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LeadingIT
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Are Cybersecurity Breaches and Ransomware Attacks Preventable?

The AI Advantage: How Microsoft Copilot Transforms Office Productivity While Aiding Small Business IT Support

The True Price of Downtime: Why Break-Fix Small Business IT Support is Costing You More

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Navigating the Top 10 Technology Challenges for Business Success

LeadingIT Celebrates

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Are Cybersecurity Breaches and Ransomware Attacks Preventable?

In the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats, the year 2023 has been particularly alarming, witnessing an unprecedented surge in ransomware attacks—a staggering 95.41% increase globally compared to the previous year. This surge is not just a number; it translates into real-world consequences, with over 3,311 victims already falling prey to these malicious attacks, surpassing the totals of previous years.

This alarming escalation poses an urgent question: Are breaches and ransomware attacks preventable? As we delve into this critical issue, we'll discuss the evolving threat landscape and the role of proactivity. We'll also explore the measures that can be taken to mitigate these risks.

The Evolving Threat Landscape

First and foremost, it's crucial to acknowledge that the landscape of cybersecurity is constantly evolving. Hackers and cybercriminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated, employing new tactics and technologies to breach systems.

This dynamic nature of cyber threats makes absolute prevention a challenging, if not impossible, task.

Some of the current key methods of attack include:

- Phishing and Social Engineering: Using deceptive methods to trick individuals into revealing sensitive information.
- Ransomware and Malware: Infecting systems with software that encrypts data for ransom or gathers information covertly.
- Exploiting Software Vulnerabilities: Attacking known or unknown flaws in software and operating systems.
- Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Attacks: Overwhelming systems with traffic to disrupt services.
- Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs): Long-term, targeted attacks aimed at stealthily stealing data.
- Supply Chain Attacks: Infiltrating systems through external partners or providers with system access.

The Role of Proactive Measures

With that being said, claiming that breaches are entirely unpreventable would be an oversimplification.

A significant number of cyber incidents occur due to preventable vulnerabilities, such as outdated software, weak passwords, and human error. Here, the emphasis must be on proactive measures. Regular system updates, robust password policies, and ongoing employee training can significantly reduce the risk of a breach.

How to Mitigate the Risks

Employ Multiple Lines of Defense

At LeadingIT, we advocate for a layered approach to cybersecurity that involves firewalls, antivirus software, intrusion detection systems, and regular security audits. Such measures, while not foolproof, significantly increase the difficulty for attackers to penetrate systems.

Have a Disaster Recovery Plan

Another critical aspect is the practice of regular backups and having a robust disaster recovery plan. In the case of ransomware attacks, having secure and up-to-date backups can be the difference between a

Pictured on the cover: Alex, Daniel, Keegan, Andrew, Kyle

The AI Advantage:

How Microsoft Copilot Transforms Office Productivity While Aiding Small Business IT Support

Today's business environment is more complicated than ever. While some workers are surrounded by their colleagues in an office building, others are logging in from home. However, whether you work under a traditional, remote, or hybrid office model, one factor remains paramount for all workers and their organizations: productivity.

Fortunately, with the emergence of AI language models like ChatGPT, many businesses are seeing the advantages AI has when it comes to productivity. In fact, Microsoft's new AI program, Microsoft Copilot, does "all the things" to help workers be more productive.

What Is Microsoft Copilot?

Microsoft unveiled Copilot earlier this year, a generative AI feature that leverages language models with data from Microsoft Graph and Microsoft 365 apps. This innovative tool automates various tasks such as drafting emails, creating PowerPoints and meeting summaries, and providing users with a personalized and efficient work experience.

Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella emphasized, "With our new Copilot for work, we're giving people more agency and making technology more accessible through the most universal interface — natural language."

How Can Microsoft Copilot Aid Small Business IT Support?

Microsoft Copilot presents a myriad of opportunities to revolutionize small business IT support. Its ability to automate repetitive tasks allows IT professionals to focus on more strategic and impactful initiatives.

Moreover, it continuously learns and evolves

offering the potential to adapt to the unique challenges and requirements of small businesses, offering tailored solutions that contribute to improved efficiency and overall IT support.

