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QUARTERLY
Newsletter

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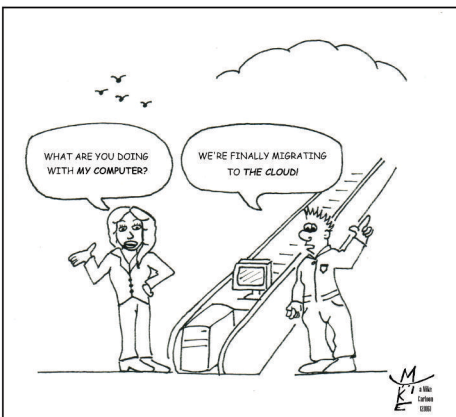
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WHAT YOU NEED TO NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CURRENT SECURITY BREACH NOTIFICATION LAWS

Data security is something that EVERY business is now responsible for, and not addressing this important issue has consequences that go beyond the legal aspect; it can seriously harm your reputation with clients. So be smart about this. Talk to your attorney about your legal responsibility.

It's Monday morning and one of your employees notifies you that they lost their laptop at a Starbucks over the weekend, apologizing profusely. Aside from the cost and inconvenience of buying a new laptop, could you be on the hook for bigger costs, and should you notify all your clients? Maybe, depending on where you live and what type of data you had stored on that laptop.

An Emerging Trend In Business Law

Since companies are storing more and more data on their employees and clients, most states are starting to aggressively enforce data breach and security laws that set out the responsibilities for businesses capturing and storing personal data. What do most states consider confidential or sensitive data? Definitely medical and financial records such as credit card numbers, credit scores and bank account numbers, but also addresses and phone numbers, social security numbers, birthdays and in some cases purchase history—information that almost every single company normally keeps on their clients.

"We Did Our Best" Is No Longer An Acceptable Answer

With millions of cyber criminals working daily to hack systems, and with employees accessing more and more confidential client data, there is no known way to absolutely, positively guarantee you won't have a data breach.

However, your efforts to put in place good, solid best practices in security will go a long way to help you avoid hefty fines. Here are some basic things to look at to avoid being labeled irresponsible:

MANAGING ACCESS.

Who can access the confidential information you store in your business? Is this information easily accessible by everyone in your company? What is your policy about taking data out of the office on mobile devices?

IT SECURITY AND PASSWORDS.

The more sensitive the data, the higher the level of security you need to keep on it. Are your passwords easy to crack? Is the data encrypted? Secured behind a strong firewall? If not, why?

TRAINING.

One of the biggest causes for data breaches is the human element: employees who accidentally download viruses and malware that allow hackers easy access. Do you have a data security policy? A password policy? Do you have training to help employees understand how to use e-mail and the Internet responsibly?

PHYSICAL SECURITY.

It's becoming more common for thieves to break into offices and steal servers, laptops and other digital devices. Additionally, paper contracts and other physical documents containing sensitive information should be locked up or scanned and encrypted.

Is Cloud Computing Right For Your Business?

Cloud computing is a concept that could save your business quite a bit of money on software, hardware, upgrades and services. Here are 9 reasons why "cloud computing" has caught on FAST with small to medium businesses:

1. CREATE AN INSTANT VIRTUAL OFFICE

Access and work from any secure PC, laptop or device. If you have employees who travel, are in remote locations or ever need to work from home, this is an ideal solution.

2. SAVE HARD DOLLARS ON SOFTWARE, HARDWARE, AND SUPPORT

Never purchase, install or maintain servers or other network equipment again.

3. LESS DOWNTIME AND FEWER PROBLEMS

Software in the cloud runs on extremely fast and reliable systems that include some form of redundancy. Compare that to your own server going down; until you get it fixed, you're unable to work.

4. AUTOMATIC DISASTER RECOVERY

Never purchase, install or maintain servers or other network equipment again.

5. LESS EXPENSIVE TO SCALE UP OR SCALE DOWN

With cloud computing, you pay only for what you need and increase or decrease storage or resources when necessary.

