TECH TIPS
TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT THAT BUILDS BUSINESS

HODGSON CONSULTING & SOLUTIONS

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Robert Zehnder President of Hodgson Consulting & Solutions.

Our Mission:
To eliminate every technical frustration, obstacle and inefficiency for companies with multiple locations and/or a remote workforce.

Protecting Your Business From Data Disasters

Data is everything to a small business in this day and age – which means if you lose access or control of your data, you lose everything.

As dramatic as that might sound, the data backs that up. According to several sources, 93% of companies, no matter how big they are, are *out of business within one year* if they suffer a major data disaster without having first formulated a strategy for combating it. And since 68% of businesses don't have any sort of plan for that worst-case scenario, that means losing data would be a death knell for most of the businesses in the country.

Fortunately, your business does not have to be one of them. By taking the following steps, you can ensure that you have a rock-solid disaster recovery plan in place.

Step 1: Know How A Disaster Recovery Plan Is Different From A Business Continuity Plan

The main difference between these two types of plans is that while business continuity plans are proactive, disaster recovery plans are reactive.

More specifically, a business continuity plan is a strategy by which a business ensures that, no matter what disaster befalls it, it can continue to operate and provide products and services to its customers. A disaster recovery plan, on the flip side, is a strategy by which businesses can back up and recover critical data should it get lost or held for ransom.

So, now that we have a clear, concise understanding of what constitutes a disaster recovery plan, we can dive into the steps necessary to create one.

Step 2: Gather Information And Support

In order to get the ball rolling on your disaster recovery plan, start with executive buy-in. This means that everyone, from the CEO to the entry-level employees, needs to be brought

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in on executing the plan in case your company suffers a data disaster. When everyone is aware of the possibility of a data disaster, it allows for cross-functional collaboration in the creation process – a necessary step if you want to prevent breaches in all parts of your systems.

You need to account for all elements in your tech systems when you're putting together your disaster recovery plan, including your systems, applications and data. Be sure to account for any issues involving the physical security of your servers as well as physical access to your systems. You'll need a plan in case those are compromised.

In the end, you'll need to figure out which processes are absolutely necessary to keep up and running during a worst-case scenario when your capability is limited.

Step 3: Actually Create Your Strategy

When everyone is on board with the disaster recovery plan and they understand their systems' vulnerabilities, as well as which systems need to stay up and running even in a worst-case scenario, it's time to actually put together the game plan. In order to do that, you'll need to have a good grip on your budget, resources, tools and partners.

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If you're a small business, you might want to consider your budget and the timeline for the recovery process. These are good starting points for putting together your plan, and doing so will also give you an idea of what you can tell your customers to expect while you get your business back up to full operating capacity.

Step 4: Test The Plan

Even if you complete the first two steps, you'll never know that you're prepared until you actually test out your disaster recovery plan. Running through all the steps with your employees helps them familiarize themselves with the steps they'll need to take in the event of a real emergency, and it will help you detect any areas of your plan that need improvement. By the time an actual data disaster befalls your business, your systems and employees will easily know how to spring into action.

So, to review, these are the quick actions that you and your employees will need to take in order to make a successful, robust disaster recovery plan:

- Get executive buy-in for the plan.
- Research and analyze the different systems in your business to understand how they could be impacted.
- Prioritize systems that are absolutely necessary to the functioning of your business.
- Test your disaster recovery plan to evaluate its effectiveness.

Complete these steps, and you can ensure that your business will survive any data disaster that comes your way.
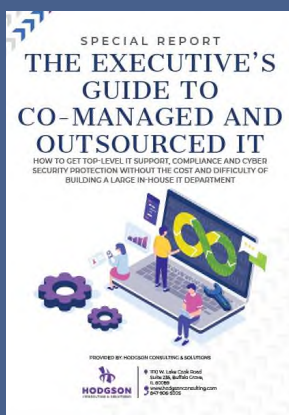
The Dirty Loophole That Lets Insurance Companies Refuse to Cover a Cybercrime Theft in Your Business

It's coming up on the end of the year so it's probably time for you to renew your Cyber Liability Insurance policy. Be warned there have been some changes. Last year's form was relatively easy in comparison to this year's form. We have seen the standard cyber liability insurance application expansion from a few pages to an upwards of 5 or more pages of cyber security questions. And some of them are doozies.

As hacking has become more prevalent in the headlines in the last few years — most recently the huge hacks this year such as the Colonial Pipeline and Solarwinds that targeted companies both large and small — insurance policies to protect businesses against damage and lawsuits have become a very lucrative business indeed. Your company may already have cyber insurance, and that's a good thing. But that doesn't mean that you don't have a job to do — or that the insurance will cover you no matter what.

