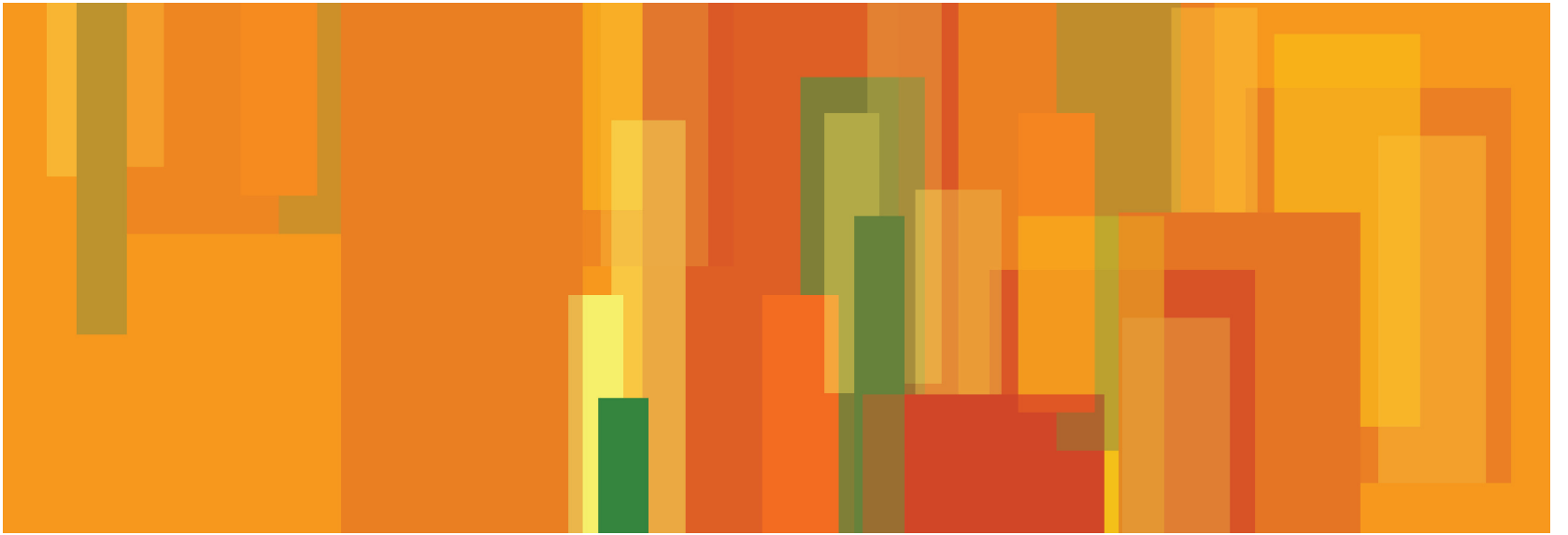


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THE MAGAZINE OF QUEST INTERNATIONAL USERS GROUP
SERVING ORACLE'S PEOPLESOFT AND JD EDWARDS USERS WORLDWIDE

PREPARING YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR A PANDEMIC



PREPARING YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR A PANDEMIC

NO ONE KNOWS WHETHER AVIAN FLU WILL EVOLVE INTO A HUMAN PANDEMIC. H5N1, THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES AVIAN FLU, COULD REMAIN LARGELY CONFINED TO BIRD POPULATIONS AND GO DOWN IN HISTORY IN A MANNER AKIN TO THE Y2K SCARE THAT NEVER QUITE MATERIALIZED. REGARDLESS, WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT SOONER OR LATER ANOTHER PANDEMIC WILL SWEEP THE GLOBE. THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF IF, BUT WHEN. ORGANIZATIONS DON'T NEED TO PANIC, BUT THEY DO NEED TO PLAN.

Facts about Avian Flu: The 'Perfect Storm' of viruses

H5N1 has the potential to be the 'Perfect Storm' of flu viruses. In less than 10 years, H5N1 has spread from its origins in southern China to nearly 50 countries, including Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Clearly, efforts to contain the virus have failed. While there have been only 229 laboratory-confirmed human cases of H5N1 (as of July 4, 2006) – H5N1 is unique in that it kills more than half of those who become infected (138 out of 229).

Like many viruses, H5N1 demonstrates a steadfast penchant for change. In fact, it is its high rate of mutation, the ability to cause severe illness in humans and high mortality rate that renders H5N1 such a considerable threat. Furthermore, the virus meets all the prerequisites of a pandemic, except for one. Currently, the virus is spread to humans with a certain degree of difficulty. You basically need to come in direct contact with diseased poultry in order to become ill. However, should that change and H5N1 mutates to become capable of spreading efficiently among humans, then a pandemic will likely ensue.

