Shadow IT: Ignore At Your Own Risk

It’s one of those little secrets that nobody wants to talk about…

The term “Shadow IT” refers to apps and devices used at work that operate outside your company’s sanctioned policies and protocols.

Shadow IT takes many forms, like conversations on Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts, Gmail or Skype. It can include software from Excel macros to cloud-based data storage apps such as Dropbox, Google Docs and Evernote. Or collaboration spaces like Slack, Asana and Wrike. And then there are devices: USB sticks, smartphones, tablets and laptops within your network that you have no control over.

Robert J. Moore, CEO of RJMetrics, relates how companies like Slack and Dropbox craft their pricing models to encourage rapid proliferation. One day, a few of his engineers were using Slack, then all the engineers, then the whole rest of the company was using it. He said, “We reached a point of no return and paying for it was pretty much our only option.”

The hidden dangers of shadow IT. When users on your network adopt apps and devices outside your control, protocols aren’t followed, systems aren’t patched, devices get infected without people knowing it and data breaches happen… As a result, confidential information can be exposed, accounts taken over, websites defaced, goods and services stolen, and precious time and money lost.

Not only that, you end up with siloed information in unknown places, data compliance issues and missed opportunities for bulk pricing.

The obvious solution would be to crack down and forbid use of all but company-approved devices and apps. Unfortunately, that tends to slow things down, stifling productivity and innovation.

Bringing your shadow IT out into the light. Obviously, burying your head in the sand won’t make the problem go away. Here’s what you can do to not
Cut loose the “control” mentality. It’s no longer feasible to simply ban certain apps. If you don’t give employees the software they prefer, they may start using their own. They can easily access a vast and growing variety of apps, all without your help – or control.

Recognize the delicate balance between risk and performance. Evaluate risk on a case-by-case basis. Then take control of high-risk situations and keep an eye on the rest.

Foster open communication. Get employees involved in creating intuitive policies. You can turn them from your greatest risk to your greatest asset by leveraging their input and ownership of protective protocols. This helps everyone maintain security while keeping practical needs for performance in mind.

“Take control of high-risk situations and keep an eye on the rest.”

Develop a fully tested plan. Even if it’s only 70% complete, a tested plan will be far more useful when the need inevitably arises than a 100% complete plan that’s not fully tested. Most managers underestimate the confusion that occurs in the first few days following a breach.

Unfortunately, that confusion can create a defensive rather than constructive atmosphere centered on discovering how, when and where the breach occurred. A comprehensive incident response plan can go a long way toward achieving a speedy resolution, and keep an otherwise manageable event from turning into a full-blown business crisis.

Finding the right balance. Focusing only on security and asset protection can drag down business performance quickly. However, balancing risk with performance enables you to maximize your return from investments in detection and response. It also helps you become more adept at adjusting as the security landscape changes. By developing your organization’s ability to recognize threats and respond effectively to incidents, you can actually take risks more confidently and drive business performance to a higher level.

TSSI can help you with this. Our proprietary Security Assessment helps you take the friction out of data protection. Contact us today at 410-239-9492 to take advantage of this offer (normally $997), FREE through the end of June, and put an end to Shadow IT in your organization finally and forever.

Free Report: What Every Small Business Owner Must Know About Protecting And Preserving Their Company’s Critical Data And Computer Systems

You Will Learn:

- The only way to know for SURE your data can be recovered if lost, corrupted or deleted—yet fewer than 10% of businesses have this in place.
- 7 critical characteristics you should absolutely demand from any off-site backup service.
- Where many backups fail and give you a false sense of security.
- The #1 cause of data loss that businesses don’t even think about until their data is erased.

Call Us Today For Your Free Copy: 410-239-9492
Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:

Many of America’s favorite companies began as a small start-up.

Ben & Jerry’s sold ice cream out of an old gas station when they first opened in 1979. Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook in his college dorm room. Starbucks started with just one location in Seattle, Washington.

The ability to scale up is a defining trait among businesses that want to move ahead of the start-up pack. To do that, companies must learn how to lose the start-up mentality and focus on a few key areas.

Building A Great Team
Nancy McCord, chief talent officer at Netflix, said, “The best thing you can do for employees – a perk better than foosball or free sushi – is hire only ‘A’ players to work alongside them.”

Top talent likes to work with other top talent. Create a culture where team members challenge each other, learn together and propel the company forward. If your top talent is too busy managing disengaged, subpar workers, the work will get old very quickly. No one wants to go to work and babysit fellow team members.

