Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer delivers drugs that help people live longer, happier, and healthier lives. To ensure that medications continue to flow uninterrupted in the event of a crisis, Pfizer Singapore turned to the Symantec Consulting Services’ Business Continuity Management practice for its expertise. Pfizer’s challenge was to align its Business Continuity Plan with current worldwide best practices and to make sure the plan would pass an internal corporate audit. Symantec delivered by assessing, testing, and strengthening Pfizer Singapore’s plan, helping the division to achieve its recovery time objective in one-half the time and pass the audit with the highest rating available.

The need to be prepared

From its beginnings as a small family-owned business begun in 1849, Pfizer has grown and changed from a specialty chemical company to a diversified research-based pharmaceutical company with global reach. Hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and others rely on Pfizer to provide drugs critical to medical treatments and to alleviating patient suffering.

Just as its founders could not have anticipated the turns and twists their company would take, neither is Pfizer, nor any company, able to anticipate worldwide events that have the potential to shut down or impact the flow of business. Recent history provides numerous examples including 9/11, SARS, the Avian bird flu, and the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Companies develop Business Continuity Plans precisely to address threats and crises such as these, as well as everyday events such as power outages and data loss due to human error. Keeping plans current as best practices evolve, and making sure they are detailed enough to work if put to the ultimate test, is a challenge. Most companies recognize they don’t have a high enough level of expertise in-house to accomplish this.
Business Continuity Management consulting assistance from Symantec Consulting Services helped Pfizer Singapore pass an internal audit with flying colors and achieve a two-hour Recovery Time Objective.

Pfizer is one. When it faced an audit of its Business Continuity Assurance Plan—more commonly called a Business Continuity Plan—it turned to Symantec for expert advice and assistance.

**Updating and validating plan**

In spring of 2005, General Manager Michael Khor, who manages Pfizer Singapore's operations, decided it was time to review and update the plan. “With the recent wave of epidemics and the heightened threat of terrorist attacks, we were concerned our plan might be somewhat outdated,” he notes. “We were also facing an impending internal corporate audit. Though our Business Continuity Plan is as thick as a telephone book—containing information ranging from call notification trees for staff, customers, and families, to notification information, to business process scripts, to crisis management and regulatory reporting, to IT and business recovery and command center information—we had no way of knowing if it could provide all the guidance necessary to help us recover our business in the event of a crisis.”

**Finding the right expertise**

The Business Continuity Management practice, part of Symantec Consulting Services, offers comprehensive Business Continuity services that include an assessment of current Business Continuity status, risk assessment, business impact analysis, Business Continuity Planning, crisis management, emergency management, incident management, corporate security, and high availability technical solutions.

Symantec consultants design, implement, and exercise both Business Continuity Plans and IT Disaster Recovery Plans and integrate them into one master plan for the enterprise. Business Continuity Planning services from Symantec cover the entire life cycle, including recovery requirements; recovery strategy and architecture; technology implementation; recovery plan development; testing and validation; and continuous improvement.

The consulting engagement at Pfizer covered the following key analysis areas: risk assessment, emergency response plans, Business Continuity Plans, crisis management plans, the command center operating plan, media handling, crisis communication plans and teams, training, availability and recoverability, security, and testing and plan maintenance.

**Business Continuity Plan assessment closes gaps**

The Symantec consultant initially conducted an assessment of the existing Business Continuity Plan to determine where gaps might exist and to strengthen Pfizer’s Business Continuity document according to worldwide best practices prior to the simulation itself. The consultant met with the Pfizer department heads responsible for assembling the original document and provided an overview of the elements that needed to be captured in it. The consultant then reviewed the resulting revisions made by Pfizer staff to benchmark the plan against worldwide best practices. Shortly thereafter, the Symantec
consultant conducted several days of Business Continuity and crisis response training for all 120 Pfizer Singapore employees reporting to Khor. What staff members didn’t realize was that they were being prepared for the unexpected.

Please evacuate the building

A surprise announcement was made by the Symantec consultant at a Pfizer offsite conference on June 16, 2005 that was attended by most of Khor’s staff. The simulation involved the denotation of an incendiary device, which created a fire at Pfizer Singapore’s headquarters, cutting off access to the building and creating what is known in the industry as “denial of access.” The crisis simulation exercise was invoked, with both plans and the employees put to the test. The initial phase of the crisis simulation exercise was to test and evaluate the thoroughness of the Business Continuity Plan and the preparedness of the staff who had recently undergone training.

After assembling employees outside, taking roll call to account for all employees, and issuing instructions to the crisis management, Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery, and other supporting teams, the consultant took the command center staff to a makeshift command center he had prepared. One of the first action instructions issued was to re-establish contact with all staff from the command center. Once all staff had been accounted utilizing call trees within the Business Continuity Plan, internal and external stakeholders such as Pfizer headquarters and regulators were contacted.

