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Innovations

Review Twice, Implement Once. Doing IT Right the First Time.

Scott Bernstein, CPA
President

Nick Espinosa
CIO & Chief Security Fanatic

3 Ways To Stop Cybercriminals Cold In Today's Crazy Times

You've seen it. You've probably even experienced it. For what feels like forever now, just about everyone has been forced to modify priorities. As a business owner, you've probably been focused on shifting your business to accommodate this world crisis. You may even be investing more of your time in retaining customers and generating new cash flow. If you're like most people out there, you've barely even had time to think about cyber security and protecting your important data.

Maybe you've heard the saying "Never let a crisis go to waste." It's as if cybercriminals wrote it because that's exactly what they're thinking right now. In fact, they're probably working overtime right now to craft new malware while our lives have been turned upside down. Yes, as you're focused on your business, hackers are finding new ways into your IT network. Their objective is to steal data and passwords, compromise your clients' private information and even demand large ransoms.

Did you know that cybercrime is expected to cost $6 trillion (that's a 6 followed by 12 zeroes!) by the year 2021? But, now is when hackers are expected to do their absolute most damage.

Here are three strategies you can use right now to help protect your business data, money and productivity during these unusual times.

1. Guard Your Inbox. People aren't paying as much attention as they usually do, which makes it the perfect time for cyber-attackers to send e-mails with dangerous malware, worms and viruses. Always carefully inspect every e-mail received and make sure you know the sender.

Here's another tip: avoid clicking links in the e-mail unless it's abundantly clear where they go. Also, don't ever download an attachment unless you know who sent it and what it is. While it takes a few extra seconds, double check by calling the person who sent you the attachment. Better safe than sorry. Make sure you communicate these safeguards to everyone on your team, especially if they are working from home.

2. Secure Your Company-Based Technologies. During crises like this one, your passwords are a critical first line of defense. Don't wait for your company's finance data to be compromised. Make a point now to reevaluate your passwords and direct your team to create stronger passwords. Too many employees are guilty of using the same password across multiple applications. Use a unique password for every single application.

Your team may tend to save your passwords in their web browser. Don't do this. A skilled hacker can bypass the PIN required to access your saved passwords. Once they have the password or PIN to access your web

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browser, they can steal as much as they want – credit card information, customers' private data and more!

3. Secure Your Home-Based Technologies. With the coronavirus pandemic, far more businesses are encouraging their employees to work from home. That means a lot of people are working from the living room or kitchen without giving a second thought to security. This negligence is an invitation to new cybercrimes.

Here are a few tips to ensure your work-from-home employees are keeping your network and data secure: make sure your employees and contractors are not using their home computers or devices when they are working from home. Add

a firewall to ALL computers and devices that will be utilized at home. Finally, your network and data are not truly secure unless your employees utilize a VPN (virtual private network).

There's no need to invite in more problems by letting your computer and network security slide during these times. We would be happy to help you create or even improve your work-from-home environment.

While this coronavirus scare has negatively affected countless businesses, we are proud to say we are open and continuously servicing our customers. If you need additional security advice or would like to have a consultation to discuss how to keep your data safe or how we can help you work more effectively, simply connect with us today.

How to Safely Clean and Sanitize Your Electronics

Electronics are magnets for dust, dirt and grimy fingerprints and they can be difficult to clean. From smudges and buildup to bacteria and germs, electronics endure a daily barrage of dirt and contaminants that can make us sick. And you won't find "clean electronics" on most cleaning checklists and even the best maid services usually don't include devices like laptops and smartphones.

IMPORTANT TIPS FOR ALL DEVICES

Using harsh cleaners is a bad idea because manufacturers put anti-scratch, anti-fingerprint and other coatings on many newer devices that are broken down by most cleaners. So, don't use hand sanitizing gel, glass cleaner, ammonia products, hydrogen peroxide, bleach, makeup remover, solvents, powdered cleansers, or disinfectant wipes as these can damage the device. You should also avoid spraying anything directly onto any device as moisture and electronics don't get along. Do not use anything paper-based - like paper towel, Kleenex, or toilet paper – to clean your devices since it can scratch them up, especially your screens. Microfiber clothes are your best friend when it comes to electronic devices.

It's important to check the manufacturer's manual (or website) before you clean your electronics for any special instructions. If possible, disconnect electronics from power sources, turn them off, and/or remove the batteries before cleaning them.

