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Criticall Finds Favour With Japanese Bank

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Criticall has enjoyed tremendous success with its EmergencyCall offering in the Financial Services industry. This is in part due to the efforts of the UK's Financial Services Authority and the Securities and Exchange Commission in the USA driving business continuity standards for the sector forwards. It is also due to the exacting standards that such institutions set for themselves and their suppliers in this area. Among their peers, perhaps few organisations have such a reputation for setting high standards as the Japanese Bank that has just become Criticall's latest financial services customer.

Criticall are delighted to announce a new 3 year contract with one of Japan's most famous banks. This was awarded at the end of an exacting 18 month procurement and evaluation exercise. All leading suppliers of such services globally were considered. Criticall was selected due to the strength of offering, its popularity for ease of use among the user community and its impressive track record among other similar financial services institutions.

The customer runs its international operations from a single, London-based building and were keen to have a mechanism for contacting around 1500 staff within an hour, in case of an emergency outside of normal office hours. The requirement for such notification was detailed in the company's Business

Continuity (BC) Plan, but the means of execution was lacking. Traditionally, such 'mega-scale' communications exercises within a BC Plan are assumed to be addressed by so-called call-trees, where one person calls 5 people, each of whom calls five people, and so-on. Criticall's CEO, Ian Hammond, comments: "In practice, such call-tree, or manual call cascade efforts do not work well enough to meet modern standards, let alone Board and investor expectations. However, only those organisations which carry out genuine, live Business Continuity tests really understand just how inadequate the call-tree model is. **Communications is definitely the weakest link in the chain in most BC Plans.**"

The main weaknesses of manual call-out models in the Financial Services sector are seen to be:

1. There is no easy way to keep a reliable audit of what has happened, of who has been contacted and with what information. Standards bodies, insurers and legislation are all pushing for financial services institutions to keep full and detailed records of key operational events, or face the threat of stiff corporate penalties and possible imprisonment for Directors held accountable.
2. Manual call trees are **slow**. In a real emergency, the slower the response, the worse the likely financial impact on a company's operations and public reputation.
3. It is almost impossible to keep key contact details **up to date** in any organisation of over 1000 individuals, let alone ensuring that all links in the call chain have the correct, current details of each person on their list to be called and carry that list with them at all times.
4. Significant issues arise if just one key link in the chain cannot be contacted, meaning all downstream contacts do not receive the message.
5. Manual calls take longer than automated calls, as there is more interaction between both parties to the call. In real life situations, people will want to know more information than is perhaps desirable

and time is taken up by people ringing back for updates.

6. The sheer amount of personnel effort involved in each iteration of the callcascade means that it is not a practical solution for providing status updates to the target audience. Hence after initial notification, key people can be left confused and out of touch as to what is going on.

7. Whoever is ultimately responsible for managing an event, or crisis, will not be able to gain a **real-time snapshot** of who has been told what and when. Without the power to communicate, or receive accurate reports from the field as to situation status, the Crisis Manager is not equipped with the tools needed to control the situation.

There are many advantages for organisations proactively implementing automated notification systems, in addition to addressing the six issues detailed above. For example, it is a valuable reassurance to an employee's sense of wellbeing to know that they can be contacted reliably and quickly in an emergency. **The Government is sending a booklet to every household in the UK to educate the public on what preparations to make in view of potential emergencies.** In it, they prompt employees to ask their employers directly about their crisis communication plans.

Furthermore, commercial insurers are asking more probing questions about the quality of an organisation's BC Plans before providing the necessary cover.

Subsequent premiums are directly affected by the assessment of the commercial risk presented by an enterprise's level of preparedness for emergencies. The assessed risk for organisations in London is typically highest of all.

For further information about
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