Facts about Pandemics: Past, Present, and Future

There have been three pandemics in the past century. The flu pandemics occurred in 1918-1919, which killed 40 to 50 million people worldwide, 1957-1958 and 1968-1969. Experts agree the world is overdue. Drawing from a more recent and memorable experience is the 2003 SARS outbreak that occurred in Toronto. This outbreak began in March 2003 and lasted four months.

A month after the illness first appeared, the World Health Organization issued a travel warning to Toronto. Overnight travel to and from the city took a complete nose dive. Mass transit became deserted and conventions were canceled. Doctor's offices and hospitals were overwhelmed. Over 15,000 people were quarantined in their homes for over a week. The economic impact was widespread and measurable. Toronto's hotel industry alone lost Can\$125 million while the tourism industry lost Can\$2 billion. During its four-month reign in Toronto, SARS killed fewer than 50 people.

Because SARS was localized to Toronto, Hong Kong, and parts of China, it was an outbreak, not a pandemic. A pandemic is an ongoing, global event with the likelihood of affecting worldwide operations simultaneously. This makes a pandemic a unique and fundamentally different type of threat falling outside of most business continuity planning.

In the event of an avian flu pandemic, experts are painting a picture somewhat grimmer than what occurred in Toronto in 2003. If the H5N1 avian flu virus mutates to become easily transmissible between people (the fine line it must cross to become a pandemic), then the WHO predicts a "best case scenario" of 2 million to 7.4 million fatalities. However, the worst case could be that 100 million people die, several times that number become seriously ill and still many times that number would have their lives disrupted by the illnesses of family, friends and colleagues.

In addition, it is expected that an avian flu pandemic would likely come in three waves, each sweeping across the globe in a matter of weeks and lasting for a combined duration of anywhere between nine and 18 months. It is safe to say, aside from an insatiable demand for public services, employee absenteeism would be massive; approaching between 10 percent and 30 percent due to sickness, quarantines, travel restrictions, familial obligations and fear. No business would go unscathed and the economic impact would be profound. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a severe avian flu pandemic would have a \$675 billion impact on the U.S. economy.

Still not convinced you need to start planning?

The WHO publishes a six phase pandemic-tracking model shown on next page. The point at which companies should begin planning is Phase 3. By Phase 4, plans start to become implemented and Phase 5 is where it gets critical. According to the WHO, we've been at phase three for over two years.

Tracking a Potential Pandemic

Interpandemic phase New virus in animals, no human cases	Low risk of human cases	1
	Higher risk of human cases	2
Pandemic alert New virus causes human cases	No or very limited human-to-human transmission	3
	Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission	4
	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission	5
Pandemic	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission	6

(Source: World Health Organization)

