

Monthly Newswire

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

October 2020

Keeping your data secure when working remotely

With many of us now working from home, making video conference calls, uploading documents and conducting business online, how can firms ensure that their data and systems are secure?

Update your network security

While you should really do this on a regular, ongoing basis, making sure your devices are completely up to date with the most recent security patches and upgrades can make a huge difference in securing your data.

Things like your operating system, antivirus and antimalware programs, and your router are just some of the things you should immediately shore up and protect since those are generally your first and last defense against external threats. If some of your staff are using their own, personal devices when working remotely, your firm can roll out secure platforms such as Mobile Iron, which can be installed on those devices, in order to keep company data secure.



Encrypt home WiFi

If your team is working from home, ensure that their WiFi network is encrypted. A good start is to change the router's default password as it's susceptible to attack from a hacker.

The default passwords tend to be weaker. 'Admin', for example. Note that this is not the password you use to access the network; it's the one you use to protect your settings and configuration.

Two-factor authentication (2FA)

2FA requires two forms of identification to gain access, such as a password and a PIN code. This makes it harder for hackers to guess user login details. If you don't want to rely on set numbers and codes, you can also use apps like Microsoft/Google Authenticator - this will send an approval notification to your phone which you can either approve or deny.

Training

Having the right training in place is central to working remotely. Assign appropriate training courses to your team and ensure that they all complete it. Reinforce staff responsibilities, including when to report cyber security issues. Remind employees that while they work remotely, they have to maintain the same level of professionalism when it comes to secure and sensitive data as they do in the office. That includes reminding people that personal email is not to be used in an official capacity and that any physical documents kept at home must either be disposed of properly with a shredder or set aside securely (in a locked cabinet) to be shredded or securely filed at a later date.

Buffer - social media management

Buffer is a tool that lets you schedule your social media posts across multiple platforms.

Businesses are focusing their marketing and business development efforts online, more than ever before.

This presents managers with new challenges such as how to manage multiple social media accounts, a company website and various other online marketing assets. Posting the same content multiple times to multiple different social media accounts is inefficient and that is where software platforms such as Buffer come in.

Buffer is a social media management platform which is used by thousands of businesses around the world. It consists of a suite of tools for planning and scheduling the publication of content across multiple social media accounts, through to the analysis of results, engagement with your target audience, etc. Buffer has been designed from the ground up to help businesses drive meaningful engagement and results on social media marketing efforts.

Buffer offers a free trial for new users and there are 4 different levels of package on offer, starting with the more basic Free Account. The Free Account lets you manage 3 social media accounts and works with LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. It allows up to 10 scheduled posts per social media account and can be used on a PC or on mobile devices running iOS or Android.

If your business needs more functionality you can upgrade to the Pro Plan which costs USD \$15 per month (just under £12 at the current exchange rate). The Pro level allows you to manage up to 8 social media accounts and schedule up to 100 posts. Larger businesses can go further and the Premium Account (USD \$65 per month or just under £51 per month) and Business Account (\$99 or just over £77 per month) allow more users, more social media accounts and far more scheduled posts - up to 2,000 scheduled posts in the case of the Business Account..

For businesses that need a customised plan, Buffer also offers additional package options which allow you to add more users, training or a dedicated account manager.

ESG - What's it all about?

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria are a set of standards for a firm's operations.

There is growing interest in environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations in the business community. Many people have strong views and expectations when it comes to corporate behaviour and at the same time an appreciation that businesses are part of the solution to many of the world's current and emerging environmental and social challenges.

It's not just investors that are taking an increasing interest in the behaviour of businesses, it's customers too. Although the origins of ESG criteria stem from the investment and asset management industry, all businesses can engage in being more environmentally and socially responsible.

In the past, sustainability may primarily have been looked upon as a way to manage reputational risk. But in recent years, these objectives have become inadequate and somewhat outdated. The expectation to conduct business sustainably by integrating ESG objectives into the business model has more or less become mainstream and is considered a hygiene factor for modern companies.

ESG is also an opportunity for brand enhancement, attracting talent and customers, and streamlining the business model. While large businesses have the advantage of resources and big sustainability teams to draft up policies and guidelines, develop green products and enter into high-level agreements, small businesses tend to have swifter decision-making processes, less bureaucracy, more flexibility and are sometimes closer to the customer.

Entrepreneurs and small firms often have the advantage of being local, with a story the consumer can identify with.

Going green just makes it better. Smaller margins mean a small business could save a lot through relatively simple changes such as switching to digital receipts, using non-disposable coffee cups, switching to renewable energy, using recycled product material, improve waste management, and so forth. Adjustments that could make a significant financial difference for a small company, while simultaneously decreasing its carbon footprint.

Adapting to ever changing consumer behaviors may feel challenging, but this also brings opportunities for streamlining, cost-efficiency, innovation, and brand-enhancement. As a result, new products and ways of doing business are likely to emerge from those firms that adopt an approach that focuses on ESG criteria.

Consumer behaviour is evolving rapidly. In the past, consumers looked to big established brands as guarantors for quality. However, Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) in particular, tend to turn to local brands that have an interesting story and a focus on sustainability, social responsibility, etc.

The wellbeing benefits of meditation breaks

Building in a short meditation break into your working day can help you to feel sharper, more refreshed and energised.

The modern workplace is mentally and physically demanding. As business has become more global and complex, we are constantly juggling priorities, multi-tasking and chasing deadlines.

Depending on your job, you will experience varying degrees of demands and stress throughout the day. We all know that stress is a productivity killer but it is also detrimental to your physical and mental health.

Taking short breaks to clear your head during the working day can help to manage and reduce stress levels. That's where meditation breaks can help.

A meditation break is quick and easy to do. Focus on taking a couple of one-minute meditation breaks throughout your working day. A one-minute meditation break can take the following form.

1. Set a timer on your phone or watch for 1 minute. Use an alarm that is at a low volume level, so that you don't distract any of your colleagues.
2. Sit in your office chair and close your eyes.
3. Place your arms on your lap or on the chair's arm rests.
4. Breathe deeply. Inhale through your nose and exhale out through your mouth slowly.
5. Focus on your breathing. Clear your mind and think only about your breath.
6. If your mind slips away to focus on a problem or think about work, bring your focus back to your breath.
7. Count each breath in order to keep your mind from thinking about work related issues.
8. Once the one-minute timer goes off, take a deep breath, slowly open your eyes and go back to your work.

If you are working in a busy office or have colleagues around, noise cancelling headphones can help to drown out distracting noises. One meditation break in the morning and one in the afternoon can be enough to help you to manage your stress levels more effectively. Best of all, doing so only takes 2 minutes out of your working day but can help to keep you feeling positive and energized.

