

How resilient is your business?

Different because we Do.

An abstract graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes. The shapes include a large white parallelogram, a green parallelogram, a yellow parallelogram, a blue parallelogram, and a small pink rectangle. They are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some shapes appearing to be in front of others.

Do you ever ask yourself tough questions about your business?

A fire could break out. A cyber attack might shut down your systems. Panic could sweep through a crowd at your venue.

These scenarios play out in real life more often than you might think.

Various research papers show how weather, water, and energy are all climate risks for various industrial sectors.

Climate risk

The numbers tell a stark story: 69% of industrial inventory in the United States sits in areas that face high climate risks. Your business could face serious threats from soaring energy costs, if not prevented during design and construction.

Energy & power risk

Energy prices have jumped 29% in the U.S., 71% in the EU, and 54% in the UK.

Water scarcity

Petrochemical manufacturing facilities located in the Middle East face particular vulnerabilities given the region's long-standing problems with high water stress.

The World Bank has projected that climate-related water scarcity and the consequent impacts of droughts on key sectors, including industrials, could reduce the GDP of the Middle East by 6-14% by 2050.

C-suite awareness

Most C-suite executives see only summary reports and don't spot operational weak points that could wreck their business once they go into operations.

Your crisis planning must tackle both urgent emergencies and build lasting operational strength.

This article discusses ways to spot potential risks, build reliable response strategies, and create a strong business framework that looks after your customers, workforce, and profits.

You'll discover practical ways to handle crises - from taking care of guests to building a resilient workforce - so your business keeps running when tough times hit.

The hidden costs of inadequate crisis planning

Business survival depends on proper crisis planning, and the financial consequences of poor preparation can be devastating.

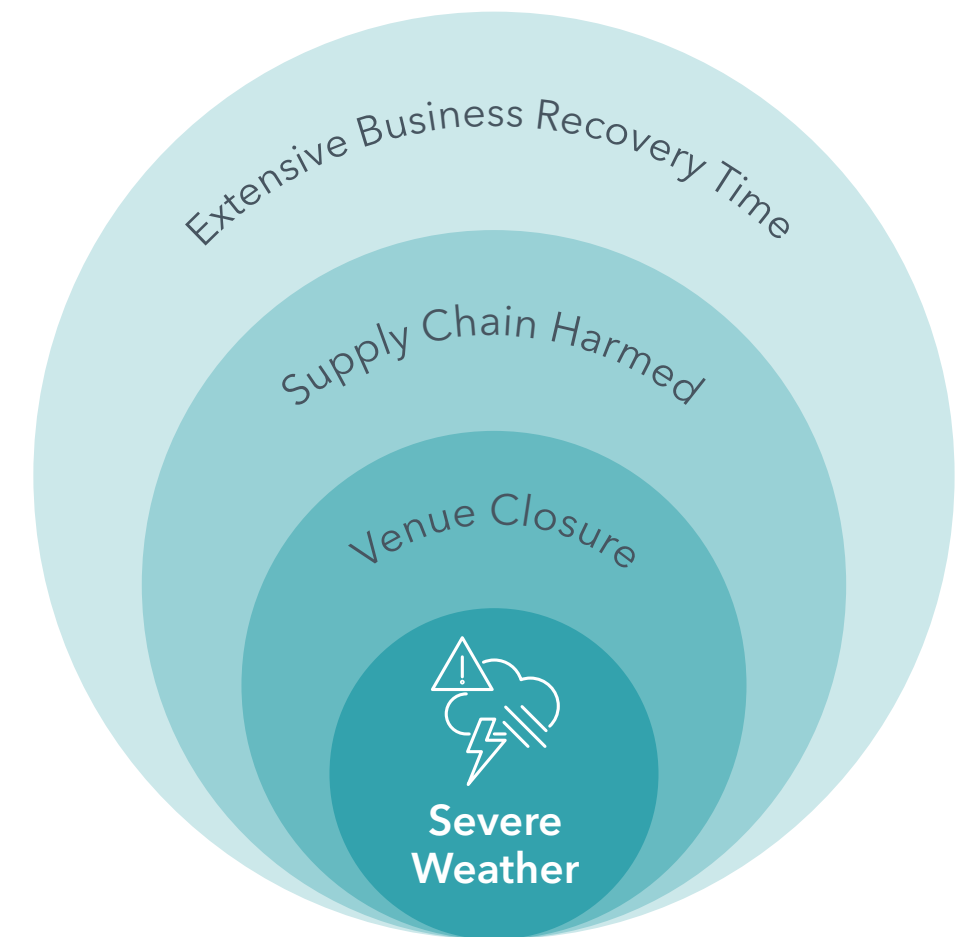
The numbers tell a shocking story: large enterprises lose \$400,000 USD for each hour of downtime, and 35% face outages at least once every month. These alarming statistics show why many businesses don't survive, yet many remain dangerously unprepared.

