



BACKGROUND

London Fire Brigade (LFB) is the largest fire and rescue service in the UK and one of the largest fire fighting and rescue organisations in the world. As one would expect, LFB is no stranger to planning for emergencies and has statutory duties under both the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA 2004). Under the latter Act, LFB has a statutory duty to plan for emergencies and to maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Brigade is able to continue to perform its functions.

Within LFB, as the department responsible for leading on performance improvement and change across the organisation, the Strategy and Performance Department has the lead for maintaining and developing the risk and business continuity management systems.

In order to satisfy its statutory duties, along with its moral and social responsibilities, LFB has developed a business continuity management system (BCMS) in line with accepted best practice i.e. BS 25999 (British Standard for Business Continuity Management) and its international successor, ISO 22301. Underpinning LFB's BCMS is its business impact analysis (BIA) through which the Brigade identifies critical activities, maps out key dependencies and determines the timeframes for recovering prioritised activities. In September 2011, LFB acquired Abriska, a purpose designed BIA and risk assessment tool from URM, in order to assist it conduct BIAs and identify areas of dependency for risk review. This case study identifies some of the business drivers behind LFB's decision to adopt Abriska, along with its migration and application experiences, as well as benefits derived.

“

The main drawback with the old BIA was that it was a very labour intensive process to produce and maintain, resulting in a number of very complex documents which didn't adopt concise terminology.

”

Chris Clark

BUSINESS DRIVERS FOR ACQUIRING ABRISKA 22301

Prior to adopting Abriska, LFB conducted most of its BIA activity through facilitated workshops with each of its departments. Outputs from these workshops were collected in MS Word documents and MS Excel spreadsheets. Chris Clark, Risk and Business Continuity Manager at LFB, comments “The main drawback with the old BIA was that it was a very labour intensive process to produce and maintain, resulting in a number of very complex documents which didn't adopt concise terminology. Another significant challenge for LFB was achieving consistency across all the BIA reports, when analysing 8 high level key products and services, supported by approximately 110 underlying activities.”

With these issues in mind, LFB started the process of researching BIA/risk assessment tools on the market. Whilst doing so, another UK Fire and Rescue Service alerted LFB to Abriska, a BIA and risk assessment tool developed specifically by URM to meet the requirements of ISO 22301. Having drawn up a shortlist of products, a tendering process followed and Abriska was selected. Abriska's specific focus on delivering a BIA and risk assessment aligned with British and International Standards was an important factor for LFB, particularly as this would address the concerns the Brigade had with its existing manual methodology i.e. time consuming, inconsistent and lack of management reporting functionality.



MIGRATION EXPERIENCES

The main challenge in adopting Abriska was migrating considerable amounts of unstructured data into the tool's relational database. The process was greatly eased by URM who worked on site with LFB to consolidate the existing spreadsheets into one master spreadsheet which was then mapped onto Abriska. This mapping highlighted a number of areas where the existing information did not have the granularity required by ISO 22301 and further work was undertaken to gather this additional information so it could be entered into Abriska. A key aspect of the implementation was to assist LFB in developing a better understanding of the underlying Abriska methodology and 'thought processes'. This was achieved by a knowledge transfer process involving URM's consultant being shadowed whilst providing the migration support.

HOW UTILISED WITHIN LFB

LFB has adopted a phased approach in adopting Abriska. To ensure total consistency and data integrity, members of the Strategy and Performance Department have been involved in data input, following the BIA workshops. This was a deliberate decision in terms of ensuring consistency, but also in terms of getting acquainted with the tool and understanding all possible departmental configurations. Abriska has been gradually rolled out to different departments with a strong central control being maintained. Once fully rolled out, the role of Strategy and Performance will be mainly one of delegating, monitoring and, most importantly, analysing. Increasingly, Abriska is being used as a management information tool to support 'what if' scenario questions and providing valuable inputs into LFB's BC strategy development.



Chris Clark, Risk and Business Continuity Manager at LFB

“*Abriska has proved a very reliable and robust product which allows a flexible approach to be adopted across the varied departments within LFB.*”

Chris Clark

BENEFITS DERIVED

Chris Clark has identified numerous benefits attributed to the adoption of Abriska with the principal ones being:

Time saving and improvements in efficiencies

When asked about time saving, Chris Clark commented “It is difficult to quantify the time saving but certainly there has been a noticeable reduction in the amount of time staff, particularly the members of my team, have spent on the BIA programme since Abriska was adopted. The principal benefits of this being that I, and the other members of my team, have been freed up to spend more productive time analysing and interpreting data, as well as advising on strategy. A key driver in the current climate is the need to provide the most cost effective service to the wider community and Abriska helps achieve this.”

Consistency

The adoption of Abriska enabled LFB to achieve far greater consistency in terms of terminology and approach. This allowed a more accurate assessment of the recovery requirements of LFB’s resources. Within the old BIAs, correcting errors once data had been amalgamated was a time consuming process. However, with Abriska, departmental decisions can be challenged, updated and the effects of these changes can be reported on immediately.

System Design

Chris Clark has been impressed with the design and approach URM has taken with Abriska and comments that “even though we have quite a comprehensive and well-established BIA programme in place at LFB, there is still sufficient scope within the system to enable us to further develop and refine our approach, should we wish to do this in the future.”

Greater Resilience

As an automated tool, Chris Clark believes that “Abriska greatly reduces dependence on certain individuals and single points of failure. Abriska has proved a very reliable and robust product which allows a flexible approach to be adopted across the varied departments within LFB.”

Responsiveness

LFB opted for its version of Abriska to be hosted within URM’s ISO 27001 (the International Standard for Information Security Management) compliant environment, which meant LFB was able to start using Abriska straight away. With updated versions of the software being released on a quarterly basis (incorporating client feedback and changes to Standards), LFB both contributes to and benefits from Abriska’s continuous improvement development process. As an example, LFB identified a potential improvement to the workflow within the ‘identified resource requirements over time’ function; this improvement was subsequently raised and implemented into the next release of Abriska.

“A key driver in the current climate is the need to provide the most cost effective service to the wider community and Abriska helps achieve this.”

Chris Clark

