



Lynda King Taylor

is a leading expert on corporate change. Her next book, *Managing Meltdown & Controlling Chaos*, will lift the lid on how organisations have succeeded and failed to deal with unexpected events

Too costly, too hard, too frightening... Lynda King Taylor has heard every excuse for ignoring continuity planning

What are you scared of?

The demands are growing on public and private sector organisations to prove they have processes in place to maintain continuous impressive performance, regardless of unusual internal or external circumstances.

Such demands can be almost impossible to meet and it is too easy to find 'reasons' to put off what seems an expensive and time-consuming exercise. But business continuity, resilience and brand reputation management is about *not* making excuses. It's about being wise *before* the event. It is about understanding that great organisations never moan they didn't do well because of the bad economy, a fire at the warehouse, an internal fraud, a strike by key workers or a critical incident. Great organisations do well anyway. Period. The talent needed for 2005 and beyond is for any organisation

to anticipate and better control chaos before it commands change.

No business can afford to ignore risk. Regrettably, most senior executives do. Why? Too many in the boardroom do not understand that it can significantly improve – or ruin – a company's reputation with all its stakeholders.

Most big companies are wandering about in a daze when it comes to corporate governance and risk management. For example, I have come across few organisations that use competitive role-plays when considering strategic options for business resilience.

People simply prefer not to think about things going wrong and it is this fear that often prevents senior managers from looking beyond the short or medium-term. Yet it is not difficult or costly to role-play how competitors, regulators, rogue employees, activists, customers, the

government and even terrorists might act.

Boardrooms must have a contingent strategy that recognises a strategy is only worth pursuing as long as its core conditions are true. As soon as the situation changes, your strategy must adapt. For example, Marks & Spencer considered Sainsbury's its main competitor when, in fact, the marketplace indicated it was ASDA and Tesco.

The Government is unable to bridge the gap between the real issue – the security and resilience of UK companies – and what really concerns the board of directors. The latter may be anything from share performance and internal politics to their own remuneration packages. And if boardrooms don't get ready now for the emerging challenges of business continuity, they simply might not be in business at all. ●