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**Important regarding Business Continuity - please pass to your Business Manager**

## **Have the pigeons come home to roost on Academy Trusts approach to IT?**

**Steve Debruin - thoughts on IT from a Business  
Continuity perspective**



**2020** is certainly going to go on record as a year of great **challenges**

but perhaps we will look back and say that we **learnt** a lot too.

One thing for sure – as we have all had to get to grips with **greater use** of technology enabling us to **work** and **communicate** remotely. We have all found it to be of **great benefit**.

Many organisations are saying that they want to hang onto these benefits **long term**. They realise they can apply to **staff, pupils** and help the **wider organisation** too.

The positive effect on **carbon footprint** is also really clear. In short – it's a **win for everyone**.

That means **reliance** on IT is likely to go **up** even **more** than might have been anticipated for instance 6 months ago.

**BUT** (and there is always a but isn't there!) we think there will also be a **downside** to this and that relates to **Business Continuity**.

We have had a number of queries from Multi Academy Trusts where they have found during Covid-19 that having **several** IT contracts with **different suppliers** across their schools has given them **differing** and **cumbersome** responses.

Some suppliers have exhibited **weaknesses** in their approach to **hardware, software** and, **timescales** to **resolve issues**.

Of course this has come at just the **right time** considering the **pressure** schools have been under that they **need** their IT to give them **continuity** in what they are trying to do.

We cannot unfortunately assume that there won't be further **pandemics** nor **other** circumstances which might **severely test** business continuity arrangements in the future.

It means this **isn't** going to go away.

Consequently as Multi Academy Trusts **develop** and **grow** as organisations it really drives home the need for them to **centralise** their IT by way of a **single trusted supplier** or by bringing **in house**.

**Both** have benefits but the essential point is **control** of the contract from a **central** function.

Right now pieces of work are **required**, due diligence if you like to understand the IT **weaknesses** borne out of the **responses** to the pandemic.

This can be done by way of an **independent review** which is something we would **recommend** and can do.

Of course there may be **hurdles** – it might be that contracts with suppliers have not **expired** and some schools continue to work **within historic arrangements**.

The reality is though, in any expansion programme **professionalism** in contract delivery is extremely important and it needs to consider the **MAT** as a **whole**.

In other words relating to IT, a **coordinated** approach is essential if the **resilience** necessary to be sure of business continuity arrangements is to be achieved.

For that reason we think MATs that have a **devolved approach** to IT delivery by school should most **definitely** look at this issue closely.

We have been asked by a number of Trusts to deliver an **independent review** to help them **understand** what they have got in terms of IT provision and to be in a position where that is also **communicable** to the board of governors.

This will allow them to make some key IT **decisions**.

Of course some Trusts might have been **aware** of a lurking problem for some time and what has happened with Covid-19 has simply brought their IT issues to the **forefront**. That prior experience is an important consideration in any review also.

It might be you want to talk about this some more and we are certainly keen to help if so.

Drop me a line via [Steve\\_Debruin@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:Steve_Debruin@bathnes.gov.uk) and I will happily contact you for a discussion.

**Thanks & I look forward to talking with you.**

**Steve**



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