Unleashing Productivity for All

GitHub data reveals that Copilot is a game-changer, unlocking productivity for a wide range of users. Among developers utilizing GitHub Copilot, a staggering 88% report increased productivity, while 74% find they can focus on more satisfying work. Furthermore, 77% state that Copilot significantly reduces the time spent searching for information or examples, streamlining workflows, and boosting overall efficiency.

Copilot's benefits extend beyond individual users, helping entire organizations by scanning through data and apps to generate valuable insights. This functionality is a significant time-saver, automating the process of finding information within vast datasets, ultimately enhancing collaboration and decision-making.

Navigating IT Budgets:
7 Steps For Strategic Investments in 2024

The mantra for 2024 is clear: Targeted IT investments for maximized business impact. As businesses globally prepare to invest an astounding $5.1 trillion in IT—an 8% increase from 2023—this financial commitment underscores a shift in perspective. No longer is IT merely a support function; it has become a pivotal aspect of core business strategy, essential for companies aiming to succeed in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Let's delve into what steps businesses can take to strategically navigate their IT budgets in 2024 to align with business objectives.

1 *View IT as a Strategic Partner*

To effectively align IT budgets with business goals, it's vital to start viewing IT not just as a support role but as a key partner in the business. IT should be seen as a driver of efficiency, innovation, and competitive edge.

2 *Identify Business Objectives*

Once you've shifted the mindset of the role of IT, start by identifying and understanding the overarching goals of the business. This may include expanding market reach, increasing revenue, improving customer satisfaction, or innovating product offerings.

3 *Align IT with Business Processes*

Align IT initiatives with business processes by understanding the workflow, challenges, and bottlenecks within different departments

4 *Collaborate With Other Departments*

Encourage a collaborative environment where IT and other departments work closely. This collaboration ensures that IT solutions are not developed in a vacuum but are responsive to the actual needs and challenges faced by various segments of the business.

5 *Support Dynamic Business Goals with Flexible IT Strategies*

This may involve investing in scalable technologies, cloud solutions, or agile methodologies that allow for quick pivoting and scaling in response to new opportunities or market demands.

6 *Measure Impact and Adjust Strategies*

Regularly measure the impact of IT investments on business objectives through key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics.

7 *Foster Continuous Learning and Adaptation*

As business goals evolve and new technologies emerge, the IT team should be equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to align their efforts with the current and future needs of the business.

Aligning IT Investments with Vision

Businesses must align IT strategies with their core objectives, encourage cross-departmental collaboration, and adapt to evolving market demands. Measuring and continuously refining these strategies will drive not just cost-effectiveness but also significant business innovation and growth.

The True Price of Downtime:
Why Break-Fix Small Business IT Support is Costing You More

What's your go-to strategy when something breaks at work? If your answer leans toward reactive solutions, you might be practicing something we call break-fix IT.

What is a Break-Fix Model?

A break-fix model in IT is a reactive approach where businesses seek help only when issues arise, paying for services on a per-incident or hourly basis.

An apt analogy is waiting for your car to break down before you address the illuminated check engine light with your mechanic. By the time you get it checked out, you could be facing a bigger problem.

The Issues with Break-Fix IT

Unpredictable Costs and The Value of Time

The primary pitfall of break-fix IT lies in the unpredictability of costs. When IT issues occur, businesses often find themselves paying hourly rates or per incident, leading to unpredictable and potentially significant expenses. The underlying principle is that time is money, and every moment spent resolving an issue translates to lost productivity and revenue.

Hidden Threats and Evolving Issues

In addition to the direct costs, break-fix IT exposes businesses to hidden threats. Minor IT issues, if left unaddressed, can evolve into large-scale threats such as security breaches or system failures. Without proactive monitoring, these issues may go unnoticed until they reach critical levels, putting the entire business at risk.

Why Managed Small Business IT Support Serves You Better

- Proactive Management
- Ongoing Maintenance and Monitoring
- Essential for Complex Systems

A Call to Proactive IT Support

The true cost of downtime goes beyond the immediate expenses incurred in fixing IT issues. Break-fix IT support, with its reactive nature, exposes businesses to unpredictable costs and hidden threats that can significantly impact productivity and overall business success. On the contrary, managed IT services offer a proactive and strategic alternative, providing ongoing maintenance, monitoring, and cost predictability.

