


Customer Segment Story: COMMERCIAL BUILDERS

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In the uncertain world that we live in today, it is essential to incorporate detailed disaster recovery systems into every business plan. The implementation of these plans will mean the difference between success and failure after a crisis situation. Having the plan in place is only half of the program. A firm must educate both executives and employees on how to protect itself before a situation and the subsequent steps that need to be taken immediately following a disaster. Preparing for the worst can prove to be the best tactic when faced with the realistic risks of everyday operation.

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*– Chris Flip, Project Manager,
Oak Grove Construction Co.*

One of the most important components of a strong disaster recovery system is a plan for vital records protection. Keeping customer and company documents safe from fire, flood, theft, or other disaster is something that all businesses need to focus energy on before a crisis occurs and it is too late. Industries that are more susceptible to fire should put even more thought into this component of the plan. For example, consider the many possibilities for disasters in the commercial building industry. Construction sites have a very large list of potential hazards. Loose or exposed live electrical wiring, overheated electrical equipment, blowtorches and welding equipment, tar and pitch boiler furnaces, smoking, and the combustible scrap, debris, and other waste materials could cause an explosion if not properly supervised. This list of potential hazards on a construction site goes on and on.

Many commercial building companies decide to proactively install the proper protection from day one, rather than waiting for the potential problem to arise. Oak Grove Construction Company, located in Santa Rosa, CA, used fireproof containers in their initial office layout and purchased more as they expanded and created more documentation that needed to be protected.

“Between our on-site locations and our office, we have several FireKing® fireproof containers. They have been housing our current job files and our human resources information for as long as we’ve been in existence,” commented Chris Flip, Project Manager, Oak Grove Construction. “I wouldn’t even be able to imagine trying to restore everything kept in the FireKings if they were gone.”

Potential for fire in the contracting industry does not only exist on-site. There is also just as big of a possibility for a devastating fire to occur in the office as in any other business. Stewart Construction Company, based in Elon, NC, has recently

taken all the precautions necessary to ensure that their most important documents in the office will be safe from permanent destruction. Stewart's Office Manager, Bonnie King, explains the importance of loss prevention equipment in her office.

"We were expanding and looking to the future for possible pitfalls that had not previously occurred to us. We realized that all of our financial documents and blank checks were in regular cabinets and completely unprotected. Moving forward, we decided to purchase a 2-drawer FireKing fireproof filing cabinet which gave us the peace of mind that nothing important would be destroyed because of a fire."

Not all companies are as wise as to purchase the proper loss prevention equipment before the disaster happens. The minimal amount of time, money, and effort involved in defining the risk areas and then coming up with necessary precautions is much cheaper than doing it the other way around. All successful office layouts should incorporate the use of fireproof containers to store vital records needed to run the business after a disaster. Dr. James Gilbert, Professor of Operations Management and Quantitative Analysis at the Crummer Graduate School of Business, is an expert in running a business and designing successful office layouts. Dr. Gilbert explains why fireproof record storage is such an important factor to include in every business's disaster recovery program.

"We live our lives by the information that we need to protect. Using fireproof records storage is critical, especially if the business's most important documents are not stored offsite. A successful small to mid-size construction company should use the Systematic Layout Planning developed by Richard Muther in 1961 to design their office space, which clearly recommends at least one fireproof filing cabinet for vital records storage."

In addition to the precautionary steps mentioned in this study, a firm's disaster recovery plan should include an overview of the business continuity plan, the purpose for each precaution, the assumptions about what will occur after a disaster, the development of prevention methods, a maintenance plan for these methods, and a testing schedule to ensure validity. Once a company has both outlined and prepared for internal and external risks that could possibly affect them, they can only hope to not have to test their solutions. Often there is no way to divert a serious crisis. However, a disaster recovery system will greatly help after a situation as occurred.