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Speaking at the launch of the second Middle East Business Continuity Survey, eHDF CEO Yasser Zeineldin said that political upheaval in the region had both raised interest in DR and BCM, and led to some organisations looking to source solutions from outside of their countries.

"The Arab Spring has touched a number of

countries, and the GCC, with the exception of Bahrain, has been fairly stable. What we have seen in some of the countries is they have started thinking more seriously about having a disaster recovery solution and business continuity seats," Zeineldin said.

"What we have seen in a number of financial institutions in Bahrain, is that a number

of these institutions started looking at DR capability outside the country, because it is a naturally small island," he added.

Discussing the results of the Middle East Business Continuity Survey, which was initiated by eHDF and UAE-based BCM consultancy Continuity & Resilience (CORE), Zeineldin said that while regional organisa-

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## IN NUMBERS

**25%**

**One quarter of businesses in the Middle East are considering international disaster recovery services.**

Source: eHosting DataFort/CORE survey



**ZEINELDIN:** The awareness of the need for DR and BCM have definitely increased recently.

The survey covered organisations across various vertical sectors in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq, with 77 per cent of respondents from organisations of over 100 employees, and 40 per cent from those with more than 1,000 employees.

Sixteen per cent of respondent organisations had suffered one significant disruption in the past year due to hardware or software failures, power failure, application infrastructure failure and site outages, but only 21 per cent had a robust and mature business continuity management programme in place.

Over half of respondents ranked their BCM and IT DR readiness as average or below, while 41 per cent said their crisis management readiness is average or worse. Thirteen per cent say they have no crisis management plan at all.

Testing of DR plans was particularly lacking, with many organisations failing to test any aspects for DR and BCM plans from IT drills to simple call tree tests.

Organisations are gaining a better understanding of the need for a holistic approach to DR and BCM, rather than looking just at the IT side of the business. The survey showed a big increase, from 58 per cent in 2009 to 84 per cent in the latest survey, of companies identifying alternative work sites in case their

main facility is offline, or access is blocked, as happened in Bahrain when protests blocked road routes into key areas for some companies.

Nearly half of respondents had also established relationships with emergency services to co-ordinate their activities, and vendors have also seen increased sharing of plans and BCM requirements.

The survey also showed a growing interest in BCM certification, with 63 per cent of respondents saying that up to 10 per cent of the staff involved with their BCM programmes had received formal training in the discipline.

The British Standard 25999 certification, which covers BCM, was also seeing some uptake, with eHDF becoming the first managed service provider in the UAE to achieve the certification last year.

Dhiraj Lal, executive director at CORE said: “The survey has revealed that BCM readiness in the region needs improvement and a number of organisations in the Middle East are, therefore, investing in business continuity solutions and working towards achieving certifications such as BS25999. The region is expected to catch up with the rest of the world when it comes to BCM investments and this is being driven by the need to minimize customer disruptions in the eventuality of a disaster.”

In terms of outsourcing of DR services, where eHDF says it can greatly reduce costs and deployment times for companies, around 25 per cent of respondents said they plan to use external providers. Zeineldin said that the figure did not mean that a full three quarters would build their own DR facilities in house, but more likely that many had still not considered their requirements and how they would meet them.

Survey respondents said that the primary driver for BCM is to protect the company and ensure long term-survival (41 per cent), a commitment to good corporate governance (30 per cent), and the need to comply with regulations such as BASEL II and SOX (14 per cent). **ACN**

tions showed an improvement in awareness of DR and BC issues, there were still areas where there are dangerous gaps in the ability to sustain operations.

“The awareness and need for both BCM and DR has definitely increased in the minds of senior management. However, the maturity of BCM and DR readiness still needs to improve and the report indicates that companies are inclined to seek the expertise of service providers for this purpose,” he said.

**“In those countries that have been touched by the Arab Spring is that businesses there have begun thinking more seriously about disaster recovery and BCM.”**

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