January 2021

CSU Connection

January 9th is CSU's 30th Anniversary!

Our Mission

is to deliver outstanding IT support to your business in order to improve uptime, productivity, and profitability.
You take care of running your business. We'll take care of your technology.

This monthly publication provided courtesy of Michelle Sherman, President of Computer Services Unlimited

5 Signs You're About To Get Hacked — And What You Can Do To Prevent It

Hackers love to go after small businesses. There are many businesses to choose from, and many don't invest in good IT security. Plus, many business owners and their employees have bad cyber security habits. They do things that increase their risk of a malware attack or a cyber-attack. Here are five bad habits that can lead to a hack and what you can do to reduce your risk.

1. Giving out your e-mail Just about every website wants your e-mail address. If you share it with a vendor or e-commerce site, it's usually not a big deal (though it varies by site – some are more than happy to sell your e-mail to advertisers). The point is that when you share your e-mail, you have no idea where it will end up – including in the hands of hackers and scammers. The more often you share your e-mail, the more you're at risk and liable to start getting suspicious e-mails in your inbox. Our recommendation is to set a free email account, used only for e-commerce. This way if the email address is shared, it wont affect you as it is not attached to any other valuable information.

If you do receive suspicious emails where you don't recognize the sender, then don't click it. Even if you do recognize the sender but aren't expecting anything from them and do click it, then DO NOT click links or attachments. There's always a chance it's malware.

2. Not deleting cookies Cookies are digital trackers. They are used to save website settings and to track your behavior. For example, if you click a product, cookies are logged in your

Continued on pg.2

Continued from pg.1

There's no good way to tell who is tracking online. But you can use more secure web browsers, like Firefox and Safari. These browsers make it easy to control who is tracking you.

In Firefox, for example, click the three lines in the upper right corner, go into the Options menu and set your Privacy & Security preferences. Plus, every web browser has the option to delete cookies – which you should do constantly. In Chrome, simply click History, then choose "Clear Browsing Data." Done. You can also use ad-blocking extensions, like uBlock Origin, for a safe web-browsing experience.

3. Not checking for HTTPS Most of us know HTTP – Hypertext Transfer Protocol. It's a part of every web address. However, most websites now use HTTPS, with the S meaning "secure." Most browsers now automatically open HTTPS websites, giving you a more secure connection, but not all sites use it.

If you visit an unsecured HTTP website, any data you share with that site, including date of birth or financial information, is not secure. You don't know if your private data will end up in the hands of a third party, whether that be an advertiser (most common) or a hacker. Always look in the address bar of every site you visit. Look for the padlock icon. If the padlock is closed or green, you're secure. If it's open or red, you're not secure. You should immediately leave any website that isn't secure.

4. Saving passwords in your web browser Browsers can save passwords at the click of a button. Makes things easy, right? Unfortunately, this method of saving passwords is not the most secure. If a hacker gets your saved passwords, they have everything they could ever want. Most web browsers require a password or PIN to see saved passwords, but a skilled hacker can force their way past this if given the chance.

Protect yourself with a dedicated password manager! These apps keep passwords in one place and come with serious security. Password managers can also suggest new passwords when it's time to update old passwords (and they remind you to change your passwords!). LastPass, 1Password and Keeper Security Password Manager are good options. Find one that suits your needs and the needs of your business.

5. You believe it will never happen to you This is the worst mentality to have when it comes to cyber security. It means you aren't prepared for what can happen. Business owners who think hackers won't target them are MORE likely to get hit with a data breach or malware attack. If they think they are in the clear, they are less likely to invest in good security and education for their employees.

The best thing you can do is accept that you are at risk. All small businesses are at risk. You can lower your risk by investing in good network security, backing up all your data to a secure cloud network, using strong passwords, and by educating your team about cyberthreats. Good IT security can be the best investment you make for the future of your business.

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Shiny New Gadget Of The Month: NexOptic DoubleTake Binoculars

You might not realize, but binocular technology has come a long way in the past 10 years. It's all thanks to advances in other areas of technology, including high-resolution cameras and high-resolution displays. Bring these technologies together along with some serious image processing, and you are left with NexOptic's DoubleTake Binoculars!

This pair of binocs is slightly smaller than a good pair of traditional lenses, but it comes with so much more, including a 12-megapixel sensor capable of shooting 4K video. It's GPS and WiFi enabled and has a Micro SD card port so you can easily save your photos and video. It's like a supercharged camera, but it has something your average phone camera does not: 10X digital zoom. It's great for travel or hobbies like birdwatching.

