

Downtown is
Calling

Good
Times
Await



October 2022

RDP Bulletin

Riverside Downtown Business Improvement District

In Memory of David St. Pierre



RDP regrets to advise of the passing of David St. Pierre on September 6th after a long struggle with cancer. He joined the RDP Board in 2007, and served not only

as a Board member but also on the Executive as Treasurer, and as Chair. When his illness worsened, he went on leave from the Board as he wanted to keep in touch with the organization. David emceed many RDP events including our fashion shows, Downtown Street Jams, and Riverside Art and Music Festivals, and he did so in his own inimitable style.

In many ways, David was a Renaissance man, involved in the community and on many boards and committees, active in theater, well-traveled, witty, and so much more. He was a docent for the Mission Inn Museum and a member of the Riverside Arts Council, a co-founder of Riverside Repertory and stage

manager for the Fant-A-Shes drag shows, loved Key West, Paris, and London, and brought smiles to a room. The Menagerie thrived under him along with his business partner, Peggy Roa, and his son, Joshua Roa St. Pierre, with drag shows, drag brunches, and a commitment to the LGBTQ community. The original owner, Madeline Lee, promised that The Menagerie would always be kept open to the community and David held to that promise.

Many people hold fond memories of David with Miss Pearl by his side at the bar and at various locations downtown. He was a stalwart of downtown who will be sorely missed. A celebration of life was held at The Menagerie on September 24th, one last party in tribute to a life well lived. Our condolences to his family, and all those whose lives he touched.



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Join us on October 25 at Avila Historic 1929 to hear from the Riverside Arts Academy on their 10th Anniversary Celebration and from RCTC on Rail Safety and Metrolink.

Call the RDP Office at 951-781-7335 for reservations.

19th Annual Day of the Dead Celebration Returns



The 19th Annual Day of the Dead celebration will be held on Saturday, November 5th from 1 pm to 5 pm in Downtown Riverside. This event has become one of

the largest and most popular events in Riverside and the Inland Empire because of its attention to tradition and the cultural significance it honors. Through music, art, and ritual, Día de los Muertos memorializes the lives of our beloved ones who have passed away. Customs and culture are completely

enveloped in the commemorative altars, festive music, bright decorations, tasty food, and original crafts throughout this special family occasion.

The event includes music and dance stages featuring professional and community performers, a Luca Libra ring, artists, food and retail vendors. The highlight of the event is the traditional individual and family altars remembering loved ones in White Park.

For more information about the event, visit <https://www.facebook.com/riversidedayofthedeadd> or email rivdod@gmail.com. The event attracts 30,000 attendees and sponsorships are available.



Mayor's Message: Riversiders Rolling Up Their Sleeves

Contributed by Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson



A popular quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead is, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." It is my hope that this sentiment resonates with Riversiders as we all see the needs of our community.

More than just hoping residents are inspired to rally and create positive change, we are creating opportunities for residents to engage and get involved in meaningful ways that better Riverside. Much of the inspiration for initiatives like Beautify Riverside and the Mayor's Bipartisan Forum come from seeing Riversiders who have taken it upon themselves to roll up their sleeves and help.

Several years ago, I was in Tokyo, Japan and early one morning I was struck by the efforts of private citizens who just woke up, took to their streets or went to their parks and began sweeping, cleaning and collecting litter. Candidly, I was shocked as to why the Japanese did this. What I learned was a stark cultural difference. In Japan, these acts of caring for one's neighborhood and city were the norm—what everyone does because it's the right thing to do. In America, all too often, these tasks are seen as the "government's job." America, and Riverside, can learn something from the people of Japan. However, we do not need to look as far away as Japan, because there are residents here in Riverside who are working to make our city more welcoming, attractive, and clean. I would like to highlight some of their stories.

When we launched the Beautify Riverside initiative in July, my team started meeting with residents to identify ways for the community and the Office of the Mayor to partner on projects. This is when we began uncovering the great work that residents are doing—so let's take notes!

