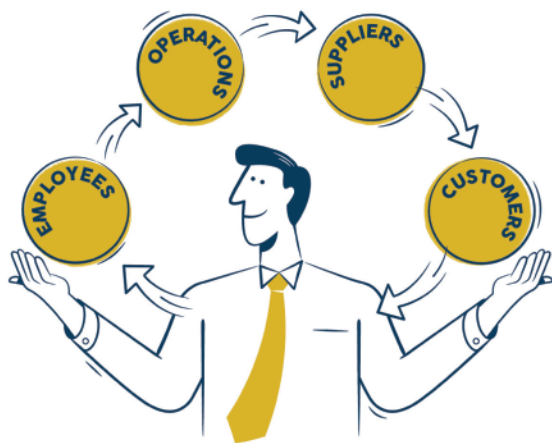


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FBI BULLETIN: ARE YOU PROTECTING YOUR COMPUTER?



TECH TIPS

By Kelly McNeil, TechBldrs, Inc.

On October 2nd, the FBI issued a warning that malware, ransomware, and other sorts of cybercrime is on the rise, detailing steps you and your business can take to protect yourself. We're glad the FBI caught up! If you've listened to TechBldrs' advice before, you're likely already putting into action the defensive steps the FBI recommended. Or, if you're one of our clients, we've been doing them for you. The best time to start following these tips? Right now, before you need them.

Want to know what the FBI recommended, and what we suggest for each step? We've broken it down for you.

1. Back up your files

Imagine what would happen if your computer suddenly stopped working. Could you replace everything that was lost? Family photos, financial documents, archived work projects? It may be possible to repair your computer, but your files

could be lost forever. The only way to ensure you'll never lose a file? Backup, backup, backup!

External hard drives

- The contents of your computer can be copied to an external hard drive to create duplicates of the files you've stored. This means that in case of an emergency, you can restore your files to a new device, or (at the very least) be confident that you still have the files

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you need. Follow-up backups should be conducted on a regular basis to keep your backup current.

- An external hard drive can be lost, damaged, or stolen, just like your computer. That's why it's important to keep your external hard drive in a secure location when you're not using it.

Online backup services

- Online backup services offer secure, Cloud-based storage. Since they store files on the Cloud, you'll be able to recover them from any computer with an internet connection. As with external hard drives, it's important that you backup your computer regularly. TechBldrs uses an industrial-strength product called CloudBerry for our clients, but for your personal computer we recommend a service like Carbonite, IDrive, or Backblaze.
- It's important to note that Cloud sync, like the service offered by Apple's iCloud and Dropbox, are *not* a form of secure backup! Don't expect them to be a reliable source for file restoration - always have a form of backup!

2. Safeguard against cybercriminals

Malware- like viruses, ransomware, and spyware- is a type of software that's sent over the internet and is designed to

damage your computer or gain unauthorized access to your information. It's cheap to use, and readily found on the Dark Web, meaning it's become less of an internet boogeyman and more of an everyday threat. It's so wide-spread that even government computer systems are being attacked, as was the case with the cities of Baltimore, MD, Augusta, ME, and Albany, NY in the last year alone.

Antimalware alone isn't enough

- If you get a flu shot, you can still catch a cold. One form of protection is better than none at all, but the only way to be as secure is to have multiple forms of security. Intrusion detection software, such as OSSEC and Splunk, can offer ongoing data protection, while antivirus and antimalware software like Avast and Malwarebytes will alert you to any potentially dangerous programs on your computer.

Develop smart browsing habits

- Most system intrusions and cyberattacks happen because of user action (even if you don't realize it!). Clicking on a link, unthinkingly opening an attachment, or responding to an email without checking the sender are all risky actions and can open your computer up to unknown actors.

(Continued on page 52)



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TECH TIPS

(Continued from page 51)

- What can you do? Hover over links before you click on them to make sure they're going to the right place, don't download and open unknown files, and always check to make sure that you know the sender of an email before opening links or responding to requests.

3. Keep your security current

Hackers love out-of-date systems and software, and love bad user habits even more. They've learned how to take advantage of known openings in programs and can buy leaked personal data (like usernames, passwords, and email addresses) on the Dark Web for less money than you might spend on lunch. Follow these two recommendations to keep your security current.

Up-to-date patches

- Tech companies send out patches for vulnerabilities in their programs and systems frequently. They also provide maintenance patches that keep your computer running smoothly and will help expand its life expectancy. But unless you're choosing to update, some of those vital patches might not be applied to your computer. If you have a habit of clicking "Remind Me Later" when you're notified of updates, start choosing "Update Now," instead.

Good password habits

- Information for at least 2.2 billion online accounts is up for sale on the Dark Web. Can you be sure one (or more) of your accounts isn't among them? If you use the same password for multiple accounts, then all it takes is for one to be compromised before cybercriminals could have access to your entire online life. That's why TechBldrs recommends having a

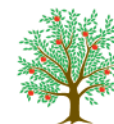
different complex password for each account (it's easier than you think - check out our blog about creating hackproof passwords at www.techbldrs.com to learn more!) and recommends changing your passwords once a year, at least.

These are just some of the steps the FBI (and TechBldrs) suggests taking to protect your online life. Other security steps- like employing best practices for the use of RDP, managing end-user access, and employee training- can only be implemented in your workplace by trained IT professionals. If you'd like to learn more about keeping your information safe, call TechBldrs at 610.937.0900, email us at info@techbldrs.com, or visit our website at www.TechBldrs.com. Mention this article for a FREE Dark Web scan of online accounts associated with your email.

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