Where to Start: General Planning

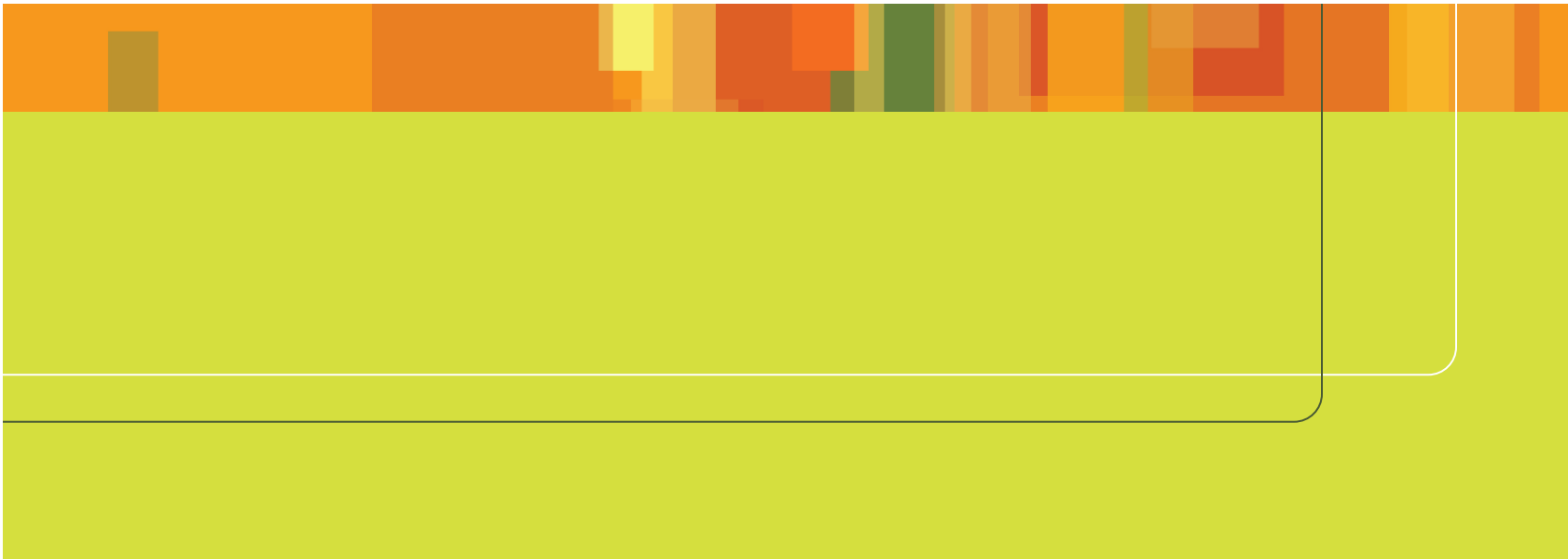
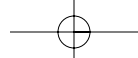
Now that you've decided to start planning it is important to determine where to begin. Start by asking questions and doing research. Ask yourself what a potential pandemic means for your organization. What would we do if 15 percent of the workforce dropped out? What if the United States closed its borders to limit exposure? What impact would this have on a lean supply chain? Many goods and components are produced in China, yet that country stands to be the epicenter of an avian flu pandemic. How are we going to monitor an outbreak in China and compensate for disruptions in both manufacturing and supply? How would we communicate with employees during a sustained crisis? If employees get infected at the office, is the company liable? Do we need to expand or extend health benefits during this time?

Clearly this isn't an exhaustive list of questions, but it would be beneficial to start posing a few of these around the office, and the list of concerns will grow by itself. For more information, general guidance on pandemic planning and resources for businesses are provided by the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. See below for a short list of key places to visit online.

<http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html>
www.who.org
www.cdc.gov
www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/avian_influenza/en/
www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/avian_faqs/en/index.html

Where to Start: IT Systems

While government sources provide a spectrum of useful information and ideas, they do little to directly address the specifics of how a business should prepare IT. As a leading systems integrator, the Business & Technology Resource Group, Inc., has been asking its own set of questions concerning pandemic planning.



During a pandemic, the biggest threat to your organization may be double-digit absenteeism. However, functions such as accounting or billing will not be operational unless businesses have a remote work plan for these functions supported properly by IT. How will absenteeism impact the ability of core systems to function properly? Specifically, how will Payroll function if 10 percent, 15 percent or 30 percent of the employees from that department are incapacitated for an extended period of time? How will payables and receivables be processed?

To address these questions and growing concerns within your organization, BTRG has developed a unique set of services designed to prepare your core Financials and HR systems for a pandemic.

Our service begins with an investigative audit of your Financials and HR systems by business and functional area. Having identified, documented and presented to you areas of potential concern, we will craft and propose a plan to bring your organization to a heightened level of preparedness. After that plan has been implemented and integrated into your operations, we'll stress test your systems to ensure reliability in the event of a pandemic and re-audit your systems as needed.

During the audit we'll address a variety of issues as we run through a handful of pandemic scenarios. Our experts will identify business critical pandemic processes, such as Payroll and Benefits Administration, and determine if it will still function properly with a remote workforce.

During a pandemic, staff formerly not considered "core" may become so. We will audit who-does-what to help you identify core pandemic personnel and opportunities to cross-train critical staff. We'll also help you identify and implement more work-at-home options, as well as establish or expand policies and tools to provide employees with the appropriate security and network access to the applications they need. We'll evaluate current online transaction and self-service options for customers, suppliers and employees and make recommendations for enhancing and extending these systems. We will help you identify and specify the business intelligence or business activity monitoring needed to maintain Financial and HR operations during a pandemic.

We will prepare your hardware and your ERP systems for remote use and configure VPN access so that it is available when and where you need it. We will also answer the tough questions. Can your IT systems be leveraged together with that of your suppliers and/or customers? Does service-oriented architecture or Web services provide integration opportunities? What new interfaces can be implemented that will allow systems to be integrated into other applications and processes?

While a pandemic is not an issue of IT, IT can prepare for an eventual pandemic as well as mitigate the impact when one occurs. To get ready and be ready, contact BTRG at 1.877.BTRG.INC or sales@btrgroup.com.