Pfizer staff went through a series of simulations to test their ability to carry out the details of the Business Continuity Plan. Command center staff members and the Symantec consultant oversaw the other teams’ responses and recovery actions to ensure that they were prepared, following the Business Continuity Plan and recovering the business in the correct sequence.

Pfizer Singapore had several key goals to achieve, as Khor explains. “First, we wanted to see how the command center group—specifically the Crisis Management Team—responded to a disaster and crisis situation. They’re the heartbeat of the Business Continuity team ensuring that the action instructions of the Business Continuity Plan are carried out—
including in the correct sequence—

**Is recovery fast enough?**

As part of the simulation, the Symantec consultant conducted a series of exercises to benchmark Pfizer Singapore against its Requirement Time Objective and Requirement Point Objective and to measure its ability to meet key Business Continuity and crisis management goals. The exercises tested Pfizer’s plans relating to emergency response, Business Continuity, crisis management, Disaster Recovery, emergency operations, anti terrorism, and media handling.

The exercises tested multiple capabilities. These included the response of senior management during the crisis; the ability of the teams to identify key decision makers; roles and responsibilities; identification of the top 15 business recovery priorities; tracing of staff communications and movements; ability to recover critical business functions and to resume normal operations; tactical and operational skills; and identification of key documents to be recovered if salvage team members were allowed into the Pfizer building.

“Lastly,” Khor concludes, “we had to be able to get access to our technology infrastructure, including the Pfizer database, Web, intranet, and email to facilitate our communications.” Most importantly, all this had to be accomplished within Pfizer’s Recovery Time Objective of four hours.”

**“Symantec’s simulation was especially helpful for our command center staff. A Business Continuity Plan can look good on paper, but if your employees can’t properly execute details in the Business Continuity Plan, that’s the end of the exercise and potentially even the business in threatening situations.”**

**Michael Khor**  
General Manager  
Pfizer Singapore

**The value of preparation in minimizing business risk**

According to Khor, the biggest surprise was the lack of surprises. “Quite honestly, I thought the crisis simulation was going to be a disjointed exercise, with staff uncertain of roles and responsibilities. I was delighted with how well it turned out. I give full credit to the Symantec consultant for preparing us so well.”

For Khor, the biggest benefits of the simulation exercise were threefold, all related to minimizing business risk: testing, awareness, and training. “Our key priority, and the point of the simulation, was to test the Business Continuity Plan to uncover any weaknesses and strengthen the plan so that we’re ‘110 percent’ prepared in the event of real crisis.”

Second, the simulation raised awareness. “It helped employees understand that a real crisis can happen at any time and drove home the importance of being mentally...
prepared,” explains Khor. “The level of awareness, especially among the command center staff, is much higher now.”

Third, the training proved essential to helping ensure that Pfizer Singapore’s business can continue during a crisis or disaster. “Symantec’s simulation was especially helpful for our command center staff,” notes Khor. “A Business Continuity Plan can look good on paper, but if your employees can’t properly execute details in the Business Continuity Plan, that’s the end of the exercise and potentially even the business in threatening situations. The pre-simulation training and the exercise itself tested our employees’ responses under stressful conditions, familiarized them with what pitfalls to avoid and how to mitigate mistakes, and gave us all tremendous hands-on experience in recovering the business within the targeted timeframe.”

After the simulation, the consultant provided a post-mortem debriefing to participants to get their feedback and used the lessons learned from the simulation to help Pfizer Singapore to strengthen its Business Continuity Plan in preparation for the internal audit. Management received a 16 gigabit filmed copy of the exercise for future training purposes, an executive summary, a Business Continuity Plan gap analysis, and a review of the results of the simulation exercises that, in turn, led to further updates to Pfizer Singapore’s response plans.

Reduced recovery time is the bottom line

Preparation and testing paid off handsomely for Pfizer Singapore. The division recovered twice as fast as its RTO and passed the corporate audit with the highest internal rating available. “We were thrilled at being able to get our business-critical functions and value-creating activities running in just two hours,” Khor relates. “In receiving the highest audit rating, Pfizer Singapore has gained a very high profile within the company as being the benchmark against which other divisions will be evaluated for Business Continuity Planning. We need to prove to all our stakeholders that we can protect our staff and recover safely and efficiently, thus keeping the business running.”

As a result of the Symantec consulting engagement, Pfizer Singapore sees the bottom-line value in keeping its Business Continuity Plan current and expects to test its plan at least every year or whenever there is a significant change to the business or IT infrastructure. “Thanks to the Symantec Consulting Services’ Business Continuity Management practice, we have a comprehensive, living Business Continuity Plan that’s ready to go into action in the event of a crisis or disaster. We couldn’t have achieved this as efficiently and effectively as we did without the consulting expertise of the Symantec consultant.”