Retired small business owner Elizabeth Hall brings a bag on her morning walks around Magnolia Center and collects

litter and debris, walking different portions of the neighborhood each day. She takes her walks to get out and get exercise and cleans her neighborhood while she's out there—it's a win-win!

Longtime Riversider Gary Coffey keeps some graffiti removing wipes and cleaner at his home and when he sees small tags or graffiti in his neighborhood of Palm Heights, he will go and remove it to allow the City's graffiti removal team to focus on the larger issues.

40-year-long small business owner Sue Mitchell has taken it upon herself to adopt Fairmount Park. Sue collects litter on her daily walks in the park, snaps a photo on her phone to report maintenance needs to the 311 app, and follows up with the Parks & Recreation department to ensure things are corrected. She shared that when something that she reported is fixed, there is a sense of pride and ownership that is exciting to her. Sue can take pride in knowing "I did that!"

After the launch of Beautify Riverside, Ward 5 residents and army veterans, Sophia Mendoza and Tracy Barlogio, wanted to help. Sophia was already collecting litter on her daily walks and convinced some friends to join in too, but she wanted to get more involved. So, she and her husband Tracy offered to be the welcome team at our monthly Beautify Riverside community cleanups bringing in a welcome tent, tables, cold waters, and more. We could not host these events without their support!

I share these stories to show how Riversiders are out in our community making small differences each day. Collecting litter on your daily walk or sending in a picture of graffiti to the 311 app may be small things we can each do but, as Margaret Mead said, these small things can amount to much more. My call to action is for each of us to exhibit the same care for our respective neighborhoods as the residents of Tokyo do or—closer to home—the Riversiders I shared about in this article. To Elizabeth, Gary, Sue, Sophia, and Tracy, thank you for being a group of thoughtful, committed citizens who are changing the world. Now, let's all return the favor.

Visit ww.RiversideCA.gov/BeautifyRiverside to find out how you can get involved. 

RDP Welcomes New Businesses to Downtown

- 4 Color Fantasies (Retail) • Back Road Rustic Designs (Retail) • Barbara Banks (Antiques)
- Carpenter Acquisition Corporation (Business Services) • Jackson Lewis P.C. (Legal Services)
- Letti's Lovely Creations (Hair, Nails, Skin Care)
- Major K Music (Arts, Crafts) • Raincross Fitness
- Raincross Promenade Apartments LLC • VL Capital Investments, LLC • Wood Be Antiques and Gifts

A poster for a public forum on parking rates. The top left features the 'Park Riverside' logo with a stylized 'P' and a tower. The top right says 'Your City. Your Parking. Your Voice.' in yellow and white text. The middle section has a white background with a blue border, containing the text 'PUBLIC FORUM: PARKING RATES' and 'Wednesday, October 20, 2022 • 5:30 PM - 7 PM' and 'Main Library, Community Room 3900 Mission Inn Ave.'. The bottom left shows a photograph of a modern building at night with a QR code below it. The bottom right text says 'The City of Riverside invites you to participate in a public forum to help us develop new parking rates and operating hours for Downtown Riverside. Join the conversation and provide input on how to balance the Parking budget through rate adjustments.' The bottom of the poster has the Riverside logo and the text 'For more information and questions on parking in the City of Riverside, visit RiversideCA.gov/ParkingRates'.

COUNCIL CORNER

Ward One Council Update

Contributed by Councilwoman Erin Edwards

Riverside celebrated **Hispanic Heritage Month** in September—continue celebrating by visiting The Cheech and many of our Latino-owned businesses in Downtown. We kicked off the month of October by highlighting the Downtown with **Explore Riverside Together** and Keep Riverside Clean and Beautiful's **River Clean-up**.

