss of key facilities, people, equipment, technologies and business partners. This process takes into account the results from the risk assessment and business impact analysis, so strategy selection assumptions are valid and realistic. For example, the risk assessment, together with our strategy definition methodology, helps to define what an appropriate distance may be between primary and alternate facilities.

Our experience also enables us to introduce creative, cost-effective strategy options for our clients. Not only does this include the cost of implementing the strategy option, but we also estimate the cost of maintaining the solution over time. Overall, business continuity strategy definition does not have to result in high cost solutions that are difficult to maintain. Detailed analysis and creativity are key success factors.

PLANNING AND SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION

While business continuity planning involves more than just developing plans, this process is still a critical component of the business continuity program. This is because the least experienced person may be the one called upon to execute the plans. As a result, the documentation of the business continuity plan remains a key service offered by our firm.

What are the key components of the business continuity plan?

- Crisis Management Plan – The set of procedures designed to assist the management team tasked with responding to an event, with the objective of stabilizing the situation and preparing for recovery
- Crisis Communications Plan – The plan outlining the organization’s internal and external communications strategy
- Business Recovery Plans – The series of business function-oriented plans focused on the recovery of critical business processes to a minimal level
- IT Incident Management Plan – The set of procedures preparing IT for a recovered state – regardless of cause (i.e. a crisis management plan for the IT department)
- IT Disaster Recovery Plans – The series of technology-specific procedural documents designed to enable a recovered state

Regardless of the scope of the planning effort, Avalution Consulting can assist in putting the pieces together. We can assist with the design of industry best-practice planning templates, as well as document the plans themselves. We understand how to balance brevity with necessary detail (using words and diagrams), which will enable your organization to more easily maintain the plans once accepted.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

We jointly develop plans with our clients’ subject matter experts – we do not accept the task of writing plans for our clients without their involvement. No one knows our clients’ organizations better than our clients’ employees.

Additionally, the plans we develop are maintainable – we don’t believe in developing voluminous, narrative-oriented plans. Instead, we believe in streamlined, checklist oriented plans that include detailed actions to recover business critical functions and technologies. Our plans are built with long-term maintenance in mind.

To help implement this philosophy, Avalution also offers The Planning Portal, a cost-effective business continuity planning software package. Please contact us for more information on this tool.



TESTING (EXERCISING)

Executive managers can obtain assurance that their business continuity strategies will work in one of two ways – a test (a.k.a. an exercise) or a real-world event. Without either, no one can state that a business continuity strategy will work as designed.

How can Avalution Consulting assist your organization with obtaining a sense of assurance regarding strategy design? We can provide the following support:

- Identifying the appropriate testing approach
- Documenting the test plan, to include assistance with developing test objectives and associated success criteria
- Developing test facilitation materials, to include scenario information and test scripts
- Facilitating the testing event, to include introducing scenario information
- Leading a “post-mortem” discussion in order to capture lessons learned

OUR PHILOSOPHY

NOT A PASSING GRADE ALONE!

Avalution Consulting would consider a test synonymous with an exercise given our perspective that a “pass/fail” rating is often counter-productive. Key testing objectives include strategy validation, business continuity maturity enhancement (based on lessons learned) and response and recovery personnel skill level improvements.

Tests are the best form of training for response and recovery personnel, so our consultants work to make the training experience as realistic as possible. To meet this objective, we develop multi-phased scenarios based on the results of a risk assessment or using scenarios with a higher likelihood of occurrence.

Our scenarios test all elements of the business continuity process, which may include emergency response, crisis management, business recovery and IT disaster recovery. For those areas of the business likely to be affected by the scenario, we use organization-specific information, to include facility, people and business function characteristics. We also prepare additional “exercise inputs” designed to make the response and recovery teams “think on their feet”. This additional information covers topics they will likely experience as part of a real response or recovery effort.

Finally, as we move through the exercise, we debrief each phase by covering key actions that should have been performed and point out sources of information that could have been helpful as the team navigated the response or recovery process.



TRAINING AND AWARENESS

In an effort to raise business continuity awareness, many business continuity managers are implementing training programs. At first, they believe the training development and implementation process will be simple, but it often proves to be just the opposite. Unfortunately, many find themselves struggling to identify training content and delivery mechanisms that reflect their organizations' unique BCM program and culture.

While custom training meets this need, it tends to be time intensive for both the trainer and the trainee. Because resource constraints are always present within business continuity groups, time and money are rarely spent on training development. This is why Avalution develops customized training that provides practical material delivered in a timely, repeatable manner.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We develop personalized training based on our client's business continuity programs, not general, best practice methodologies and processes. Our training development methodology provides effective training material that meets specific learning objectives for multiple audiences throughout an organization. Many business continuity training programs focus exclusively on the planner, ignoring all the other employees that participate in the response and recovery process. Avalution's training programs do the opposite. We develop content specific to all key audiences, and identify the best, most cost-effective way to reach them.

For example, we have successfully brought together various risk management groups in many of our client organizations with the objective of introducing emergency response, crisis management and business continuity processes in one clear, concise training module. We've built programs that address evacuation, accountability, first aid, crisis communication and recovery without jargon – often introduced using scenarios that the organization may experience. Delivered via the web, our 5-20 minute animated, narrated training modules are viewable on-demand. Even better, the delivery of the training does not rely on the business continuity professional, which frees these critical resources to consult with the business in order to mature business continuity strategies.

Cost-effective. Timely. Repeatable. Avalution's training programs are all of these, but they also further the business continuity manager's objective of increasing readiness through training and awareness processes.



AND MOST IMPORTANTLY...

Our entire firm is committed to quality. Our co-workers hold each other to high standards, and our clients have grown to expect this from us. As a client, you will immediately recognize we emphasize quality through our project management approaches, as well as our quality, risk and communication management plans.

We also consider a key element of quality to be knowledge transfer – we want to leave our clients with the knowledge and tools to maintain and expand the solutions we deliver. We share our strategies, tools and project lessons learned throughout the course of each engagement.

THIS WAS JUST A SHORT INTRODUCTION

We look forward to discussing these important topics with you in greater detail. Until then, we hope this information helps you better evaluate Avalution Consulting as a future business partner or place of employment.





800.941.0381

www.avalution.com

© 2007-2010 Avalution Consulting, LLC

OUR VISION

To be recognized as a firm of distinction:

- By creating and delivering high quality business continuity and risk management solutions recognized as best-in-class by our clients
- By recruiting and retaining the very best people
- By using the very best tools to deliver repeatable value