



*Stephen Lancaster
Managing Director*

ABOUT ENVUE

Envue provides professional IT and project consulting services for clients in a range of industry and business sectors, including oil & gas, engineering and public bodies.

Its service portfolio includes Project, Programme and Service Management, IT Strategy and Due Diligence.

For more information visit:
www.envue-ltd.com

T: +44 (0)1224 224561
E: info@envue-ltd.com

Making Plans for 'Business as Usual'

Recent political unrest across North Africa and the Middle East has served to underline how important it is for companies with operational interests in the countries involved to have business continuity plans in place.

Such plans have one basic reference point in those circumstances: keeping the business going efficiently if means of communication are suddenly lost, personnel movements are restricted, or operational activities are otherwise compromised.

Business continuity is all about preparation: identifying and assessing the potential threats to the organisation, and putting in place measures to counteract them should they become reality. Those threats can range from flood or fire to the sudden loss of all IT functions across the organisation.

Putting those plans in place to protect overseas interests or activities, the complexities inevitably grow: consideration has to be given to geographical and political factors as well as local and international communication issues.

I was actually in Cairo on business at the end of January this year when the large-scale public protests against the Egyptian government started. Within 24 hours, visitors to the country were being advised to avoid the centre of Cairo and limit our movements; within 48 hours I was preparing to fly home, and organisations were putting plans in place to evacuate ex-pat personnel. Events moved that quickly.

A combination of factors – the speed with which the political demonstrations and violence developed, a government-imposed curfew, office closures, the loss

of internet and mobile phone networks – will undoubtedly have tested the contingency plans of many businesses with an operational presence in the country.

In the event of moving personnel away from areas of unrest or hostility, communication is central to the issue: maintaining voice and online links between local operations and relocated staff working temporarily from outside the country. Equally, it is about ensuring there is continuity of access to operational data that remains secure and subject to robust back-up systems on location.

In this technological era, there is an immense range of communications solutions available that businesses can put in place to meet those needs. They provide them with the confidence and assurance that systems and processes vital to the organisation's activities will be maintained in the event of a sudden or drastic change of local circumstances.

Those solutions represent the tools of the business continuity process: the practical elements of a strategic plan that needs to be carefully formulated – and regularly tested and reviewed to ensure it always remains relevant to the circumstances it was designed to address.