Mark your calendar for the following dates this month:

- Following the Land Use Committee's direction, the City is hosting **community meetings on warehouses and industrial uses in Riverside**. Join us on October 6th at 5:30 pm at the Cesar Chavez Center, or at 6:30 pm on October 26th for a virtual meeting.
- We're rolling up our sleeves to **clean up Downtown with the Mayor** on October 8th and 15th. Contact PMontes@RiversideCA.gov to learn more.
- Riverside's **Homelessness Action Plan** heads to City Council on the 11th.
- In the same meeting, Council will discuss an agreement for the 2nd phase of architectural plans for the **Museum of Riverside**.
- You can bring your questions and ideas to our **Office Hours** on October 12th at **Reid Park from 5:30 to 6:30 pm**.
- Make sure you stick around after the October 12th Office

Hours for a **conversation about Redistricting** at the Ruth Lewis Center from 6:30 to 8 pm.

- Learn more about Inclusionary Housing during the Planning Commission's **Inclusionary Workshop** at 9 am on October 13th.
- On the evening of October 13th, Downtown comes to life from 5 to 10 pm with the **Night of Arts and Innovation**.
- The conversation about downtown **Parking Rates** continues with a stakeholder meeting on October 20th at 5:30 to 7 pm at the Main Library.
- Celebrate a milestone in our Downtown with the **Civil Rights Institute's grand opening and block party** on October 22nd at 5:30 pm.
- Get your running shoes on—the **Mission Inn Run** is on October 23rd.

Also this month, stay on the lookout for discussions about ARPA funding and Business Security Grants at City Council. As always, I look forward to hearing your thoughts and hope you reach out to ask any questions. You can call me at 951-783-7811, or e-mail me at EEdwards@RiversideCA.gov. 

Ward Two Council Update

Contributed by Councilwoman Clarissa Cervantes

Happy Autumn Days!

Riverside Arts Academy City of Love Art of Giving Gala:

The Riverside Arts Academy is committed to changing the lives of our youth by providing instruction and a springboard to arts education in a broad-based curriculum that focuses on improving the quality of life through music, dance, performing, and visual arts. This year we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Riverside Arts Academy with an amazing Art of Giving Gala, hosted by Musical Director Dr. Nove Deypalan and the Riverside Arts Academy Board. The "City of Love" Art of Giving Gala will be held on Friday, October 21, at 5:30 pm at the Fox Performing Arts Center for an evening with special performances, delicious food, and a silent and live auction. All proceeds will support our youth in their musical education. You can purchase your tickets at www.riversideartsacademy.com/gala. To sponsor and support our youth contact Luke Hillard at info@riversideartsacademy.com or my office at 951-826-5419.

Eastside Fall Festival: Come one, come all to the Fall Festival! The event is free and open to the community; children of all ages are welcome. The Riverside Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department will be hosting the event on Friday, October 28 at Bobby Bonds Park from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm where families can enjoy carnival game booths, arts and crafts, jumpers, musical entertainment and participate in a costume contest! For more information contact the Cesar Chavez Community Center at 951-826-5746.

Ward 2 Development: Housing partnerships are vital to Ward 2! As we look for ways to strengthen our local neighborhoods and economy, providing a better quality of life for people of all backgrounds and walks of life – I believe how and where we build

speaks volumes of our community's, which is why we are intentional with every development project.

Business Spotlight:

- **Prism Aerospace:** is HIRING! Prism Aerospace is a leader in the aero-structure manufacturing Industry and is located in the Eastside community of Ward 2. They specialize in sheet metal forming, precision machining, special processing, kitting, and complete assemblies. As a AS9100 business, Prism works tirelessly to manufacture first class products while meeting their customer's stringent requirements. They have competitive wages with great benefits. Their philanthropic side also assists local small businesses by helping them get back on their feet. Most notably, they have recently helped a struggling business by bringing them in to their company and 100% of the revenues are going back to local charities in our community. To learn more about Prism Aerospace call 951-582-2850 or email contracts@prismaerospace.com.
- **Dos Hermanos Mexican Food:** is an authentic Mexican Food restaurant that has its roots in Ward 2. Dos Hermanos Mexican Food is located at 1975 University Ave, Riverside, CA 92507 and is wonderful addition to the culinary experience in Ward 2. If you are in the mood for traditional Mexican food than you need to stop by Dos Hermanos Mexican Food. You can place your order via phone at 951-777-1033. 

