

Disaster Recovery Management Consulting, Advisory and Training



Phil Lambert
President & Founder
Ripcord Solutions

CEOCFO: Mr. Lambert, what is the idea behind Ripcord Solutions?

Mr. Lambert: The idea behind Ripcord is the long-term success of our clients. Eventually when a company does face a crisis or significant business interruption, instead of freefalling with massive losses, Ripcord helps to soften their landing by proactively planning before the event occurs. Some people would call it disaster recovery, business continuity, crisis management and vendor continuity. These disciplines save lives and reduce losses. Ripcord likes to think of it as conditioning our clients for rapid change when faced with challenging circumstances.

CEOCFO: What goes into conditioning a company? What should people be paying attention to that you know and they do not?

Mr. Lambert: Conditioning a company for rapid change is a top down initiative. Our objective is to achieve a state of readiness to face any adversity or challenge. Step one is to determine what future state of readiness is desired of the senior leadership. The second step is to determine their current state of readiness. Once we have these two factors, we can easily design a road map to achieve our future state within the desired timeline. The process of planning is much more complex than one would first imagine. In addition, a company will often ask an internal employee to be their planner without providing adequate training in these disciplines, which can be a huge mistake. During an actual disaster or crisis event, plans on the shelf, no matter how good they are, do not minimize impacts or save lives. An organization must have two strategic frameworks: simple, accurate and viable resiliency plans and knowledgeable, trained and ready people who know how to use those plans.

The one asset that makes Ripcord one of the best is that we make it easy for people to participate in these activities. Ripcord minimizes the interruption to our client's day to day operations by as much as 50% as we develop and implement the program, as compared to your average consulting agencies. Because of our proprietary methodology and program components, we are able to accomplish these cost saving objectives without sacrificing quality.

CEOCFO: Do you think companies just have not paid attention because they do not want to face it? Why have companies traditionally not faced these issues?

Mr. Lambert: Until just recently, most organizations who participate in disaster planning were regulated industries like finance and health care. Today, the mandate for planning is shifting. More and more organization's customers or boards are mandating this process. Customers are requesting information concerning their disaster recovery and business continuity plans and asking whether these plans have been tested within the last year. We are finding that too many organizations do not have an answer. Customers are great motivators.

In March of 2011, the world witnessed once again the importance of our partners and supply chain vendors when Japan experienced an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster within just a few days of each other. Thousands of suppliers felt that disaster all around the world.

Most organizations I talk with today already have a disaster recovery program. What is missing from most is any participation from the business functions in their disaster recovery program. One of the most sought after service we have is conducting a business impact analysis, or BIA for short. The outcome of the BIA determines the disaster recovery priorities, sets the level of resiliency that is best suited for the organization and their customers, and defines the impacts a company would face when interrupted.

The focused threat of the day that creates the largest concern right now is cyber threats, and with good reason. Ripcord helps companies not in the protection or detection of a cyber-attack, but how an organization would respond to such an attack as they discover, escalate, remedy and communicate, both internally and externally, the challenge they are facing. This is a strategy that is often overlooked when setting up one's defenses.

Because scenario based planning is so broad and wide with many unknowns, we are beginning to make a paradigm shift in how we plan. The new strategy Ripcord works with is the Denial of Services strategy. Of which there are four: denial of facility; denial of technology; denial of people; and denial of vendors. No matter what the disaster scenario is and the severity of damage it causes, one or all of these four impacts will happen, each to its own degree. The restoration and recovery strategies for these four denial of services are easily developed and tested. When we take the time to condition the organization to respond, restore and recover, then we are going to minimize impacts. And we have a term for that here at Ripcord, it's called a soft landing.

CEO CFO: *What types of companies are looking to Ripcord?*

Mr. Lambert: Our clients cross almost all industries and sizes of organizations. Many are global companies that have different needs, standards and regulations in each country. Of course, we have a lot of finance and health care clients as well as manufacturing. Manufacturing is becoming more prevalent, and health care is huge right now because of so much uncertainty and change. I would say that the medium-sized businesses who have never planned or who had plans reaching back many years are reaching out to Ripcord.

"Ripcord likes to think of it as conditioning our clients for rapid change when faced with challenging circumstances." - Phil Lambert

CEO CFO: *How do you reach out to companies, and how would someone find you if they were looking? Would they even know what to look for?*

Mr. Lambert: More often than not, our friends and clients recommend Ripcord. Ripcord has a very professional and experienced team who speaks at most national, regional and local events. We do have a web site and are very generous in providing the information people need to make an informed decision. We also conduct two educational webinars a month each about 15 to 20 minutes in length.

Knowing what to look for is a complex question. If you Google the words disaster recovery or business continuity, it is often a sad story that people are more confused after 30 minutes of research than they were when they began their pursuit for clear and distinct definitions. When doing research, one must be careful not to interpret viable components of an organization's resiliency solution as the total package. These are viable services people offer in the marketplace. However, most are a key component of the total solution, not the total remedy of one's needs. A holistic approach is most appropriate for almost all organizations.

