Team IBM overcomes floods in Chennai to put the client first

Living the IBM values helps ensure business continuity for Client Innovation Center in Chennai, India

Overview

The business need
On December 1, 2015, Chennai, India was hit by record-breaking cyclone winds, torrential rains and flash flooding. In the midst of this devastation, the Client Innovation Center in Chennai needed to perform critical business activities to meet client deadlines.

The solution
IBM groups worked together to implement an IBM Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to execute a smooth operational transition.

The benefits
The recovery site was up and running within 24 hours of invoking BCP for the Chennai operations. The IBM team got the primary site up and operations were back to normal within three business days.

Chennai, the largest industrial and commercial center in Southern India, is normally a hot and dry city with limited seasonal rainfall towards the end of the year. In November 2015, Chennai received record-breaking torrential rainfall, making it the highest recorded in the city in the past hundred years. By December 2, Chennai was officially declared a disaster area: power supply from the grid was suspended, roads were submerged and became impassable, access to essential supplies were impacted, and the telecom network was quickly becoming dysfunctional.

Chennai is an important hub in IBM's global delivery network, with a team of more than 750 professionals providing critical financial operational services to global clients. November is typically the busiest period of the year for the IBM team because this is when client books close to ensure financial statements are published on time. The scope of business critical activities handled by the Chennai team includes monthly close of financial books to generate financial statements, vendor setup, invoice processing, and payment reconciliation of bank statements.

Relying on IBM's robust Business Continuity Plan
With an impending fuel shortage, maintaining ample power became top priority. Power failure caused the scanning vendor to cease services. In fact, the weather situation was so severe, it looked as if it would impede the clients' business. To address these concerns, the team adopted a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to ensure operations were uninterrupted.
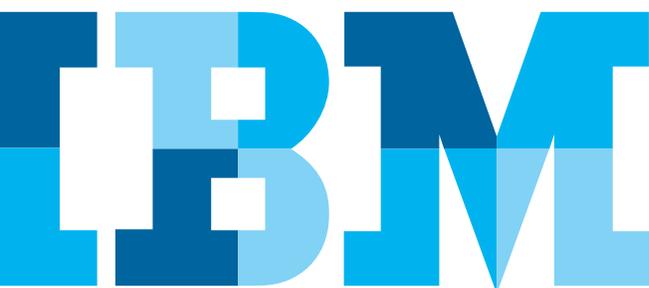
"What makes us essential to our clients is not just the elegance of our offerings or the integration of IBM, as important as those things are, but also our capacity to amaze, delight and surprise our clients. And those are things that can happen every day, often in small ways, but when done consistently, they leave an enduring mark."

—*Ginni Rometty*
IBM Chairman, President and CEO

Figure 1. Buses were mobilized after mapping out the safest route to reach the BCP recovery site in Bangalore.

Purpose[1]
Be essential

Values[3]
- Dedication to every client's success
- Innovation that matters—for our company and for the world
- Trust and personal responsibility in all relationships.

Practices[9]

"Put the client first."	"Listen for need, envision the future."	"Share expertise."
"Restlessly reinvent — our company and ourselves."	"Dare to create original ideas."	"Treasure wild ducks."
"Think. Prepare. Rehearse."	"Unite to get it done now."	"Show personal interest."

Despite continuous flooding, more than 400 IBM professionals made it to the office. With support from IBM administration, a camp site was set up in the Client Innovation Center—complete with rations, water, emergency lights and other means to sustain the employees for an extended period. The closest BCP recovery site was 180 miles away in Bangalore. The employees continued to work from the office to meet the month close timeline as they had no means of getting back home. Different groups within IBM—Delivery, HR, Administration, Business Operations, IT Support, and Transportation—worked together to plan and execute a smooth operational transition. The recovery site was up and running within 24 hours of invoking a BCP for the Chennai operations. In addition, a team of 200 professionals was moved to the BCP site overnight. Another team of 25 professionals was flown to the delivery center in NCR, where the larger team was based. This ensured continuity of operations to support the client's business need.

The IBM team used a robust Business Continuity Management Program, comprising of a comprehensive site readiness check including health certification, and ensured the primary site resumed normal operations within three business days.

Putting our values into practice
IBM Chairman, President and CEO Ginni Rometty states, "What makes us essential to our clients is not just the elegance of our offerings or the integration of IBM, as important as those things are, but also our capacity to amaze, delight and surprise our clients. And those are things that can happen every day, often in small ways, but when done consistently, they leave an enduring mark."

"I would like to acknowledge the excellent collaboration, partnership and working as one team to coordinate and lead the BCP for FS Chennai, which was recently invoked due to the severe flooding that impacted the city. Our operations had to be closed and transferred to Bangalore. The team under the leadership of Siva and support from his leadership team and all the staff in Chennai, as well as leaders of IBM, supported by the finance teams in RT ensured a seamless execution of the BCP whilst maintaining employee safety and wellbeing a priority."

—Sanjay Patel
Financial Shared Services Leader, Rio Tinto

"Overall, the outcome was very positive, as the plan proved to be comprehensive, the response to the situation from both IBM and PepsiCo demonstrated the partnership between PepsiCo and IBM and the results were seen as a success for all geographies supported from Chennai."

— Marie Gallagher
SVP and Controller, PepsiCo, Inc.

Figure 2. Different IBM groups worked together to plan and execute a smooth operational transition.

During the challenging weather conditions in Chennai, the relentless efforts of the IBM team provided a solid example of our Purpose, Values and Practices in action. This team was committed to our Purpose to be essential to our clients, to the world and to each other.

IBM was able to close their monthly accounts and publish financials on time. All the clients supported by the Chennai Client Innovation Center expressed appreciation for the IBM team's relentless efforts to ensure their deadlines were met with minimal impact on the business.

- The IBM delivery leaders consulted with the Executive Leadership Team to mobilize the team with the requisite skills to meet the year-end closing requirements.
- The IBM Transportation Team mobilized buses and mapped out the safest route to reach the BCP recovery site in Bangalore.
- IBM HR ensured each employee was accounted for and provided assistance in bringing everyone home safely from the Chennai site.
- Due to intermittent telecom services, the team used instant messaging and social media to update internal and external stakeholders on critical developments.
- The constant communication between the IBM and client teams ensured there were no gaps with focus on business priorities maintained throughout.

For more information

To learn more about IBM Business Process Services, please visit
ibm.com/services/BPO