Arts Corner: Riverside Artswalk

Artist Spotlight - Michael Sedano

Contributed by Rachael Dzikonski, Executive Director - Riverside Arts Council

As we settle into the fall season with cooler weather on the way, we can say we made it through one of the hottest summers on record. The heatwave that seemed as though it would never end caused the cancellation of many events – but not Riverside Artswalk. Although many patrons waited until the sun went down for the September first Thursday Artswalk, the rain or shine event carried on without a hitch. The galleries and museums were open offering free admittance to view their current exhibitions and their air conditioning. The Artist Vendor Lot was as busy as ever with dedicated vendors arriving in the heat of the day just to be ready for the start of the event at 6 pm.

Riverside Artswalk has earned the support of many of the participating artists who make every effort to participate in the event each month, some of which have been participating for over a decade. Michael Sedano, the September Riverside Artswalk Artist Spotlight, is one of the longest standing vendors for the Artist Vendor Lot, participating since 2011 and missing less than a handful of events throughout that time.

Michael Sedano is a painter and muralist who was born and raised in Riverside CA. He has been creating art from the time he was in high school and is currently a full-time artist, creating artwork every day. He is inspired to create art by his life and experiences and his artwork acts as an

outlet for stress. Although he has made art his career, it fulfills his desire to create as well as connect with others. By participating in the Riverside Artswalk, there is the opportunity for networking and collaboration – connecting with local artists and supporters. It also gives Michael the chance to inspire future artists who may be starting out the way he did.

Michael also participates in other events aside from Riverside Artswalk. He participates in other Art Walk events as well as conventions including LA Comic Con and Designer Con, Riverside's Day of the Dead event and various pop-up events throughout the region.

His artwork has been found in many art galleries such as The Gramercy, Curated Chronicles, and Artist Tree. He has also been showcased at coffee shops such as Back to the Grind, Twee, and GoodtimesLB. His murals can be found in Newport Beach, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Downtown Upland. When he is not painting or sketching, Michael is looking for inspiration for his next piece and in his free time, enjoys thrifting and finding unique items to transform into art. He looks forward to exhibiting his work in galleries, future collaborations as well as the opportunities for creating more murals, specifically in his hometown.

Visit Michael on Instagram @area90art or his website area90art.com for more information. 

Business Spotlight: Back Road Rustic Design



Back Road Rustic Design opened on August 12th in the former Hollyhocks Simply Vintage location. The store features handmade home décor, vintage and restored goods, as well as handmade items, and gifts. The owners, Kelly and Danny Cook, have been selling handmade signs and other items online

through Etsy, vintage markets, and vendor locations. Their store is a welcome addition to downtown Riverside, and just in time for holiday shopping.

You can find them on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/Backroadcraftn>, or at their store located at 3541 Main Street, Riverside. You can also reach them at backroadcraftn@gmail.com or at 951-237-6967. 

BUSINESS BUZZ

6 Marketing Tactics You Need to Stop Doing (and what to do instead)

by Jess Lunk

Marketing is a must for any business that cares about increasing revenue and scaling up. However, it's a complex industry. Marketing practices and tactics are ever-changing, and it can seem like new industry-shattering trends emerge every month. It can be challenging for busy business owners to keep abreast of the latest tactics and to keep their knowledge sharp. Play that game for too long, and you're bound to make lots of marketing mistakes that you'll be paying for.

For example, what worked some years back may be outdated by today's standards. In this article, we will point out some

marketing tactics you should let go of and what you can do instead.

1. Promotion-Centered Social Media Posts

Yes, social media marketing is important for businesses, thanks to the overwhelming number of users on various social platforms. However, you can kiss the benefits of social media marketing goodbye if all your posts are focused on sales and promoting your brand or services.