One of the things that we are doing here at Ripcord is we are trying to make this thing as simple and easy as possible for an organization to condition themselves for rapid change. We strive to ensure that we begin this journey with the idea that 20% of the effort is going to give us 80% of the results we want. After that, we can mature the plan if we want, but most companies do not want a complex, comprehensive and robust plan. We find that most organizations want a market driven resiliency program that will protect their brand and their customers. Ripcord's strategy is clear and distinct: simple, accurate and viable plans with knowledgeable, trained and ready people.

CEO CFO: *When a company engages with you, what is the process?*

Mr. Lambert: There are often three types of request for engagements. The first and most often requested service is the business impact analysis along with the GAP analysis. In most cases, this request comes from the C-Suite of an organization. The second most often requested service is the current and future readiness assessment with a two to three year road map. This request often comes from the senior leadership's direct reports. And the third request we get most often is the outsourcing of their entire program.

Our first and foremost objectives when working with a new client is to determine what specific outcomes are they wanting to achieve. This will dictate the scope, timeline and reporting structure throughout our engagement. Ripcord is well known for our collaborative project management style, our focus on delivering on time and within budget, and how easy it is to work with our professional consultants.

CEOCFO: *What might you add into the mix when you are looking that other companies do not always take into consideration when assessing risk?*

Mr. Lambert: There are two key elements when working with a Ripcord. One of them I have already mentioned in that we are going to make it as easy, painless, efficient and productive as possible. We are the only company in the industry that uses 10 minute web-based training modules to help educate the people all along the way. No other consulting company in our industry uses these. These trainings are one of our flagship products. We develop these for other companies for their planning efforts and have developed well over 250 trainings. We produce these for others because they work. Moreover, when something works, we embrace it! We can produce a conditioned organization using this simplified methodology. It is in the simplicity of Ripcord's methodology and the duality of great documentation and the readiness of people, which produces these amazing results.

CEOCFO: *Once you develop a plan, what is the revenue model?*

Mr. Lambert: Each of our short-term consulting engagements is a fixed bid contract. Most of our clients will come back to us each year to update and exercise their plans. When you consider implementing an entire program, you would find at least 8 to 12 different milestones. They might ask us for any one of four to six of those components. For instance, the road map and evaluation assessment would be one example. They might ask us for our cyber threat exercise for IT-DR teams. Every contract is different, depending on our client's needs, wishes and their desired outcomes.

Another type of engagement is those that completely outsource their program to us. In other words, these clients have trusted their entire program to Ripcord. Most of these contracts are 12 or 24 months in length.

CEOCFO: *Is that your preference given the choice?*

Mr. Lambert: We really enjoy doing both. We are here for our clients to ensure that they can softly land when faced with adversity and the biggest of challenges. Most of our clients sign a new contract every year because they have come to trust us and we have enjoyed working with them.

Understanding our client's business and their unique culture is always enjoyable. We value the business environment that our clients have established and recognize along with them about what works and what doesn't work so well.

CEOCFO: *What is new in recovery? What might be available today that was not two or three years ago?*

Mr. Lambert: The maturity of the industry comes quickly to mind. For years, there was a high turnover with entry level personal who did not want to stay in the industry. Most planners are silo, solo and independent within their organizations. Standing alone is always a tough journey. This is beginning to change for the better. Today we have bachelors and masters degrees in disaster management opportunities. Organizational teams are bigger and more collaborative. We have advanced level education outside the colleges. And today we have a more defined career path than ever before.

The tools we are using are changing for the better. Communications is the most important aspect of planning. Mass notification and recovery management tools are maturing quite nicely.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Lambert: It is great. We have been together for ten years. Our 10 year anniversary is in October 2015. We have grown every year except for one, and we are completely debt free. In 2014, we grew 40% over 2013, and we are expecting to grow another 40% this year.

CEOCFO: *Are you equipped to handle the growth?*

Mr. Lambert: Is anyone equipped for growth? The best you can do is manage growth! Not always easy but we have a great team, a very active advisory board and people hanging on the wings ready to come on board when needed.

As with every other growing company, finding people is easy, but finding the right people is difficult. Ripcord has a results driven environment in that we are a very empowering company. Every one of our consultants are leaders and have lead Fortune 500 companies planning programs. When we show up at our client's site, I just do not want a planner or practitioner to show up, I want a leader who will help advise and lead the company with just the right balance. That is where I believe we provide the best value for our clients. Again, if you want plans on the shelf, then we are not the right fit. There are those who will do just that. The duality of documents and people produces the greatest level of resiliency. Ripcord always collaborates with our clients to determine the right direction with just the right amount of planning. I am very meticulous about the people I bring on board. It takes a lot to be a Ripcorder.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why choose Ripcord Solutions?*

Mr. Lambert: Our focus is on the ongoing success of our clients. Ripcord conditions clients to rapidly change in challenging circumstances. Every person on our team values the success of our clients and are not just concerned about passing audit or putting red notebooks on the shelf. If we do this right, we are going to exceed all expectations. It is a no brainer for us. Ripcord prides ourselves as we serve our clients, willing to be flexible, wanting to get to know our clients, and we listen more than we talk. We corroborate in every meeting to ensure that everybody is engaged, equipped and empowered within each organization to do what needs to be done before, during and after a crisis.

CEOCFO: *Final thoughts?*

Mr. Lambert: We will be here when you are ready.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

For more information visit: www.ripCORDsolutions.com

Contact: Phil Lambert 425-670-8700 phil.lambert@ripCORDsolutions.com