Washing your hands properly and frequently also helps keep your devices clean and free from germs.

PHONE OR TABLET

When cleaning your phone or tablet, be cautious since it probably has a fingerprint-resistant coating that could be damaged. Tempered-glass screen protectors likely have the same coating too. The safest way to clean these electronics is to wipe them gently with a damp microfiber cloth. Use cotton swabs to get into crevices and the edges of the screen and

buttons.

If your device has a screen protector that doesn't have a coating, use an isopropyl-alcohol-and-water mixture with a microfiber cloth. Pour one-part alcohol and one-part water into a spray bottle and then spray your cloth with the solution and wipe down the phone to get rid of dirt and germs. Keep this solution handy because you'll be using it for other electronics too.

Don't forget about your case! Remove the case and wipe it down with a damp microfiber cloth. If your case is plastic with no special coating you can also wash it with a couple drops of dish soap mixed with warm water.

SCREEN

LCD—LCD screens are delicate, and you don't want to press hard on them, because that can burn out the pixels. Instead, turn your monitor off (so you can better see the dirty spots), and grab a dry microfiber cloth. Many monitors and other gadgets come with one. From there, just gently wipe the screen. If you need to, add a little bit of water. In most cases, that should be all you need.

If you have a heartier build-up of spots or gunk, resist the urge to press hard and wet the cloth with a 50-50 mix of water and white vinegar. You can use a special monitor cleaner if you desire, but the vinegar/water mix should work just fine. If you can, use distilled water instead of tap water, since tap water is likely to leave white spots on your screen from salt or other deposits.

Touch Screen—Like your monitor, the best cleaner for a touch screen device is either plain old water or a 50/50 mix of distilled water and vinegar. That said, touch screens are a bit more resilient than LCD monitors, due to the fact that they're meant to be touched, so you can press a bit harder if you have a particularly stubborn spot (don't go overboard, though).

If you want to not only clean but disinfect your touch screen, you can use a bit of isopropyl alcohol on some devices (Apple, for example, does not recommend it). There are also touchscreen-safe antimicrobial sprays and, depending on the device, eyeglass cleaner applied to a microfiber cloth can also work. Check your manufacturer's warnings to see what they allow.

KEYBOARD

If your keyboard is only mildly dirty, you should be able to get by with two things: blowing some compressed air in between the keys (to blow out dust) and cleaning dirty keys with a swab of rubbing alcohol to remove oil, grime, and germs. Alternatively, we've become very big fans of the Mr. Clean Magic eraser, and it'll do wonders for a grimy keyboard, especially if it's noticeably oily. If your keyboard's rather disgusting, though, you might have to pop out the keys and really dig in with a toothbrush.

For a quick clean you can always turn your laptop and/or keyboard upside down and gently shake out the keyboard to get rid of crumbs.

MOUSE

Apart from old-school mice or the Apple Mighty Mouse, most mice shouldn't need to be opened up to be cleaned. Generally, you can just turn it over and take a cotton swab to the rubber pads, wetting it with water or alcohol if necessary. For the mouse buttons, you should be able to clean it in much the same way you did the keyboard—use some alcohol on a cotton swab to rub away dirt and grime
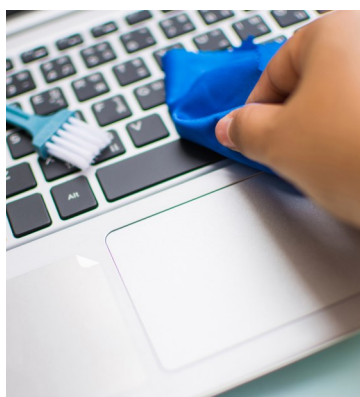
DESKTOP PC

Wipe down your computer tower with a cloth and blow out dust from the fan. If you are confident to open the PC, do so and blow out any dust that is inside the case. While you're at it, wipe off the dust on your desk to get your home office area nice and clean. Dust is one of the biggest killer of PCs, so keeping the area dust free will expand the lifespan of your PC.

LAPTOP BODY

If you have some non-acetone nail polish remover around, it's been known to clean up laptops (especially lightly colored ones, like the old white MacBooks) quite well, but nothing works quite as well as the Mr. Clean Magic Eraser. Get it wet, wring out as much water as you can, and lightly rub it over your trackpad, keyboard, and laptop body. It should clean them up, remove any grease from your fingers, and give it that new, fresh-from-the-store look. Don't press down too hard, since the Magic Eraser tends to "shed" when rubbed

hard, which will just dirty your computer up more. It's also an abrasive, which means it can rub off whatever coating is on your device if you press hard.