Social media allows businesses to connect intimately with ***continued on next page***

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their audiences for increased engagement, leads, traffic, and sales. Instead of salesy posts that will push your audience away, focus on strengthening your brand visibility and engagement using helpful content that your audience can relate to and engage with.

That's not to say you shouldn't use paid ads or incorporate some promotional posts into your social media. Just make sure that you still focus on posts that share helpful resources or showcase your team so your audience can truly get to know the brand behind the business. A great way to maintain some balance with your posts is to create a social media calendar that has all these posts planned out in advance.

2. Focusing on One Audience Base

You've probably heard about the dangers of selling to everyone. Irrespective of the products or services your business offers, your business cannot be for everyone. One common marketing mistake is to target everyone when promoting your product while hoping that those interested will be attracted to you and buy from you. Selling to everyone burns through your marketing budget with little to no results.

With that said, it's okay to sell to more than one segment of your audience base. In fact, we highly recommend it. It's rare that a brand has only one audience base, so as long as you conduct appropriate research to establish your target audiences and do everything to get to know them and what influences their purchase decisions, there's nothing that should hold you back from targeting more than one group with your marketing. Where you get into trouble is assuming your product or service is for everyone. And as nice as that sounds, that is never the case.

3. Focusing on Print Marketing

Brochures and printed newsletters used to be excellent marketing practices. Often these pieces were sent directly to someone's mailbox, which was a great way to reach prospective customers directly. However, with the development of digital marketing and more buying being done online, businesses have expanded their marketing approaches, meaning print marketing is quickly losing its appeal.

Using print marketing occasionally for specific purposes in your environment may not be a bad idea, but do not rely heavily on this medium for ticking off your marketing goals. It may be a method you're more familiar with, but that doesn't mean your consumers are. If needed, take some online courses or webinars that show you the ins and outs of digital marketing. Or build an internal digital marketing team that can focus on these efforts.

4. Not Utilizing Inbound Marketing Tactics

With digital marketing comes the practice of inbound marketing. Your inbound marketing strategy is comprised of digital marketing tactics, which include:

- Online paid advertisements
- SEO practices
- Social media marketing
- Content marketing – blog posts, guest-contributed content, press mentions, gated content, etc.
- Email marketing

The beauty of inbound marketing is that when it's implemented effectively, it brings your audience to you. It leads them back to your website, where you can convert those visitors to leads and engage and nurture them via your email marketing until they're ready to purchase.

This approach is effective because modern consumers aren't huge fans of being pressured into their purchase decisions. They like to search online for solutions, perform their own research before buying, and feel like, ultimately, the decision is in their hands. Inbound marketing caters to that mentality, all while allowing businesses to stay top of mind with their consumers through consistent, permission-based outreach.

In order to implement inbound marketing, you need the right tools to help you get the job done. Investing in a marketing automation tool like BenchmarkONE will help you convert website visitors to leads, keep track of their actions, and send them drip campaigns that will eventually convert them into customers.

5. Blogging Without Distributing

Educating your customers with valuable content that answers their burning questions is excellent for building thought leadership, credibility, and engagement with your client base. But it is not enough to create blog posts and leave them sitting pretty on the blog section of your website.

It is crucial to get the word out and let people see the content you are putting out. You can do this by sharing content on your social media pages, spreading the word via email newsletters, and optimizing your posts so they can be discovered in search engines. Below are some other non-traditional distribution tactics to try for your blog posts:

- Send them to dormant prospects in an attempt to re-engage
- Share them with a previous brand partner and ask them to share with their networks
- Create a social post promoting the content and encourage your internal team to copy and paste it to their social networks
- Add a link to the content in your email signature
- Add them to your drip campaigns

6. Creating Generic Content

While we all agree that content is king, generic content won't do your business any good and may even hurt your brand's credibility. Ensure that the content you create is suitable for your audience – is it helpful to them in any way? Does it solve a problem? Does it provide any new information?