6. HASSLE-FREE SOFTWARE

All of your software is loaded on a server in a data-center and then shared over the Internet. There are no software disks to manage, organize or file.

7. ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Cloud computing uses significantly less power in your office. You also won't have to upgrade your hardware as often, which means fewer PCs, laptops and other components piling up in landfills.

8. NO MORE EXPENSIVE SOFTWARE UPGRADES

Networks in the cloud benefit from automatic software upgrades; best of all, they are done FOR you.

9. REDUCED MAINTENANCE

When your software is in the cloud, patches are automatically applied, meaning fewer reboots and downtime for maintenance. It's all taken care of for you.

NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY ALLIANCE:

"PRIVACY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS"

In our ever-expanding digital world, American consumers are paying closer attention to the value of their personal information and how to protect and manage their privacy. Since it is not readily apparent about how most companies collect and use information, businesses willing to make their data collection and use practices more accessible have a tremendous opportunity to build trust and confidence with their customers.

Consider taking the following "Privacy is Good for Business" actions to create a culture of privacy and security in your organization:

IF YOU COLLECT IT, PROTECT IT
Follow reasonable security measures to protect individuals' personal information from inappropriate and unauthorized access.

BE OPEN AND HONEST
Be open and honest about how you collect, use and share consumers' personal information. Clearly communicate your privacy practices and make consumers aware of any tools you offer to manage the use of their data.

EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS
Don't count on your privacy notice as your only tool to educate consumers about your data practices. Communicate clearly and often to the public about what privacy means to your organization and the steps you take to achieve and maintain privacy and security.

CREATE A CULTURE OF PRIVACY
Create a culture of privacy in your organization. Educate employees about their role in privacy, security and respecting and protecting the personal information of colleagues and customers.

ABOUT THE NCSA
The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) is the nation's leading nonprofit, public-private partnership promoting cybersecurity and privacy education and awareness.

NCSA works with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and NCSA's Board of Directors, which include representatives from ADP; AT&T; Bank of America; BlackBerry; Cisco; Comcast Corporation; ESET; Facebook; Google; Intel; Logical Operations; Microsoft; PayPal; PKWARE; RSA, the Security Division of EMC; Raytheon; Symantec; Verizon; and Visa.

NCSA's core efforts include National Cyber Security Awareness Month (October), Data Privacy Day (January 28), and STOP. THINK. CONNECT., the global online safety awareness and education campaign led by NCSA and the Anti-Phishing Working Group, with federal government leadership from DHS. For more information on NCSA, please visit staysafeonline.org/about-us/overview/

The Gold Standard Spotlight

"The Builders Exchange of Merced & Mariposa has been serving the construction industry in Merced and surrounding areas since 1969. As a member driven organization, we work to facilitate the link between contractors, architects and sub-contractors to streamline the bidding process for commercial and public works projects. We provide blueprints, general prints, training courses and an online plan service for our members, so they can continue to be successful in our industry.

We run our entire office off of an internet connection, including our phones, and Aureus Consultants have become our "go-to" vendor. They have been our outsourced IT department for the last four years, and they have effectively and efficiently set up all the new equipment we have thrown their way. Ashley has been fantastic to work with and is very fair and honest in recommendations for new hardware/software."

- Sammie Shaner
Executive Director

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WHY SHOULD YOU MIGRATE YOUR ON-PREMISE EMAIL SYSTEM TO THE CLOUD?

THE PROS & CONS OF HOSTING YOUR OWN EMAIL USING MICROSOFT EXCHANGE SERVER

With IoT (Internet of Things) now fueling the trend to migrate business class email service to the cloud, how can you be sure it's the right move for <u>your</u> business? Here are a few "Pros & Cons" that I've noticed about hosting your email on-site, compared with some of the benefits of migrating your email to the cloud.