Real-life disaster statistics that should alarm you

The World Economic Forum lists extreme weather, economic divergence, infectious diseases, and natural resource crises as the biggest global risks businesses face today. These threats have become everyday realities.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that 2022 saw 18 weather-related events. Each caused damage worth \$20 billion USD, with total losses reaching \$400 billion USD. Now think about the locations of some of the giga projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for example, and consider if extreme weather, or natural resource crises could cause a crisis?

Ransomware attacks cost organisations worldwide \$4.6million USD on average. American organisations suffer even more, with data breaches costing \$9.3million USD on average—almost twice the global figure of \$4.8million USD. The Saudi and UAE markets have both a challenge and opportunity here due to its unique global market position.



The business interruption ripple effect

Isolated incidents aren't the biggest threat - it's how risks pile up and cascade. This "risk ripple effect" represents a radical alteration in crisis management approaches. Research shows 84% of global business leaders acknowledge risks becoming more interconnected and complex.

To name just one example, see Hurricane Ida in 2021, the year's most expensive weather event at \$75bn USD. Businesses faced more than direct damage. Supply chains broke down, workers got displaced, and communication systems failed. The blockage of the Suez Canal in 2021 is another example of how one event affects an entire supply chain.

These failures go beyond physical damage. Risk creates vulnerability in multiple areas, and costs multiply exponentially. Companies that experience more incidents face 16 times higher financial losses than those with fewer outages.

How resilient is your business?

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Why most crisis plans fail when actually tested

Crisis plans often break down under real-life pressure

Here are the main reasons:



Insufficient testing

96% of IT managers experienced at least one outage over three years. Yet many organisations never test their response procedures properly. With all smart city implementations, the risk of outage could be high.



Lack of Embedding Lessons Learned

Organisations frequently identify lessons during post-incident reviews but fail to integrate these insights into revised plans. This omission leads to repeated mistakes and vulnerabilities in future crises.



Inadequate risk assessment

Organisations don't deal very well with unexpected scenarios because they underestimate potential risks and threats.



Communication breakdowns

Even well-laid-out plans fail without proper communication protocols and designated leadership during crises.



Resource shortfalls

Teams can't handle emergencies effectively because of limited resources and poor crisis management training.

Your business needs more than surface-level planning to avoid becoming another statistic. Engage with operational experts to consider which potential immediate crises and how multiple failures might ripple through your operations. These diagnostics usually generate insights that are valuable, and solutions can be actioned.

Protecting your customers during crisis events

Your business's long-term reputation depends on how well you handle customer experience during emergencies.

Crisis management goes beyond just managing risks – it builds and strengthens customer trust through difficult times.

Guest experience considerations in emergency situations

Your customers might feel abandoned during a crisis. Companies lose up to 30% of their customers after poorly managed crises. Customer expectations change drastically during emergencies.

They don't just look at your products or services but watch your response closely.

Customers expect:

- Information that's clear, consistent and on time
- Real understanding and empathy
- Quick problem spotting and solving
- Safety and well-being as top priorities
- Aftercare

Communication protocols that prevent panic

Good communication sits at the heart of crisis management. Your business needs to control the story during emergencies to maintain trust and stop dangerous misinformation from spreading panic.

Customers need honest, complete information for reassurance. Don't wait for perfect details. Set up communication steps that address the situation and outline your action plan. Have a robust crisis communications plan and strategy to get these communications out. This shows you are responsive and creates a partnership with your customers



Staff members should know crisis communication steps. They need to understand why empathy and clarity matter when talking to customers. Messages that stay the same across all customer touchpoints build confidence in your organisation's crisis handling abilities.