When you buy a car, you get the warranty. But in order to keep that warranty valid, you have to perform regular maintenance at regularly scheduled times. If you neglect the car, and something fails, the warranty won't cover it. You didn't do your job, and the warranty only covers cars that have been taken care of.

Cyber insurance works the same way. If your company's IT team isn't keeping systems patched and up to date, taking active measures to prevent ransomware and other cybercrime attacks, and backing everything up in duplicate, it's a lot like neglecting to maintain that car. And when something bad happens, like a cyber attack, the cyber insurance policy won't be able to help you, just as a warranty policy won't cover a neglected car.

The truth is that insurance companies are tired of paying out the nose for ransomware and mitigations, especially for companies that don't implement basic security precautions.

Check out this real life policy exclusion we recently uncovered, which doesn't cover damages "arising out of or resulting from the failure to, within a reasonable period of time, install customary software product updates and releases, or apply customary security-related software patches, to computers and other components of computer systems." If your cyber insurance policy has a clause like that — and we guarantee that it does — then you're only going to be able to collect if you take reasonable steps to prevent the crime in the first place.

That doesn't just mean you will have to pay a ransom out of pocket, by the way. If your security breach leaves client and partner data vulnerable, you could be sued for failing to protect that data. When your cyber insurance policy is voided because of IT security negligence, you won't be covered against legal damages, either. This is not the kind of position you want to be in.

All of this is not to say that you shouldn't have cyber insurance, or that it's not going to pay out in the case of an unfortunate cyber event. It's just a reminder that your job doesn't end when you sign that insurance policy. You still have to make a reasonable effort to keep your systems secure — an effort you should be making anyway.

Let's face it, you are paying good money to cover your losses in the event of a breach, the LAST thing you want is to battle with the insurance company to collect in the event you file a claim.

Want to make sure that you are in compliance for cyber liability insurance to ensure a payout if you compromised? We Can Help!!

We have compiled the application forms from the top cyber insurance carriers, extracted the technical requirements and built them into our own Cyber Insurance Manager.

Give us a call at 847-906-5005 for a Cyber Insurance Assessment to see what would prevent your insurance company from approving your claim.

◼ 3 Digital Disruptions That Affect WFH Employees And How To Avoid Them

As more employees work from home, the risk of cyber-attacks grows. In 2020, between the months of March and July, nearly half of all businesses dealt with some sort of digital disruption. Some of the most common digital disruptions were:

Worker Productivity Losses

When hackers infiltrate company computers, they might steal employee identities. This won't hurt your business directly, but it will indirectly, as workers have less time for work while they grapple with their identity being stolen.
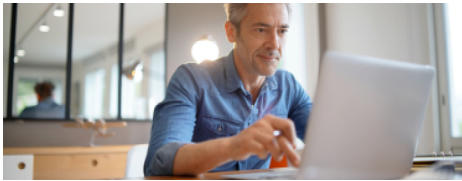
Internet Of Things Infiltrations

Now that so many "smart" devices can be hooked up to a central server, there are more avenues than ever for hackers to gain access to sensitive company data.

Ransomware Attacks

Businesses of all sizes are falling victim to ransomware attacks, but it's the small and mid-size ones on a tight budget that really suffer from the fallout.

To stop these kinds of attacks, educate your workforce on best practices for avoiding hackers and make sure their systems are up-to-date with good cyber security software. Nothing is bulletproof, but you can do a lot to protect your company.

CYBER READINESS STRATEGIES

Deploy a Multi-Layer Security Strategy

Nothing is failproof. Is your company taking advantage of all the security protections possible?

◼ 5 Tips For Millennial Entrepreneurs From A Millennial Entrepreneur

Millennial entrepreneurs are more diverse than entrepreneurs of any other generation, with a greater portion of them being women and people of color than ever before. But what does it take for a millennial to succeed in this brave new world of business?

1. Remember that although older business owners may have valuable insights, they might not understand how entrepreneurship works in the digital age.
2. Know how to do every job in your business; after all, you'll have to do them all when you start out!
3. Find a mentor, someone who is where you want to be one day, and learn from their successes and failures.
4. Don't take advice from people who haven't been where you are – even if the advice is well intentioned and from people you care about.
5. Do not let people judge you for your age. Being in the know about the latest tech – because of your age – is a tremendous advantage in today's marketplace.