What Is Your Business Data Protection Plan?

What do a business's invoices have in common with e-mail?

If both are done on the same computer, the business owner may want to think more about computer security. Information-payroll records, proprietary information, client or employee data-is essential to a business's success. A computer failure or other system breach could cost a business anything from its reputation to damages and recovery costs.

This past week I had the opportunity to visit with some business owners and I asked them these questions:

1. What happens to my business if my sensitive business information falls into someone else’s possession?
2. What would it cost me to be without some or all of my sensitive business information?
3. Could I recreate lost sensitive business information and what would be the cost?
4. What would be the implications to my business if I could no longer trust the accuracy or completeness of my sensitive business information?

If you cannot answer these questions, then read on.

The small business owner who recognizes the threat of computer crime and takes steps to deter inappropriate activities is less likely to become a victim. The vulnerability of any one small business may not seem significant to many other than the owner and employees of that business. However, over 27 million U.S. businesses-over 95 percent of all U.S. businesses-are small and medium-size businesses (SMBs) of 500 employees or less. Therefore, a vulnerability common to a large percentage of all SMBs could pose a threat to the Nation’s economic base. In fact, some have said that this is the next biggest threat to our Nation’s security.

In the special arena of information security, vulnerable SMBs also run the risk of being compromised for use in crimes against governmental or large industrial systems upon which everyone relies. SMBs frequently cannot justify an extensive security program or a full-time expert. Nonetheless, they confront serious security challenges and must address security requirements based on identified needs.

The difficulty for these businesses is to identify needed security mechanisms and training that are practical and cost-effective. Such businesses also need to become more educated in terms of security so that limited resources are well applied to meet the most obvious and serious threats.

To address this need, The SouthEast Minnesota SCORE Chapter and the Small Business Development Center have organized and are sponsoring a special program for area small business owners. It is being held at the Heintz Center on June 19th.

Key partners in this endeavor are the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). These government partners have developed a workshop on computer security for small businesses. The purpose of the meeting is to make individuals knowledgeable about computer security, provide an overview of information security threats, vulnerabilities, and corresponding protective tools and techniques with a special emphasis on providing useful information that small business personnel can use to apply directly or use to task contractor personnel. I urge businesses to go to the local workshops tab on this website to find the details: http://seminnesota.score.org/
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