Accessibility and inclusivity in crisis response plans

Emergency response must work for everyone—whatever their ability or background. Legal, financial, and moral duties require fair access to emergency services.

Your planning process should put inclusivity first. Team up with disability specialists to spot and fix problems that might get worse during emergencies. Set up easy-to-find refuge points, safe zones and shelter areas with all needed supplies.

Emergency messages must reach everyone. Use different methods – text alerts, voice announcements, and visual signals—so everyone understands what’s happening. Public spaces and venues should have evacuation plans that help people who need assistance, like those with mobility issues.

Cultural awareness plays a big role—think about language barriers and spiritual, religious, ethnic, or other cultural needs in your response planning. People with disabilities and others with special needs should help plan these responses. This partnership finds better solutions to current problems and opens up better ways to communicate.

Planning for all customer needs before a crisis shows your commitment to great service stays strong even in tough times.

Safeguarding your customers and workforce through thoughtful planning

Are your employees ready to handle any business crisis? What happens if someone needs urgent medical care? Can your core team access your facility during emergencies? How will staff cope with trauma after a workplace incident?

Your business needs to prepare employees before emergencies happen. This preparation helps them protect themselves and others when crisis hits. Many organisations treat workforce resilience as an afterthought instead of making it a critical business priority.

Building workforce resilience through regular training

Training sessions and drills help employees understand crisis response procedures and strengthen their confidence during emergencies. Teams should work together on these preparations. Different departments need to line up their goals, spot critical processes, and set up backup plans.

Effective training programmes should include:

- Emergency response drills that simulate ground scenarios
- Role-specific training for the core team with critical duties
- Interactive simulations that help employees practice and master procedures
- Cross-departmental exercises that promote unified crisis response methods
- Multi-agency exercises as often this creates gaps or delays in response times when time is of the essence

Research shows social learning helps people learn new information faster, remember lessons better, and feel motivated to change their behavior. Yes, it is true that employees show six times more engagement during crisis events when they receive strong organisational support through clear processes, enough resources, and supervisor backing with psychological safety.

Mental health considerations in crisis recovery

Crisis situations put huge psychological pressure on leaders and employees. This pressure can affect how people make decisions.

Mental health support is essential. Remember, everyone heals from crisis differently. Good post-crisis mental health strategies give customers and employees access to counseling services.

They create supportive workspaces and keep communication channels open, resulting in reassurance and trust, which means a better recovery for all parties involved.



Future-proofing entertainment developments and public venues

Smart venue planning starts with asking tough “what if” questions before construction begins, and operational readiness in parallel of construction.

During design reviews bringing in resilience, crowd management, facility management and operational expertise in will result in better functioning developments and events.

Questions like:

What if thousands need to evacuate at once?

What if severe weather hits during a sold-out event?

What if transportation systems fail as crowds leave?

can all be simulated and resolved with minimal CapEx adjustment and prevent major OpEx risks.

All references questions often go unasked until a crisis happens, and the flaws of the design are exposed resulting in business risks. The construction principle ‘Safety by Design’ should always be at the forefront and considered from the conception stage.

Mass mobility planning for city-wide events

People need to move easily within cities to boost economic growth and social well-being. Urban areas hold more than 80% of all economic activity. This makes planning for mass movement during major events a complex challenge. Many existing cities within Saudi Arabia are planning to substantially grow, while entire new cities are built that equal the size of Belgium.

