

Small businesses, the target of cyber criminals

Internet security is one of those things that small businesses never think about, until they become the victim. "Small businesses are prime targets for cyber criminals," says Bruce Goodwill, sales director at AVG Technologies.



"Small businesses worldwide lose billions annually to cyber attacks, as most small businesses are hoping nothing happens. If it does, they aren't prepared."

Recent research by AVG reveals that IT security breaches are relatively common with as many as one in six SMBs reporting having had an incident in the past year. According to the AVG SMB Market Landscape Report, SMBs are often most concerned about the more short-term, logistical issues resulting from an IT security breach, including time and cost to replace damage. However, those who have experienced a breach are more likely to have seen the longer term impacts such as loss of sales and revenue opportunities.

Start with basics to protect information

"Businesses of all sizes should treat online security the same way they treat corporate governance and brand protection, and make it a boardroom issue. This is not just a technology debate," says Goodwill. "While they may seem like common sense, small business owners should start with the basics like promoting strong password management, with password and username combinations that are not easy to guess and which include a combination of letters and numbers; encrypting data on computers; having the latest security software installed and up to date; training employees on the dangers of cyber attacks and identifying them, as well as protecting mobile devices, which are increasingly vulnerable to attacks."

He adds that as the inexorable drift towards the mass use of mobile technology in the workplace becomes manifest, SMBs that do not take prompt action stand to lose a great deal. "SMBs are showing greater appetite for solutions used by mobile workers. However, not all are aware of the IT security risks that accompany this technology. One in five are employing Android smartphones; an equal proportion use BlackBerries while employees spend an average of one day a week working away from the office."

Mobile phones a threat to security

Yet only a quarter of SMBs surveyed by AVG viewed the use of mobile phones in business as a threat to IT security. "Very few SMBs are currently using antivirus or internet security for Smartphones or solutions for mobile workers," Goodwill says.

As content is increasingly packaged for mobile consumption - often delivered via apps from cloud servers - methods to stay secure can become as confusing as they are numerous. While most users are familiar with the benefits of simple anti-virus software, not everyone appreciates the multitude of phishing and other scams that purveyors of malware will try to install on a device. "While SMBs may not be dealing with issues of national security, cyber criminals have SMBs firmly in their sights as they try to get hold of anything of value from product roadmaps to pricing data to corporate bank account information," Goodwill points out.

"Internet security is an aspect of running a business that requires ample attention. Never assume that your business is safe online, and always keep a keen eye on anything that may potentially be harmful to your business' files or information," he concludes.

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