GAME CONSOLE AND CONTROLLERS

Game consoles, and especially controllers, can get grimy, greasy and dirty from hours of gaming and snacking. Unplug the console and disconnect the controllers before you start cleaning. Spray the cutouts and inputs with compressed air and dust everything with a soft bristle brush. Wipe down all surfaces with a damp microfiber cloth and use cotton swabs to get into crevices.

For controllers, dampen a cloth with your alcohol and water solution. Wipe down the controller and cord thoroughly. Use a cotton swab with the same sanitizing solution and get into the grooves and all around the buttons. Make sure everything is dry before you reconnect the controllers and plug in your console.

FITNESS TRACKERS AND SMARTWATCHES

Your fitness tracker and smartwatch are subjected to sweat and the bacteria from your hands. Use a microfiber cloth dampened with water to wipe off the screen and casing. You can get into any crevices with a small soft-bristled brush and use your sanitizing solution for buttons. It's best to remove really dirty bands if they need a thorough cleaning.

Nylon bands are prone to absorbing sweat, so use a dab of dish detergent and a damp cloth to wipe them down frequently. For silicone bands, wipe them down with a small amount of rubbing alcohol to remove dirt and germs. Metal bands should be wiped with a dry, lint-free cloth. If the metal is especially dirty, use a damp cloth and dry thoroughly. Leather bands can be wiped down with water and a microfiber cloth followed by a leather conditioner.

HEADPHONES AND EARPHONES

Your headphones and earphones can be handled as frequently as a smartphone, so in addition to germs and bacteria, you're dealing with sweat and earwax. Disconnect your headphones or earphones before cleaning them. For earphones with removable tips, take the tips off and clean them with soap and water and rinse thoroughly. Use a water-dampened microfiber cloth to wipe down the rest of the earphones and the cord. Make sure the tips are dry before putting them back on the earphones.

For headphones, a microfiber cloth and water will get rid of any buildup. Wipe down the surfaces of the headphones and the cord. For crevices and grooves, a small soft-bristled brush will get the dust out. Bluetooth headphones or earphones should only be cleaned with a dry cloth to prevent damage to the electronics inside.

Now that you know how to clean and sanitize your electronics, make keeping them that way a routine task. Your electronic devices will be shiny and clean and using them will be a healthier experience.

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BSSi2

35 Aztec Court
South Barrington, IL 60010

(312) 752-4679

www.bssi2.com

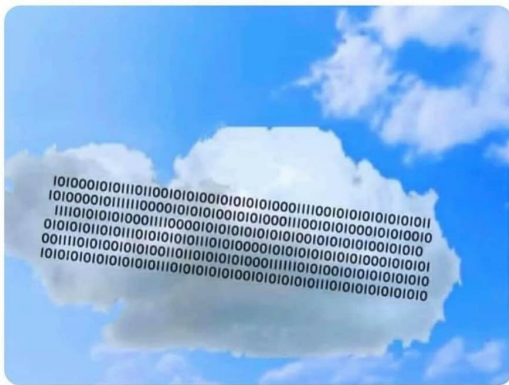*"We make all of your computer problems go away without the cost of a full-time I.T. staff"*

Due to lesser pollution, we can now see the data stored in a cloud.

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The Pets of BSSi2

Meet one of Kurt's cats: Bytes

The perfect guard kitty, Bytes makes sure our customer's technology equipment is kept safe.

Shiny New Gadget of the Month

Zepp Golf 2 Swing Analyzer

Improve your golf game with a device smaller than a golf ball. The Zepp Golf 2 is a remarkable piece of tech that attaches to the back of any golf glove. It's packed with sensors and delivers real-time analysis of your game.

Using Bluetooth, the Zepp Golf 2 pairs with your smartphone. As the data is analyzed, it's displayed on the accompanying app. It tracks your club speed, backswing positioning, hip rotation, consistency and much more. The Zepp Golf 2 also has a long-lasting battery – up to eight hours – so it will definitely make it through your next game without a hitch. The Zepp Golf 2 is compatible with both iPhone and Android devices. Learn more at Amazon or Zepp.com.