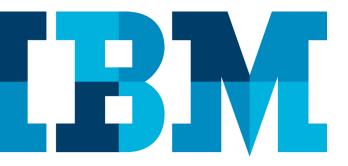## Overview

The need

In late 2011, Zurich Insurance suffered a major flooding incident at the main office of its General Insurance business in Ballsbridge, Dublin. With the building out of action for nearly four weeks, the company needed to invoke its disaster recovery plan.

The solution

120 staff were relocated to IBM's Damastown Technology Campus. IBM Business Continuity and Resiliency Services provided PCs, phones, parking and catering facilities to help Zurich Insurance continue with business as usual until the Ballsbridge office could be restored.

The benefit

Instead of sticking rigidly to the terms of the contract, IBM reacted flexibly to meet the Zurich Insurance team's needs. Key IBM staff were mobilised rapidly and were available 24/7 to support Zurich Insurance's continuity and recovery plan. Thanks to Zurich Insurance's seamless execution of its continuity plan and IBM's support, this serious incident had only a negligible impact on business operations.

Zurich Insurance makes a triumph out of disaster recovery

IBM facilities and resources provide business continuity after a major flooding incident

Part of the Zurich Financial Services Group, Zurich Insurance plc is one of Ireland's leading insurance companies. Based in Dublin, it operates two major lines of business: Life Insurance, which operates from an office in Blackrock, and General Insurance, which has its main office in Ballsbridge.

Over a weekend in October 2011, Dublin suffered from torrential rain which led to localised flooding in a number of areas. By the Monday night, the Zurich General Insurance team knew that they had a serious problem: the basement and car park of the Ballsbridge office was under ten feet of water – which meant that the building's generator, electrics and air conditioning system were all put out of action.

"By around midnight on Monday, it became clear that we wouldn't be able to work at Ballsbridge for some time, so we invoked our disaster recovery plan," explains Frank Crummey, Head of IT for the General Insurance business. "A major component in this plan was our long-standing contract with IBM Business Continuity and Resiliency Services [BCRS] to provide office space and facilities for our staff in the event of a disaster. By 3am, we had received a text message from IBM saying that their team was on its way to their Damastown Technology Campus to prepare for our arrival."

Forming a gold team

Crummey maintained contact through the night with the company's senior executives to form a "gold team". Its first tasks were to analyse the current situation, assess risks, review the business continuity plan and policies, and prioritise the next steps.

"You can't prioritise until you've fully understood the situation you're in, including all the assets and liabilities," says Crummey. "In our case, although we didn't know how long the Ballsbridge office would be out of action, we had to assume it would be unavailable for a significant period. We then looked at which aspects of the business would be affected by this. The good news was that most of our customer-facing operations would be untouched: our claims registration is outsourced to Galway, and most of the other customer-facing staff work in Wexford. We also had no significant IT systems in the office: our main systems are either at the group head office in Switzerland or at other sites. So we knew that the main impact would be on back-office processes – and although these are vital to the company's operations, a brief lack of availability could be tolerated without serious negative effects."

Solution Components

Services
- IBM Business Continuity and Resiliency Services

Relocating staff

By early Tuesday morning, the gold team had made some important decisions about relocating staff. The senior team along with some other staff were accommodated in the Zurich Life office in Blackrock, and in Zurich's European Head Office at the International Financial Services Centre. The remaining 120, who were mostly back-office staff, were asked to remain at home on Tuesday, and to report to the IBM Damastown facility on Wednesday morning.

Setting the priorities

Meanwhile, Crummey and the IT team spent most of Tuesday working with IBM BCRS to prepare the Damastown site for their arrival. The BCRS contract actually covered only 97 seats, but IBM was able to scale up the service to 120 people and meet Zurich Insurance's needs.

"From the simulations we had run, I knew the top priority would be to get the phones working," says Crummey. "By 10am, we had rerouted all the Ballsbridge phones to our office in Wexford, and formed a team there to answer calls and forward inquiries to the appropriate people. By the end of the day, we had the phones working at the IBM site, and over subsequent days, IBM helped us set up a temporary interactive voice response [IVR] service and add extra functionalities such as hunt groups."

Getting back online

The next task was to provision PCs for each of the 120 staff who would be working at the IBM site. Zurich Insurance's standard desktop PC image was installed on the PCs that IBM provided.

"The PC install was an area where we learned a lesson," comments Crummey. "The image we deployed was a few weeks out of date, which meant that each PC needed updating and patching. With 120 PCs trying to download updates at the same time, we had a couple of hours of very slow performance. This wasn't actually a problem because the staff weren't coming in until the next day – but since then we've been sure to update our master image more frequently.

"By Tuesday evening we had 97 PCs and phones up and running. It was a terrific achievement, and put us in a strong position for the arrival of our staff the next morning. The IBM team couldn't have been more helpful: whenever we asked for something, they made it happen. They were quite prepared to go beyond the strict terms of the contract to make sure we got what we needed. They dealt with everything very professionally – even little things like air conditioning settings and sorting out lunch vouchers for the on-site restaurants."

Senior executive support

Over the next few days, the Zurich Insurance team settled in at IBM Damastown, and the company's senior managers visited to support their staff.

"The C-level executives came in on the Wednesday, and they were impressed by the level of recovery we'd achieved in so little time," states Crummey. "The IBM facilities were excellent, and our staff

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— Frank Crummey, Head of IT for the General Insurance business, Zurich Insurance

reacted very professionally to the whole experience. In fact, there was almost a kind of 'Blitz spirit': even though adapting to a new workplace was a bit inconvenient, everybody made the best of it and nobody complained."

Moving back home

The Zurich Insurance team spent more than three weeks at IBM Damastown while the Ballsbridge office was repaired and refitted. The move back to Ballsbridge was completed over a weekend, without incident.

"We had heard from other companies that the move back can sometimes be a bigger challenge than the move out – but in our case, we managed it very smoothly. In general, although the whole incident was a stressful time, it proved to us that our disaster recovery plan was solid and that IBM was the right choice as a partner."

He concludes: "The cost of business continuity services can seem high, and companies often pay for them through gritted teeth – but our contract with IBM BCRS has paid for itself ten times over. The ability to relocate so many staff and recover so quickly and comprehensively from a major incident without any significant impact on the business has been absolutely priceless for Zurich Insurance."

For more information

To learn more about IBM Business Continuity and Resiliency Services, contact your IBM sales representative or visit **ibm.biz**/BdxRug