

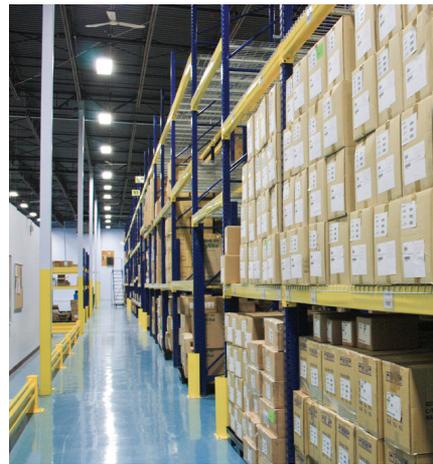
A proactive response to minimise business disruption during Covid-19

Qosina is a leading global supplier of OEM components to the medical and pharmaceutical industries. Back in 2017, the company set up a business continuity management system to minimise disruption in case of emergency. No one could have predicted that the first time they would execute this plan would be due to a global pandemic. *Medical Device Developments* talks to president and CEO Scott Herskovitz about activating the system in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the crucial role it has played in enabling operations to continue.

Can you tell us about Qosina's business continuity management system and why this was set up?

Scott Herskovitz: Our business continuity management system [BCMS] had been under consideration for several years. Our top priority was the protection, health and safety of our staff in the event of a crisis. Moreover, we wanted to safeguard our business and ensure that we could continue serving our customers during disruptive incidents. The project began in 2017 with a thorough business impact analysis [BIA] conducted by an outside consultant and Michael Raphan, director of project management at Qosina.

Meetings took place with key stakeholders in each of our company's departments, from human resources to product development. The purpose of these meetings was to get a clear picture of how each department conducted their day-to-day activities, what software



Qosina's warehouse and manufacturing supply chain has remained operational since the beginning of Covid-19.

Following each meeting, Raphan and the business continuity consultant compared notes and sent a final version to each of the stakeholders. In turn, feedback from the stakeholders led to additional questions

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applications they relied on, how they interacted with other departments and whether they needed to be physically present at our facility in order to do their jobs.

and to follow up meetings.

18 months later, when the BIA was complete, a business continuity manual was drafted, setting out a detailed and comprehensive plan of action in the event of

a crisis. We also created a crisis management team to evaluate the impact of an unexpected event, develop a plan of action and establish a communication plan for our staff, customers and vendors to ensure stakeholders were aware of the action being taken. Subsequently, we conducted several tabletop exercises to test the effectiveness of the manual, which led to after-action reports and modifications where necessary.

What steps did you then take to achieve ISO 22301 certification for the business?

Once a final draft of our business continuity manual was approved by executive management, we began the process of becoming ISO 22301-certified – as it is one of our fundamental principles to follow best business practices for the benefit of our stakeholders.

Lloyd's Register, our independent ISO auditor, conducted a gap analysis over the course of two days, during which our existing processes and procedures, as well as our BIA and business continuity manual, were reviewed. After several months of additional work to bring our systems up to the ISO standard, the audit was scheduled. We were very pleased when we were approved for certification, and will continue to be subjected to annual audits to maintain the high standards. The auditor remarked what a fantastic job we had done and that Qosina would be his shining example for BCMS certifications. In total, we currently have four ISO certifications: 13485, 9001, 22301 and 14001.

What challenges has Qosina faced since the outbreak of Covid-19?

Initially, our primary challenge was to quickly develop a plan that would allow the majority of our staff to work remotely. In March 2020, the governor of New York ordered a business shutdown, which required all non-essential businesses to work remotely or not at all. Qosina comprises two divisions: our medical division, which supplies components to medical device manufacturers, and our Qosmedix division, which sells disposable applicators, containers and other supplies to the cosmetics industry. All of our Qosmedix staff and the vast majority of our medical staff were required to work remotely.

This created two immediate challenges. The first was to draft appropriate rules and regulations for staff who would continue to work on-site. The second was to put measures in place to enable 80% of our workforce to work remotely, which included the purchase and configuration of laptops, headsets and monitors for off-site use. What's more, we had to establish a revamped internal communications system for our staff, customers and vendors. This involved rerouting our phone systems and introducing our employees to collaborative software.

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Beyond this, we needed to carefully monitor our supply chain as this was, and still is, a global pandemic. We also had to closely follow the seemingly constant barrage of executive orders from our governor, as well as the state and national legislative mandates, all of which affected our employees' rights, our legal responsibilities, and the way in which our company was permitted to operate.

How has activating your BCMS allowed Qosina to continue to function during the Covid-19 pandemic this year?

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we discovered that all of our work and



Qosina supplies single-use components to medical device manufacturers.

effort in building a BCMS had paid off. Our crisis management team set about implementing the plan. As such, we were able to immediately assess the crisis and put in place the actions necessary to keep our staff safe and our business operations running without a major hitch. This included enabling the majority of our workforce to work from home, establishing rules to protect the health and safety of essential personnel that needed to be on-site to perform their jobs, and instilling clear and concise

communication procedures for our staff, customers and vendors. We believe that our BCMS was the difference between our successful navigation of this unprecedented crisis and what might have been a very painful and costly journey if no plan was in place.

Indeed, our ability to act quickly and carry out our carefully planned solutions right from the start allowed our customers – many of whom are essential healthcare companies – to rest assured that the part of their supply chain that depends on Qosina would not be disrupted. It soon became clear that we were much better prepared to handle the crisis than other companies who do not have a BCMS.

Having worked on this project from its inception three years ago, I can honestly say that with all of the crisis situations we contemplated – severe storms, major electrical outages, wars and conflicts in countries that form part of our supply chain – we never considered a health pandemic that would shut down businesses across the globe. Suddenly we found ourselves in a situation none of us could have imagined. That said, our system not only stood strong but carried our entire company through the crisis, while so many others suffered and, unfortunately, some did not make it. It would be hard to imagine a future unexpected event that would be a sterner test of our BCMS, but our confidence in our system has certainly been buoyed by this experience.

What's next for your business continuity management system?

An integral part of our BCMS is to conduct a thorough after-action report and review. This has been accomplished and the final report has been presented to our business continuity steering committee, which meets quarterly to monitor whether we are meeting our key performance indicators, and to recommend adjustments where needed. After reviewing the Covid-19 pandemic after-action report from the crisis management team, the steering committee recommended a BIA review to begin in early 2021 to make sure our BCMS is relevant to the current state of our business. ●

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