



The Soap Box provides you the reader with an opportunity to speak your mind on the issues impacting on your discipline. To air your views contact Nigel Allen at [nigel.allen@thebci.org](mailto:nigel.allen@thebci.org)

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## Q: Is there a sufficient level of professionalism in BCM?

In my opinion it is people that make the difference between a BCM process that works and one which does not. In terms of determining the levels of professionalism which exist amongst BCM practitioners, it is necessary to consider the various functions and roles within the BCM process. In my response to the question posed, I will examine how these functions and roles are embedded in organisations and consider the extent to which companies in the Netherlands where I am based have succeeded in embedding these.

Within organisations where business continuity is well established, BCM professionals are represented at strategic, tactical and operational levels.

**Strategic:** In BCM-advanced companies, ownership of business continuity is allocated at a strategic level. The board is responsible for the overall business continuity strategy and as such is the owner of the BCM programme and is responsible for the funding of the process.

In most Dutch organisations, I would say that there is a lack of strategic 'know how', experience and commitment with regards to business continuity management. In general, most companies consider BCM to be of minor importance. Organisations are generally driven by short-term goals and are often not aware of the necessity for effective continuity procedures and the potential cost benefits which such processes can create. In my opinion, only if there is specific BCM legislation and regulation, as in the financial markets, will ownership of BCM be elevated to a strategic level.

**Tactical:** At a tactical level, business continuity management is located within the BCM division where business continuity officers and managers are responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the BCM process. These responsibilities may include: aligning all BCM activities across various departments/processes; creating and embedding awareness of BCM activities; ensuring alignment with legislation and regulation; and executing risk assessment activities and business impact analyses.

As has already been mentioned, if Dutch companies are failing to make a strategic commitment to BCM at a board level, then it is to be expected that they are underperforming in terms of their continuity activities at a tactical level. In those organisations where a business continuity officer or manager has been appointed, it is often the case that they will meet significant resistance to implementing the required continuity procedures. Since BCM is often regarded primarily as a cost centre, activities tend to be limited to isolated operational initiatives, without any alignment with other processes.

**Operational:** At an operational level, there is responsibility for plan development, testing and maintenance. Business continuity coordinators and/or business continuity specialists should have in depth knowledge of the processes that they are responsible for. They act upon the guidelines that are provided by the BCM manager in relation to issues such as the MTPD, the frequency of testing and the use of templates.

Once again, with so few organisations in the Dutch market incorporating BCM activities into their general business policy, and with limited senior management support, any operational-level BCM activities tend to be poorly conducted and are relatively ineffective.

In response to the question, I would consider an organisation which has appointed BCM responsibilities as a strategic, tactical and operational level to be displaying sufficient levels of professionalism in business continuity. In addition, such staff should be properly resourced and have sufficient knowledge of BCM processes, with the skills to raise awareness and train people effectively. Ideally, BCM should be an integral part of the business and if the majority of organisations embed continuity into their way of thinking then it will become simply business as usual. We are, however, a long way from this ideal situation, and it is clear that, certainly in the Dutch market, there is still a lot of work to do!

### JOOP FRANKE FBCI

Joop Franke is principal of educational services at the BCM Academy in the Netherlands. The Academy is also located in Belgium and Germany.

[Info@bcmacademy.nl](mailto:Info@bcmacademy.nl)  
[www.bcmacademy.nl](http://www.bcmacademy.nl)