PROS:

MICROSOFT EXCHANGE SERVER (THE PROGRAM THAT HANDLES YOUR EMAILS) IS ALREADY INTEGRATED IN THE WINDOWS 2003/2008/2011 SMALL BUSINESS SERVER OS

This really is the main reason why hosting your own email service became an accessible option to most small business owners in the first place, and it made a lot of sense at the time.

Plus, Exchange Server has been a stable platform with Microsoft Outlook becoming the staple application for hosting in-house business class email service.

CREATE AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF EMAIL ACCOUNTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

This feature in Microsoft Exchange Server has been attractive for many small business owners who are spooked by having to pay a monthly subscription fee for a cloud-based email service.

CONS:

YOU HAVE TO KEEP YOUR SERVER UP AND RUNNING AT ALL TIMES

If you are hosting your own email service and your server crashes or is not online, you won't receive any emails. Period. When your server is down for any reason, those emails will bounce back to the sender – leading your prospect or customer to believe your business does not exist anymore, and that could be a problem.

SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM SPAM!

Configuring the spam filters correctly on your in-house server can be a complicated process and, if you're using the same server for other types of hosting, it could really slow down your performance. Otherwise, If you didn't want to purchase and run sophisticated spam filtration software on your main business server, you could pay a monthly subscription fee for a service to scrub incoming emails before they reach your

server. Either way you have to find a way to control the spam and whatever method you choose will always have a price tag attached to it.

YOUR PROVIDER COULD CUT THE CONNECTION FOR YOUR EMAIL SERVER

Whether you have Comcast, U-Verse, or some other internet service provider, if they notice that your server is being used to send a lot of spam, they will cut your connection. You will be forced to pay an additional monthly fee for a service that will allow you to send messages out.

YOUR EMAIL SERVER IS PRONE TO GET HACKED AND BE USED AS A RELAY

That means a "spammer" could actually use your server as a spam server to send out massive amounts of unsolicited spam, which will really slow down your server's performance. You may not even know you've been hacked until the damage has been done; corrupting your crucial files and blacklisting your server.

BENEFITS OF THE CLOUD:

YOUR SYSTEMS FOR EMAIL WILL STAY CURRENT, WITHOUT THE COST OF UPGRADING YOUR EQUIPMENT

When you host your own email server, you can expect to fork over a lot of money to purchase and configure a newer and better machine every so often. On the other hand, you could let a cloud-based email service provider worry about upgrading and staying compatible with the latest devices in exchange for your monthly subscription to their service.

YOUR BUSINESS SERVER WILL PERFORM BETTER AND WITH SIGNIFICANTLY LESS DOWNTIME

It's simple, if your server isn't being bogged down with Exchange Server and sophisticated spam filtration software, it will be able to do what it really should be doing – which is serving your other critical business applications. Also, if your business server is down for any reason it won't affect your ability to send and receive email messages in any way since it is hosted in the cloud.

YOU WILL SPEND LESS BY RELYING ON A CLOUD-BASED PROVIDER COMPARED TO HOSTING YOUR OWN EMAIL ON-SITE

When you add up all the costs and risks associated with hosting an email server, it's really a lot more than what you would pay for the average subscription cost of cloud-based email services.

YOU WILL HAVE PEACE OF MIND KNOWING THAT YOUR BUSINESS CAN SEND AND RECEIVE EMAILS, DAY OR NIGHT, WHETHER YOUR BUSINESS SERVER IS ONLINE OR NOT

First of all, remember what I said about what happens if someone sends you an email when your server is down? Not only will you miss out on getting the message, but it will bounce back to the sender – which can be a little embarrassing, not to mention confusing. As I noted earlier, your in-house server is a soft target for hackers and spammers – which can affect your productivity and your reputation. When you subscribe to a cloud-based service, you're paying for peace of mind as well as email exchange.

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- Recommend ways to speed up your computer network
- Outline a comprehensive line of defense against malware

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Aureus Consultants, Inc. is a computer consulting firm and IT Service Provider headquartered in Merced, CA. We offer the gold standard in providing professional IT services with the most affordable options for local small businesses.

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