To create a team of top-tier talent, focus your energy on engaging current members and improving the hiring process. Create a company scorecard for job candidates. Outline the type of person who excels in the position and the character traits they must possess. If an applicant doesn’t meet the criteria, politely decline to pursue them further.

Choosing The Right Strategy
Your company’s strategy is the roadmap that tells you how to get from where you are to where you want to be. It’s the defined path that your start-up will take in order to grow and become a leader in your industry. You should live, breathe and make decisions based on this strategy.

This requires more than just vague goal-setting. What matters most to your organization? What’s your mission? All of these should be taken into consideration before you pick a strategy. Once this strategy is established, your senior leadership should meet weekly to discuss its progress.

Include your entire team in the execution of the strategy and educate them on the “why” behind it. Each employee should have a solid knowledge of the company values, foundation and proposed direction of the company. This transparency will also aid in retaining the top talent you worked hard to recruit.

Improving Your Cash Flow
Your cash conversion cycle (CCC), or the amount of time it takes for a dollar spent to make its way back into your bank account, is one of the most important metrics to watch while scaling your business up. Growth requires money, and the faster you scale up, the more money you need. Learn how cash flows through your organization.

Scaling up is possible, but it takes focus and dedication to these three areas. Every industry-leading company started somewhere, and there’s no reason why your organization can’t be next.

Andy Bailey can cut through organizational BS faster than a hot knife through butter, showing organizations the logjams thwarting their success and coaching them past the excuses. After all, as he tells his clients, 100% annual growth is only 2% growth every week. It’s not easy. But possible. Andy learned how to build great organizations by building a great business, which he started in college then, grew into an Inc. 500 multi-million dollar national company that he successfully sold and exited. He founded Petra to pass on to other entrepreneurs, business owners and leaders the principles and practices he used to build his successful enterprise, which are rooted in the Rockefeller Habits methodology.
The Lighter Side:

What is Two and Two?

A business man was interviewing applicants for the position of divisional manager. He devised a test to select the most suitable person for the job. He asked each applicant, “What is two and two?”

The first interviewee was a journalist. His answer was “Twenty-two.”

The second applicant was an engineer. He pulled out a slide rule and showed the answer to be between 3.999 and 4.001.

The next person was a lawyer. He stated that in the case of Jenkins vs Brown, two and two was proven to be four.

The last applicant was an accountant. The business man asked him, “How much is two and two?” The accountant got up from his chair, went over to the door and closed it, then came back and sat down. He leaned across the desk and said “What would you like it to be?”

He got the job.

Imagine just taking a pill to acquire a whole new skill set.

In The Matrix, Neo opens his eyes after being programmed and tells Morpheus, “I know kung fu.” According to futurist and world-renowned inventor Ray Kurzweil, conversations like that will actually take place within the next 20 years. By implanting blood-cell-sized, cloud-connected nano-robots into the brain, humans will be able to literally download any skill set or body of knowledge from the cloud. Sound far-fetched? Scientists are already helping Parkinson’s patients, using a pea-sized implant connected wirelessly to an outside computer. And Kurzweil has a 30-year track record of accurate predictions – including a little thing we now know as the World Wide Web.

- Inc.com

Which app best helps you take notes on the go – Google Keep or Evernote?

Google Keep runs faster with a cleaner mobile interface than Evernote. It also wins on consistent quality of search across devices. Where Evernote shines is in its ecosystem of third-party integrations that add cool features. And its Clipper extension makes it easy to save web pages from Android or iOS directly into Evernote. So which app is best for you? If you just want to make quick notes on the go and share them easily, go with Google Keep. Plus, it’s free. If you want a deep database of notes, lists and web content with lots of features, even if you have to pay for it, go with Evernote.

- CIO

Facebook wants to help you blow up your business.

The Facebook Ad platform can work wonders when you apply these principles: 1) Have a strategy. Don’t make the mistake of diving in without knowing how the money you put in will actually pay off. 2) Remember “T-O-M”: TARGET the right audience with a great OFFER wrapped in a compelling MESSAGE. 3) Write great copy. Start with an engaging headline, keep your text simple and straight to the point. Make it easy to grasp and end with a clear call to action. Facebook ads give you access to the world’s largest audience – over 1.5 billion at last count… And one good ad could make a world of difference for your business.

- Forbes