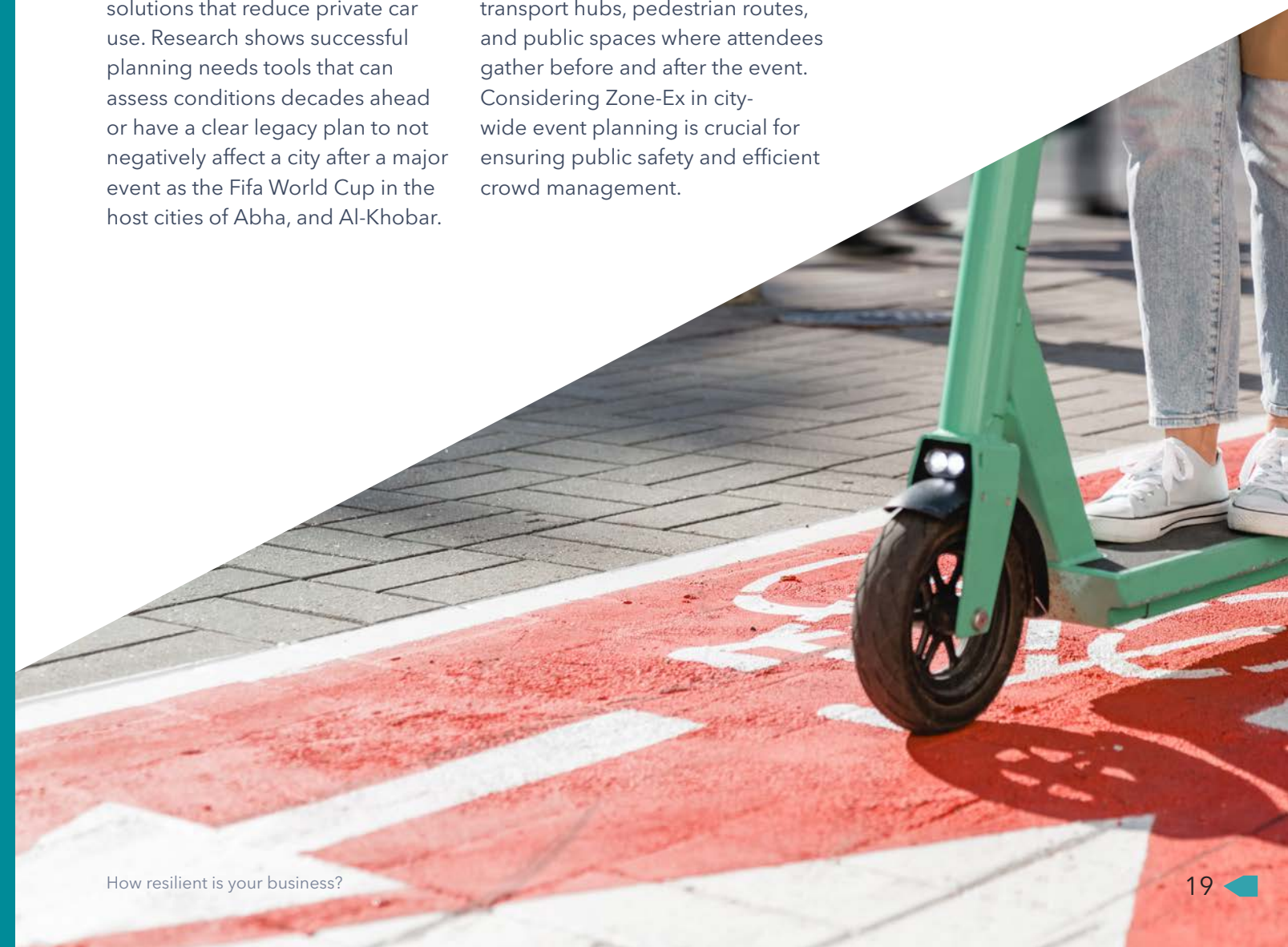
Cities and venue operators should adopt multi-modal transportation solutions that reduce private car use. Research shows successful planning needs tools that can assess conditions decades ahead or have a clear legacy plan to not negatively affect a city after a major event as the Fifa World Cup in the host cities of Abha, and Al-Khobar.

A practical solution includes setting up dedicated parking areas for carpools, e-scooters, clear routes, and bikes while encouraging shared transport. Tests in Milan showed that people prefer eco-friendly transport options at events when good alternatives exist and there are adequate lanes separated from cars to enhance safety.

Zone-Ex, or the external zone, encompasses areas outside the main event venue, such as transport hubs, pedestrian routes, and public spaces where attendees gather before and after the event. Considering Zone-Ex in city-wide event planning is crucial for ensuring public safety and efficient crowd management.

Proper planning in these zones helps mitigate risks associated with large crowds, such as congestion, accidents, and potential security threats. By coordinating with local authorities, transport services, and security personnel, event planners can create a seamless and safe experience for attendees, while also minimising disruptions to residents and businesses.

