



ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Preventing Data Loss

We regularly hear on the news when high profile companies suffer large scale data loss perpetrated by criminals that hack into online systems but, it was not until the publicity surrounding Edward Snowden and the so called Panama Papers that many companies realised the extent of the internal threat. Both of these offences were perpetrated by trusted individuals and not so called hackers, nevertheless, they were still crimes.

What we learn from events like these is that it is not sufficient to focus on Cyber Security and threats posed by external criminals, trusted individuals pose an even greater threat because they often have largely unrestricted access to sensitive data. If personal data and other confidential information is to be kept safe then a holistic approach to Information Security is required.

Information Security

Information Security requires that a company identifies what information assets (digital, paper, etc.) it has and that it instigates a security regime that limits access to information assets based on a need to know basis. These rules are the cornerstone of Information Management and they are considered good practice but, in our experience, many companies ignore these as they are perceived to be too difficult to accomplish and manage.

From a corporate governance perspective the implementation of an Information Security Management System (ISMS) will fully address all Information Security risks, ensuring best practice is followed. An ISMS is a systematic approach to managing sensitive company information (digital, paper, etc.) so that it remains secure. It includes people, processes and IT systems by applying a risk management process and a process of continual improvement.

The First Steps

Implementing an ISMS can be a long process and most regulated companies have an immediate problem.

Alternative Solutions Limited
PO Box 176, Cirrus House
Garenne Park, Rue de la Cache
St Sampson, Guernsey, GY1 3LQ

T: 01481 701234 F: 01481 715718
W: www.asl.gg E: info@asl.gg

Registered in Guernsey 16421



ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Many companies have taken steps to remediate external threats but they have done very little to address the very serious internal threat. One obvious point to make is that the internal threat is not limited to malicious activities, sensitive data can also be lost through unintentional and negligent actions.

The first step is to locate, identify and classify sensitive data that resides in folder structures containing Word, Excel, PDF and other document types, and within databases, such as, a Trust and Company system. The second step is to pinpoint and control possible escape routes. A company must decide whether personal data is to be printed, emailed, transferred to memory stick, uploaded to Dropbox, attached to Hotmail and similar and, if it can, by who and what controls need to be applied.

Audit trails and event logs are just not sufficient to prevent serious data loss. If unintentional and malicious data loss are to be prevented then data must be analysed in real-time before it leaves the company but, at the same time, daily workflows must continue unhindered so productivity and customer satisfaction are maintained. This is a challenge, unless you know how.

In summary

For companies in highly regulated industries, the consequences of a data breach can be severe and may include reputational damage, costly law suits and hefty fines. In light of numerous highly publicised international events and several low key local events, every regulated entity should be taking Information Security seriously because the effects of data loss could be disastrous.

About the Author

Tim Roussel has worked in the information management industry for over 20 years. He has experience of working with public bodies and commercial organisations across the UK and EMEA. He has been working for Alternative Solutions Limited for the past five years advising and assisting a variety of organisations on improving business processes, with a specific interest in information management.

Alternative Solutions Limited
PO Box 176, Cirrus House
Garenne Park, Rue de la Cache
St Sampson, Guernsey, GY1 3LQ

T: 01481 701234 F: 01481 715718
W: www.asl.gg E: info@asl.gg

Registered in Guernsey 16421