

The (Real)ity of a Cyber Attack

Description

If you work in the title industry, then you understand that your company is at risk for a cyberattack. You are constantly reading articles about fraudsters, scams, and phishing. You have ongoing training for staff, you put a prevention plan in place, and you upgraded your security measures. Your Cyber Security Incident Response Plan is an ongoing project and has been a topic of discussion for years. You gently warn your employees about the potential impact on your finances and reputation. You know exactly what to do if you experience a breach, but do you really understand the day-to-day reality of the recovery period? Unless you are prepared to close your doors, you need to put a practical plan in place to limit the interruption to your business.

Immediately following a breach, you go into triage mode. You must stop the bleeding. One of the most important steps in recovering from a cyberattack is to isolate the breach. The goal is to limit the damage. In many cases this means suspending your entire network. You need to be prepared to lose access to your database and software. This news probably isn't surprising, but it doesn't end there. Stop and ask yourself, "What stops working if the network goes down?" In many cases, the answer is everything. You will likely lose access to your e-mail and ability to print. Unless you have a landline phone and fax, you may not be able to initiate and receive calls or faxes (AND no one stops calling and faxing—they just don't understand why you aren't answering). You may not be able to retrieve voicemails. You need to understand what is impacted if you lose temporary access to everything that relies on your network.

Good news. Your security team appears to have identified the breach. The next task will be to restore access to uncompromised systems. This can be a slow process since it is likely that only one will be restored at a time. You think to yourself, "Just give me back my phone—at least I can contact clients." Do you have access to phone numbers without your database up and running? Once I have access to my software then I will be ok! When your software comes up, you can produce important documents—a win! Are you able to print them for signatures? Walk through your daily tasks and activities with staff members and identify potential issues.

Once you identify your challenges, you can start to brainstorm creative workarounds to limit interruption to operations. Every business, office, industry will have different hurdles and needs, but the following suggestions may help generate some ideas: Invest in a dedicated cell phone for emergency use. Consider having one landline with a traditional fax machine and a telephone. Create an employee phone tree to distribute information quickly when you cannot use e-mail. Keep a paper file (yes, paper) of important instructions and contact information. Vet third parties now that can securely receive, print, and deliver documents. Practice accessing your phone system from an outside line in the event you are able to change your message or re-route calls.

All real estate industries are at risk for a cyberattack. Staying a few steps ahead of the fraudsters requires constant evaluation, training, upgrading, and education. Even when your company does everything right, you might find yourself the victim of a sophisticated attack. Taking the time to identify priorities and develop practical workarounds may be the only way to keep your doors open while you

execute your Cyber Incident Response Plan. It is no secret that the fallout of an attack can be devastating to your bottom line and to your reputation—it can sometimes take months or years to recover. Planning now, while you are not in the midst of a crisis, will minimize interruption to your daily operations. This may be the difference between dusting yourself off and landing on your feet and dealing with a lengthy recovery leaving lasting scars.

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Ali Newkirk, former REALTOR®®, Home Staging Professional, and Elementary School Teacher, specializes in client care and real estate relationship management at RGS Title in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Working as a REALTOR®® on a top producing team for 8 years enables Ali to bring a unique point of view to her colleagues at RGS Title. She is passionate about real estate and especially enjoys educating REALTORS®® about the settlement process and helpful ways to get their buyers from ratification to the closing table. While Ali has many different roles as a licensed title agent at RGS, her primary goal is to ensure that all clients (agents, buyers, sellers, and affiliates) receive unparalleled customer service. Ali, a long time Virginia resident, graduated from James Madison University with degrees in Anthropology and Early Childhood Education. She especially enjoys cooking with her family after a trip to the farmer's market with her boyfriend, Cody, and their two dogs, Margot and Ruby. Ali's other interests include gardening, reading, upcycling old furniture, and tinkering in the garage.

Category

1. Cybersecurity
2. Uncategorized

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