This holistic approach is essential for the success and safety of any large-scale event.



Crowd management techniques that prevent disasters

Crowd disasters happen mostly when density reaches 6 people per square meter. The approach to crowd behaviour has changed from force-based control to community-based methods. This creates safer spaces.

Good management needs:



Capacity planning based on venue popularity, event frequency, and local conditions, size of venue, number of exit routes and ingress routes, egress flow rate, ingress flow rate, emergency egress flow rate and the venues holding capacity.



Monitoring systems that count and control visitor flow



Clear processes before, during, and after gatherings, the 6 stages of an event need to be considered: (Arrival, Assembly, Ingress, Circulation, Egress, Dispersal)



Technology that provides up-to-the-minute density monitoring

Creating policies that require various entities providing data to feed into a city-central system unlocks the ability to simulate crowds from a door-to-door perspective and enable easier crowd management preparation across various stakeholders for major events.

Legacy planning: Ensuring long-term facility resilience

Legacy planning changes how venues stay relevant and strong for decades. Studies show venues should develop four main strengths: quick adaptation, response to demand changes, stable operations while growing, and the ability to work with broader ecosystems.

Great venues don't just get built—they evolve. Adding operational expertise during budget planning helps facilities work well throughout their 20 - 60 year lifespan.

This means changing from project-focused development to constant adaptation. Venues can remain valuable community assets long after their original construction. In that perspective major venues and stadiums are similar to airports which are another examples of facilities with a lifespan of 50+ years easily and evolve.



Testing the resilience of your operations

Paper-based testing plans rarely show if they'll work during a crisis.

Organisations should ask "Have we tested our plan under realistic conditions?" instead of "do we have a plan?" Most businesses find operational vulnerabilities when real disasters strike—which is often too late.

Beyond ticking-the-box during a design - or construction review: realistic crisis simulations

Your crisis simulations should mirror both internal operations and external environment to work. With current designs all being 3D and software evolving, realistic crisis simulations are possible.

Best practices when using 3D designs to test scenarios:

- ▶ Include realistic "news" injections and stakeholder interactions
- ▶ Test all but one of these teams and supporting organisation
- ▶ Create engaging, emotional, and entertaining scenarios
- ▶ Push participants beyond their comfort zones

Crisis simulations are a great way to get insights into your organisation's readiness, and can start from master planning up to periodically during operations.

They build personal and organizational confidence among your people, leadership team, and stakeholders. You'll sleep better knowing your crisis plan works—something only rigorous and regular testing can confirm.

Key performance indicators for operational resilience

Specific KPIs highlight areas that need improvement to measure resilience effectiveness. These metrics help make informed decisions that improve overall resilience:



Recovery Time Objective (RTO)

Targeted duration within which business functions must resume after disruption



Recovery testing success rate

Percentage of successful recovery tests conducted annually



Recovery Point Objective (RPO)

Acceptable data loss measured in time during disruptions



Employee training completion rate

Percentage of staff completing business continuity training



Plan activation / incident response time

Average time to respond to continuity incidents

Measuring communication effectiveness during crises stands out as significant, including response time and message delivery success rates. These KPIs show how effectively your organisation achieves its business objectives. Establishing a qualified fire and emergency team, that constantly maintain their internationally recognised certifications are crucial.

The OpEx perspective: maintaining resilience for decades

Operational resilience requires ongoing attention, not just a one-time project. Capital expenditures matter, but operational experts – not just project managers – must embed resilience into systems designed to function for 20-60 years.

Regular reviews and improvement strategies play a vital role as operational resilience continues to evolve. This approach requires horizon scanning, early threat identification, understanding implications, developing mitigation strategies, proactive implementation, and continuous monitoring.

Your organisation's resilience grows with well-defined business continuity strategies that enable swift decisions during crises. The goal extends beyond survival – it helps your organisation thrive amid uncertainty.



Conclusion

The success of any ambitious development hinges not just on bold plans, but on operational resilience—tested, strengthened, and embedded from the start.

Ambitious projects, whether cities, venues, or national initiatives, face growing complexity, rising stakeholder expectations, and increasingly unpredictable risks.