For best results, create a content library, segment your audience, and target them with content that aligns with their position on the buyer's journey. That way, whenever they come across your content, it strikes the right chord and helps build trust for your brand.

Also, don't just stick to one kind of content type. Sure, blog posts and guest articles are crucial for your content strategy, but make sure you mix it up with infographics, whitepapers, eBooks, and video tutorials. People like to engage with content in various ways, so by keeping your strategy robust, you'll create a more enjoyable experience.

You have to market your business to be successful, and not every strategy is going to work for your business. Conversely, mistakes in your marketing strategy can cost you potential customers. Prevent this by staying away from marketing strategies that are no longer effective, and update your marketing plan to what works today.

Source: <https://www.benchmarkone.com/blog/marketing-tactics-you-need-to-stop-doing/>



SECURITY CORNER

How to Improve Your Small Business's Cybersecurity in an Hour

By Bennett Conlin with Neil Cumins

Improving your defenses against cyberattacks doesn't have to take months. Learn how to improve your business's cybersecurity measures in under an hour.

- Cybersecurity is an important concern for small businesses.
- Cyberattacks are expected to double by 2025, yet 60% of businesses have no cybersecurity policy in place.
- A cybersecurity breach can result in a business losing valuable information, money and brand credibility.
- This article is for small business owners who want to protect their company with a cybersecurity plan.

Statistics show that cybersecurity is a legitimate threat to small businesses, but owners don't always act on that knowledge. According to PurpleSec statistics, cybercrime has risen by 600% during the COVID-19 pandemic, and cyberattacks are predicted to double by 2025. This is clearly a serious issue, yet a survey by the Cyber Readiness Institute has suggested 60% of businesses have no policy in this area.

It's not fair to conclude that small businesses don't care about cybersecurity, but they do seem willing to ignore concerns. Despite alarming statistics and articles peppering the internet, many smaller firms consistently underplay the risk of cyberattacks.

Logically, this makes sense. While cybersecurity threats can be as bad as physical ones, online threats aren't always obvious. Bad password protection and poor site maintenance may leave your business vulnerable to attack, but there isn't the same tangible threat as leaving a store unlocked or allowing a stranger to walk around your offices unsupervised.

Unfortunately for small businesses, this "out of sight, out of mind" mentality can have consequences. If you fail to protect your business from cybersecurity threats, you may lose critical company information while also damaging your brand and losing money. Cyberattacks can be so severe that companies simply can't cover the cost; IBM calculated that the average cost of a data breach was \$4.24 million in 2021.

Why your small business needs cybersecurity

"Small business owners cannot think their business is too small to be hacked," said Monique Becenti, product marketing manager at Zimperium. "While the breaches that make headlines tend to be associated with large enterprises, no business is immune to cyberthreats."

If in doubt, ask.

One of the big reasons small firms avoid putting resources toward cybersecurity is a lack of understanding and concern. Even the term "cybersecurity" can be intimidating, yet there are plenty of experts ready to offer advice in layman's terms. If the reason your business avoids taking cybersecurity measures is a lack of knowledge, there are experts out there willing to visit your business, either for training or to share options for cybersecurity plans. Ignoring cybersecurity because your team lacks technical knowledge isn't a legitimate excuse.

If you are strapped for time or have a team of remote workers, you can take online cybersecurity classes to better train everyone, and to understand where your business

lacks online protection. Here are a few of the top free online cybersecurity classes.

- **SANS Cyber Aces Online:** This is great for beginners because much of this content is as basic as it gets. If your team is generally ignorant when it comes to cybersecurity, consider taking advantage of this free course.
- **Cybrary:** Free access to Cybrary includes hundreds of courses related to cybersecurity and IT. The courses are sorted by difficulty, helping to determine which are best suited to you.
- **Foundations of Cybersecurity:** Springboard's free course includes a whopping 37-plus hours' worth of materials. You don't need to watch all of it to gain a better understanding of cybersecurity best practices, but one hour of viewing per week would provide tremendous insights.

