

## **SS 540:2008 Singapore Standard for Business Continuity Management**

Prepared for the Unexpected

With at least half the population relying on Singapore Health Services' (SingHealth) quality healthcare supported by its three pillars of Patient Care, Education and Research, business continuity simply cannot be left to chance. SingHealth is the largest healthcare group in Singapore, offering a complete range of multi-disciplinary and integrated medical care across three hospitals, five national speciality centres and a network of nine polyclinics serving the eastern half of the island.

"While some organisations create their own Business Continuity Management (BCM) systems, we felt that SingHealth stood to benefit much more by certifying to SS 540. The constant auditing allows us to work on areas that need improvement, so we continue to evolve, and stay relevant," explains Mr Tan Jack Thian, Group Chief Procurement Officer, SingHealth, Chief Operating Officer, KK Women's and Children's Hospital & Chairman, SingHealth Business Continuity Planning /Management Workgroup.

SS 540 provides a BCM framework and guidelines for companies to prepare themselves so as to minimise the impact of disruptions to business operations. Applicable to all companies regardless of industry or size, it gives reassurance to customers and stakeholders that the company is prepared to deal with business disruptions and continue its business.

The BCM framework covers six areas: Risk Analysis and Review, Business Impact Analysis, Strategy, Business Continuity Plan, Tests and Exercises, and Programme Management. It also covers four components in a matrix format (Policies, Processes, People and Infrastructure) to help companies identify potential gaps in their BCM efforts.

SingHealth appreciates the benefits of such a framework which enables the organisation to deliver uninterrupted and uncompromised patient care. As Mr Tan explains, confirmation that certification was the way to go came in the wake of 9/11 and was cemented by the SARS outbreak of 2004. Being a top-down plan made implementation easier to achieve. But of course, management was faced with the inevitable resistance to change from staff who were used to a set routine. "This was one of the major challenges we faced during the six-month implementation process," recalls Mr Tan. "But it was one we foresaw and overcame through putting the right people in place to champion the cause, and winning the staff over by helping them understand how it would ensure quality for patients 24/7 at normal times and even during a crisis."

BCM implementation commenced five years ago right after the SARS crisis and is still an on-going process of improvements. Transition from the basic BCM standard to TR 19 *Technical Reference for Business Continuity Management* certification in 2005 was a challenge as major changes had to be made to the existing framework. The recent change to SS 540 was a smoother transition, although budget allocation was a careful consideration.

However, the journey has been worth taking. Today SingHealth has the proper procedures in place to guide the organisation to select the most cost-effective strategy to deal with a given situation. In addition, in all its critical function areas, alternative sites at member institutions have been prearranged. In short, with SS 540 in place, SingHealth is ready to meet the challenges of an adverse business interruption, and assure its patients and stakeholders of the best care for their patients at all times.

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