Learn more at NexOptic.com/doubletake

6 Time Management Tips For The Busy Entrepreneur

Face it, there will never be enough hours in the day to accomplish everything you need to do. But, if you methodically review how you spend your days and instill focus and discipline while completing daily priorities, you will soon find more time to work on the long-term success of your business. Here are six ways to do it.

1. Conduct A Time Audit.

Sit down and review three months of activity. The data from the analysis will show where you spent your time (which projects, tasks and priorities demanded your attention) and with whom you collaborated to get the work done. The audit will also shed light on areas where you were distracted, where you were the most productive and which tasks/projects took more (or less) time than anticipated.

2. Eliminate Time Drains.

These are the kinds of things that sneak up on you and steal time that can be put to better use growing your business. Look for these time drains: not delegating tasks, not managing meetings efficiently (tip: always have an agenda!) and spending too much time writing/responding to e-mails. If you've done your job as a leader, members of your team can handle a majority of meetings and e-mails. You hired great people. Now let them do their jobs.

3. Take Control Of Your Calendar.

Remember, *you* drive your schedule; don't let others drive it. Block time throughout your day and guard against changing your schedule to work on tasks that are not important or urgent. The way you allocate your time has a direct correlation to your effectiveness as a leader and, ultimately, the performance of your business. Prudent calendar management will also send a strong signal to your team that you should take this seriously.

4. Plan Your Day.

When you know your priorities for the day, you will be better prepared to reset your work schedule if the unexpected comes your way. Once your schedule is set, block off chunks of time to work on your priorities. I recommend 90-minute blocks so you can concentrate on big-picture items or work on a group of related tasks. Stay disciplined and don't allow yourself to go over that allotted time.

5. Limit Interruptions.

Now comes the hard part. Once you start working on each priority, you need to remain focused. Close the door and don't answer the phone unless it's a critical issue. Avoid checking your e-mail. Don't let distractions slow you down.

6. Hold Yourself Accountable.

Share your tasks, priorities and deadlines with a colleague. Meet with that person at least monthly to review how well you managed your time. The probability of success increases when you have someone watching your progress and coaching you until you the cross the finish line.

Andy Bailey is the founder, CEO and lead business coach at Petra, an organization dedicated to helping business owners across the world achieve levels of success they never thought possible. With personal experience founding an Inc. 500 multimillion-dollar company that he then sold and exited, Bailey founded Petra to pass on the principles and practices he learned along the way. As his clients can attest, he can cut through organizational BS faster than a hot knife through butter.

4 Ways To Make Sure Your Business Is Ready For What 2021 May Bring

As you prep for the coming year, here are four things you need to give your business a serious edge.

1) Head To The Cloud. Back up your data to secure cloud storage. This makes it a breeze for you and your team to access. Should anything be disrupted on-site, you have a backup you can turn to.

2) Update, Update, Update! Patch all of your security solutions, apps, programs — you name it. You don't want to accidentally leave yourself open to security exploits because you're four months behind on the latest security patch.

3) Dive Into Software-As-A-Service (SaaS). One great way to stay ahead of the curve on software is to pair with a SaaS for your various needs, such as marketing, project management or billing. It's easier to keep updated and integrated with the latest and most reliable software on the market.

4) Call Your MSP. Talk to your managed service provider to make sure all of your current needs are being met. Do you need additional protection? Do you need to back up data more frequently? Do your employees need more IT security training? Look for gaps and work together to fill them.

The "Human Firewall" — What is it and why you should be freaked out by it

Social engineering is a scary thing, and we're **all** vulnerable. It starts when scammers try to build trust with their victims. They trick their victims into handing over e-mail addresses, physical addresses, phone numbers and passwords.

Scammers often use phishing e-mails (and sometimes phone calls) posing as legitimate sources to get this information. They might tell you they're a representative at your bank or your favorite online store. They may even pose as one of your colleagues. They prey on your desire to help or fix a problem.

Social engineering works because scammers know how to break through the "human firewall," or the people in your organization. You can have all the malware protection in the world, but hackers can still break in by **exploiting your employees.**

How can you protect yourself and ensure your human firewall isn't breached? While no method can stop social engineering completely, **ongoing cyber security training can go a long way in patching that firewall.** When your team knows what to look for and how to deal with it, they can stop the scammers in their tracks.