While 84% of global business leaders see growing risk complexity, many companies still rely on untested plans and basic preparations.

Smart business leaders don't wait for disasters to ask tough questions about their operations.

Resilient operations protect people, safeguard reputations, and ensure seamless experiences, even under pressure. They are not a last-minute fix; they are a core capability designed into every decision and every system.

True resilience is invisible when it works, but critical when it matters most.

Your crisis management strategy needs more than theoretical exercises. The numbers tell a frightening story - large enterprises lose \$400,000 USD per hour of downtime, and 60% of small businesses close within six months of cyberattacks.

These statistics show you need action, not just plans.

Here's what you need for true operational resilience:



Crisis simulations that go beyond basic tabletop exercises



Buildings designed to handle decades of operational challenges



Support for your team's mental health and full emergency response training



Complete customer communication plans that work across all channels



Clear KPIs that track recovery time, response success, and training progress

The C-suite might see summary reports, but the real problems hide beneath basic metrics. Your company needs operational experts, not just project managers. These experts build resilience into systems that must function for 20-60 years.

Team up with the right partners to make sure your crisis plans hold up against life's challenges.

Test your operational resilience today or count losses tomorrow. Those critical questions can't wait - your global event, city, or developments future depends on them.





Resilience by design; The team behind this paper

Serco & +impact: Where strategy meets execution

Serco is a global operator of critical public services, with over 50,000 employees supporting governments, cities, and infrastructure across more than 30 countries. From airports and hospitals to transport networks and citizen services, Serco brings decades of experience managing high-demand environments at scale.

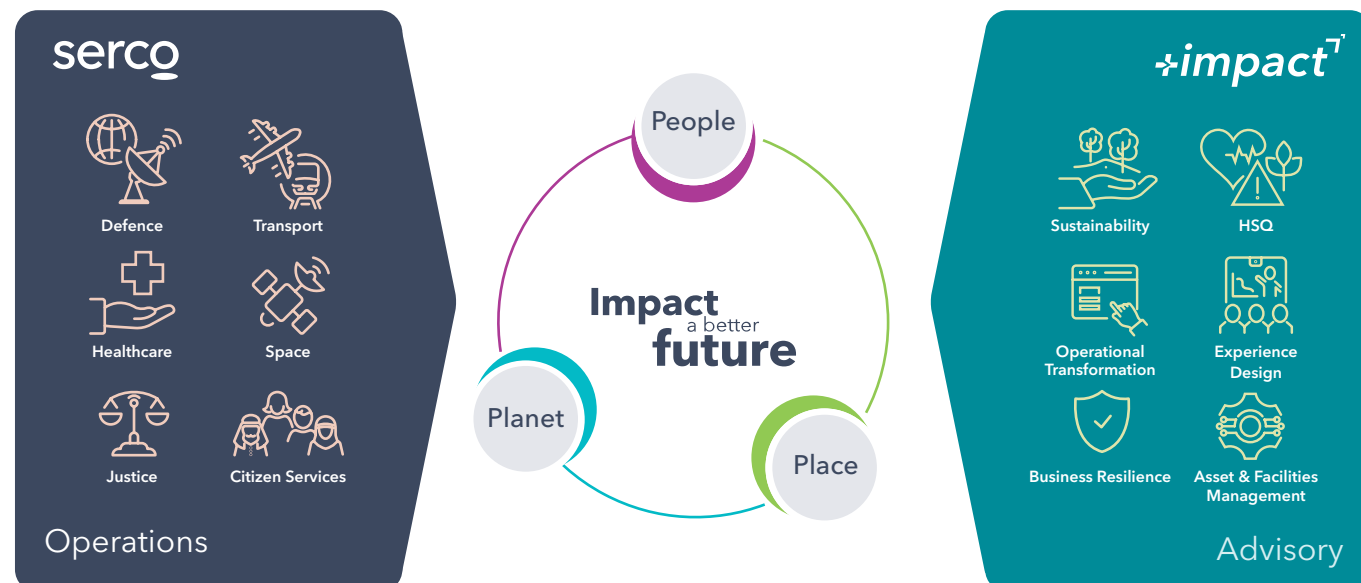
+impact is built on this operational foundation—bridging strategic insight with frontline delivery. Unlike traditional consultancies that advise and exit, +impact works end-to-end: from diagnosis to implementation, embedding resilience into real-world operations.