Navigating the
Top 10
Technology Challenges for Business Success

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1. Cybersecurity Threats

2. Data Privacy and Compliance

3. Integration of AI and Automation

4. Managing Big Data

5. Balancing Innovation with Risk

6. Supply Chain Digitalization

7. Managing IT Infrastructure

8. Adapting to Cloud Computing

9. Sustainable Technology Practices

10. Cybersecurity Skills Gap

■ *Are Cybersecurity Breaches and Ransomware Attacks Preventable?*

minor setback and a catastrophic data loss.

Be Aware of the Human Element

Employees can be the weakest link in the security chain or the first line of defense. Regular training and awareness programs are essential to equip staff with the knowledge to identify and prevent potential threats, such as phishing attacks.

Collaborate and Share Information

Collaboration and information sharing within the cybersecurity community also play a vital role. By sharing knowledge about new threats and vulnerabilities, organizations can better prepare and protect themselves. This collaborative approach extends to working with law enforcement and cybersecurity agencies to address and mitigate cyber threats effectively.

Focus on Continuous Improvement and Adaptation

Finally, the key to reducing the risk of cybersecurity breaches and ransomware lies in continuous improvement and adaptation. Cybersecurity is not a one-time effort but an ongoing process. As technology and threats evolve, so must our strategies and defenses.

Empowering Resilience

While it's unrealistic to claim total prevention of all cyber threats, a considerable number can be mitigated through appropriate measures. This involves a blend of technological solutions, best practices, employee education, collaboration, and a mindset geared toward ongoing improvement.

As a leader in the IT sector, LeadingIT remains dedicated to offering top-tier defense against these dynamic threats, embodying the spirit of resilience and adaptability in the face of digital adversities.

■ *The AI Advantage* continued from pg 3

Enhancing Skillsets

With Microsoft 365 hosting thousands of commands, Copilot takes a revolutionary approach by unlocking these commands through natural language techniques. Commands that were previously underutilized or overlooked are now accessible, empowering users to interact with the technology in a more intuitive and efficient manner.

Microsoft envisions Copilot as a catalyst for transforming how people perceive and interact with AI, ushering in a new era of streamlined digital collaboration.

Privacy and Security

As Copilot seamlessly integrates with Microsoft apps, it adheres to existing security, compliance, and privacy policies and processes. This reassures SMB owners that their sensitive data remains protected, ensuring a secure and reliable AI-driven workspace.
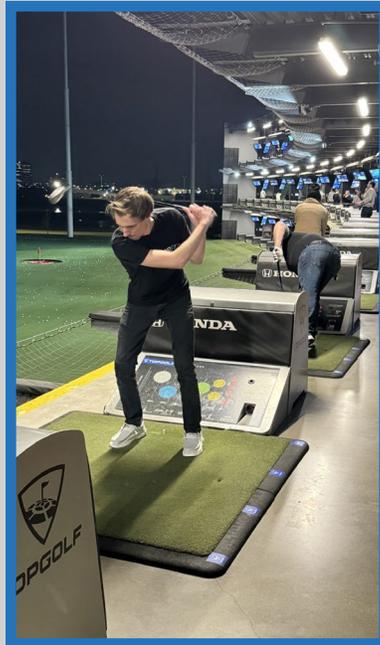
Continuous Evolution

Microsoft Copilot is not static; it's a dynamic tool programmed to evolve continuously. Beyond its current capabilities of creating, summarizing, analyzing, and collaborating across various apps, Copilot is designed to learn new skills.

This includes connecting with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and transforming customer data into actionable communications. As it adapts to new systems and processes over time, Copilot becomes increasingly sophisticated, reflecting Microsoft's commitment to staying at the forefront of AI innovation.

LeadingIT Celebrates

The LeadingIT team celebrated a successful year with a fun holiday event at Top Golf. Laughs, swings, and shared moments created memories that will last well into the New Year. Thanks to all of our clients who allow us to serve your organization, we wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Kyle

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Serving the Chicagoland area with offices in Woodstock, Downtown Chicago, and now in Manteno, IL.

WE ARE CELEBRATING!

Birthdays

Devin Lindelof - January 6th
Daniel Rabenold - January 6th
Lori Yarnall - January 21st
Brian Sadowski - January 23rd

Anniversaries

Stephen Taylor - 1/1/2010
John Funk - 1/23/2023
James Clayton - 1/31/2022