

## **COLUMNIST URGES FIRMS TO GET DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS IN ORDER**

Jim Lee, who's 'Midrange Matters' articles appear regularly on iSeries365.com and in iSeries NEWS UK magazine, has urged UK firms to think more seriously about their business continuity and disaster recovery plans.

His comments came after his firm, Glasgow-based Campbell Lee, received inquiries from London-based companies seeking to back up their data at Campbell Lee's data centre in the wake of July's bombings in the capital. The iSeries specialist's datacentre is the biggest in Scotland and companies think that the country is a safer haven for their valuable company data.

Lee said that the London bombings have forced IT managers to think carefully about data back-up. But he said that many others are ignoring real risks: 'Four years on from September 11, almost half of the UK small and medium-sized businesses lack coherent plans to keep the wheels turning if the unthinkable happens – whether it's fire, flood, IT or telecoms failure or, after July 7, terrorist bombings and related threats. SME's employ half the country's workforce, yet are poorly equipped to escape the disruptive impact of the unexpected.'

Lee was speaking after the authorities said that the terrorists may be looking for fresh targets in London and that threat must be taken seriously.

'Even after the Madrid and London bombings, most chief executives and IT managers seem to believe 'it could never happen to us'. They treat potential disaster as an acceptable risk, yet from our own experience of assisting companies, we know that one in five businesses will experience major disruption every year'.

Lee said that there are a wide range of extremes to consider. At a higher level, staff could turn up for work to find their business has been reduced to rubble, with

irreplaceable company data destroyed. And at the lower end of the scale, scenarios include street closures for a number of days, power outages or telecom outages.

‘These can be just as disruptive to the smooth running of a business. Companies should consider how these eventualities might affect them, and protect themselves accordingly. Business continuity is also about people – it’s not just about technology and rebuilding computers. If you don’t have a robust plan in place, you are not a resilient company’.

‘Since July 7, we have been approached by a number of London-based companies wanting to re-locate their back-up systems here in Glasgow because they believe the risk of disruption is too great in the capital. They think Scotland is safer. And that’s not a problem; with today’s communications facilities, the computers can be anywhere and people can work from locations other than their primary place of work. Outage time in the event of a worse-case scenario can be reduced to minutes’.

Lee said that demand for contingency plans was being driven by the fact that insurers will not provide loss of profits cover without a demonstrable continuity plan in place. He said that such plans can alleviate the fears of senior executives that they will not be able to keep the business running and cannot insure that risk.

Lee urged drawing up a shopping list – one whose starting point is to analyse the risks the organisation faces, what credible events might happen and what impact these events will have on staff and their ability to continue to serve customers, suppliers and partners. IT or infrastructure failure was merely one facet of such a plan.

He said: ‘It’s simply a matter of asking: After July 7 what is the worst thing that is likely to happen?’ and preparing for it. It’s really a perfect example of the old army expression “proper prior planning prevents poor performance.”

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