Together, Serco and +impact offer a uniquely powerful model:

Trusted advisory backed by proven delivery.

Strategy designed for execution.

Resilience that's not just planned—but performed.



Our areas of resilience expertise



Business Continuity

Continuing delivery of products and services following disruption.



Crisis Communications

Communicating with all stakeholders in a crisis for a more effective response and to protect reputation and brand.



Cyber Resilience

Planning to respond and recover from the impact of cyber incidents across the organisation.



Crisis Management

Leading and coordinating the effort to manage and mitigate the impact of a crisis for an effective response and recovery.



Crowd and Event Safety

Managing risk in public spaces to keep people safe and secure in line with industry regulations.



Emergency Management

Anticipating, preparing, responding, recovering, and continuing to learn from emergencies to prevent or minimise potential disruption.



Fire Risk Safety

Assessing and managing the risk of fire to meet legal and regulatory requirements.



Where we operate

Canada

Serco has over **1,400 employees** working across 5 provinces in Canada, delivering a multitude of services, from air navigation services to space programme support

Middle East

We have over **4,500 people** working on our projects in the Middle East, with operations across the United Arab Emirates and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

UK and Europe

We benefit from the expertise of Serco's operational teams which consists of **31,000 people** in the UK & Europe, working across 220+ government contracts.

Asia Pacific

We have over **12,000 Serco people** in the Asia Pacific region, with operations across Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

Our team



Paul Bogan
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As the Managing Partner of +impact, Paul has the ability to link vision and execution, using technology to promote growth, enhance efficiency, and spark innovation. Paul's leadership style revolves around fostering strong, productive relationships and this resulted in the success of +impact within the Middle East and its global expansion.



Deborah Higgins
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An experienced emergency management and business continuity specialist, Deborah is the former Head of the Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. Having designed large-scale crisis management training and exercises, she has also led on the design and development of British Standards and qualifications. As well as ensuring our clients achieve their objectives through a range of services, Deborah continually strives in her own professional development.



Ben Crabb
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Ben Crabb is an internationally respected resilience and safety strategist with over 20 years of experience shaping complex safety, risk, and operational frameworks for some of the world's most high-profile events and venues. He advised on risk, crisis, and resilience strategy for large-scale events including FIFA World Cup, UEFA, Commonwealth Games, and Formula 1—ensuring robust planning from concept to crowd execution. As the Resilience Capability Lead at the UK Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College (EPC), Ben actively advises to the UK Government, Royal Household, and security agencies (NPSA, NaCTSO), developing national-level guidance.



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Patrick Hallgate stands out as an accomplished business leader and Project Director, boasting an illustrious twenty-year career spanning both the public and private sectors. He possesses a wealth of expertise in managing large-scale projects and enhancing performance metrics within the Middle East, and Europe. Patrick is a passionate advocate for change, maintaining a strong focus on customer satisfaction and commercial success. An example is his work for the Ministry of Finance in Saudi Arabia on the EXPRO Programme to transform public entities in KSA.



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At the helm of Serco, our team has expanded our market presence in Riyadh, aligning with the transformative Saudi Vision 2030. Mona has a very successful and diverse track record of delivering ambitious projects within both the public and private sector. Mona plays an integral role in establishing and growing the Citizen Services business in the Kingdom, to support Vision 2030 with a commitment to service excellence and customer experience, strengthened through Serco Middle East's ExperienceLab.



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An accomplished sustainability and ESG leader with over 17 years of experience including design, construction, and operational readiness. Engi leads climate-responsive, resource-efficient development strategies across the Middle East and globally. Her portfolio spans 100+ high-profile projects in real estate, infrastructure, tourism, and data centers—successfully aligning them with key ESG goals and certifications such as LEED, WELL, EDGE, and Estidama.



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With over thirty years of expertise in the field of transport systems engineering, asset management, resilience, and organisational change, Clive offers an abundance of understanding to our clients in Saudi Arabia and worldwide.

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Different because we Do.

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Serco's advisory business

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