CYBER READINESS
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Should I Get Outside Support to Manage My Cybersecurity Risk?

This is the first guide in a five-part series on using outside firms to reduce your cybersecurity risk.

If you are like most small business owners or managers, you wear many hats. Your focus is usually on the fundamentals of managing and building your business. You know that cybersecurity is an area of growing risk because there's been more news about it – especially more news about cyber threats and attacks. Cybersecurity is multifaceted. Yes, firewalls and spam filters help, but you also need a well-educated workforce that is aware of the basic elements of cybersecurity. The Cyber Readiness Institute focuses on human behavior and education to create a culture of security within every organization. After all, it just takes one misguided click on a phishing link to potentially bring down your business. If this sounds overwhelming, it is okay to seek out guidance. This five-part series from the Cyber Readiness Institute in consultation with its Small Business Advisory Council will help guide you through the process of determining if you need outside help and if so, how to get it.

Perhaps you used to think that you wouldn't be a target for hackers, but now it's clear they are attacking small companies for financial gain, such as by planting ransomware, as well as using small companies as gateways to attack larger businesses. You know you need to do something, but you're not sure what you should do or if you need outside help. **Remember, you can outsource some of your cybersecurity responsibilities, but you cannot outsource your accountability for cybersecurity.** With or without outside help, it will always be your responsibility to create and foster a culture of cyber readiness within your organization.

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The first step is to take an honest look at your cybersecurity risk. Prioritize the systems and data you need to run your company. Here are some quick tips to get started:

1. List the **information and data that is most important** to the success of your organization (e.g., customer information, confidential business information).
2. List the **computer hardware and software tools that are most important** for running your organization (e.g., website, email, file storage, accounting system, databases).
3. From the lists above, identify the top three to five items that would cause the most damage to your organization if they were unavailable, lost or stolen. Let's call these your **crown jewels**.
4. Identify who has **access to your crown jewels**. Realistically determine how well protected they are and if you're comfortable with the **level of protection**.
5. If you can't tell how well protected they are, you need to get outside support.
6. If they need better protection, do you know what to do and are you able to get it done? If not, you need to get outside support.
7. Determine if there are any data protection, cybersecurity, or data privacy requirements from your customers or applicable federal or local laws and regulations.

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Don't worry if it looks like you need to consider getting outside support. Most small businesses need to get some outside support for IT and cybersecurity. As a non-profit organization, we're here to give you free, straightforward advice. We can help you understand the difference between an IT consultant, a Managed Service Provider (MSP), and a Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP). We can provide some guidance on where and how to use cloud-services to help your business be more cyber-secure and resilient.

There was a time when cybersecurity was not considered to be a "fundamental" of managing a business – that time has passed. You need to focus on it the same way you prioritize your financials, customer relations, and human resources. From the last few years of cyber-attacks and breaches, we have learned that you must not wait until disaster strikes to pay attention to cybersecurity.

Check back soon for the next guides in the series or **sign up here** to get an email notification when they are released.

When assessing your cybersecurity risk, think about data loss and business continuity.

If you're an accounting firm, for example, losing customer data is probably a lot worse than having your website go down for a week. If you sell products and services online, having your website go down for a week could be extremely detrimental.

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The complete list of guides in this series:

Should I Get Outside Support to Manage My Cybersecurity Risk?
(THIS GUIDE)

Introduction to the Types of Outside IT and Cybersecurity Support

How to Select the Right Level of Outside Support

Reviewing and Understanding the Contract

Your Ongoing Cybersecurity Responsibilities

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About CRI

The Cyber Readiness Institute is a non-profit initiative that convenes business leaders from across sectors and geographic regions to share resources and knowledge that inform the development of free cybersecurity tools for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Explore the building blocks of good cybersecurity with our Starter Kit or create a cyber readiness culture in your organization with the self-guided, online Cyber Readiness Program. Our Remote Work Resources and Hybrid Workplace Guides offer timely tips for addressing the evolving cyber challenges of today. To find out more, visit www.BeCyberReady.com.

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