There are plenty more phish in the sea

Among the most common types of cyberattacks against small businesses are phishing attacks. Fishermen use bait to lure their prey close, and when the fish bites the hook with the bait on it, the tug on the fishing line tells the fisherman to reel the fish in. Phishing emails work similarly. Cybercriminals try to trick users by using bait, often in the form of an email.

A cybercriminal might create a fake email address that closely resembles that of your CEO – we've seen this a few times at our company. The email may say something like, "Hi, message me immediately with your cell phone number. I need your help on a project and want to give you a call." The goal is to make you think you're emailing back and forth with your CEO before you submit personal information to the hacker without even realizing the threat.

Other phishing attacks ask for more personal information, like your credit card number. Avoid sending personal financial information over email. Instead, share confidential data with companies or individuals over the phone or in person. Phishing is one area where training your employees in best practice can prevent crippling cyberattacks. According to Verizon research from 2021, phishing is responsible for over a third of all data breaches.

Don't be held for ransom

Businesses should also be prepared for ransomware attacks, which occur when malware infects your computer and locks it down until a ransom is paid. Anti-malware software is a quick way to prevent these attacks.

If your business is attacked, never pay a ransom, regardless of the threats or promises made. If criminals can lock down your system once, they could do it again. Plus, there's no guarantee they'll return data even if you meet their demands. They might simply ask for more money.

How to quickly improve your cybersecurity

Introducing and implementing a comprehensive cybersecurity program will inevitably take more than an hour. You won't be completely protected by making the quick changes below,

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but you can take drastic strides in 60 minutes or less by implementing these techniques. Here's a checklist of the things you should do ASAP:

1. Perform a cybersecurity audit.

Start by figuring out where your business stands. Are you well protected against cyberthreats? Are you secure in some areas but lacking in others? Figure out how secure you are (or aren't) now so you understand where you can improve.

"While most measures that a small business can take require more than an hour to implement, it may be worth spending an hour doing a quick audit of what cybersecurity measures you already have in place," said Heather Paunet, senior vice president of product and marketing at Untangle, which provides network security to small businesses.

"Cybersecurity includes policies as well as systems. Formulating an acceptable use policy for devices, data and the network can be an important first step if you don't already have one in place. If even this is too daunting, spend that hour locating an IT professional in your area who can help you out."

Don't be afraid to call in outside assistance from cybersecurity experts. Going on a cybersecurity course or taking a class will give you an insight into the key threats, which you can then disseminate to your workers.

2. Train your employees to recognize common cybersecurity threats.

Teaching staff how to identify threats is central to a proactive and positive company-wide cyber security policy. Specialist cybersecurity firms can send your staff a bogus email of the type a spammer or hacker might produce. If they click on a link or open an attachment, they're shown a message along the lines of "this was a test, but next time you might have infected the network with a virus." Staff will remember this, discuss it and – most importantly – learn from it.

Some businesses might picture an overseas hacker taking extraordinary measures to break into a small business's network, but that's not usually the case. In many scenarios, a crude phishing email could compromise your small business. Basic safety measures often prevent attacks from being successful.

"If SMBs spent one hour training staff on basic internet hygiene – spotting phishing emails, good browsing practices, not downloading suspicious files or clicking links – cybersecurity would be greatly improved," said Sean Allen, digital marketing manager at Aware. "Employees and emails are still the leading causes of breaches for SMBs, rather than master hackers."

3. Improve your password strength.

It's shocking that, in 2022, the world's most-used password is still "123456." If you're feeling a sudden flush of embarrassment reading that last sentence, now is the time to overhaul your passwords. Too many employees and executives use passwords that are easy to hack, often sharing them across several platforms and websites. If one password is compromised, the potential harm increases exponentially.

"I would recommend changing your password to a complex password," said Taylor Toce, CEO and founder of Velo IT Group. "The simple act of changing your password will lock out anyone who might have it. For example, if your password was compromised as part of a security breach, or if you simply shared it with too many co-workers, you could tighten

the security on those accounts by using a new password. A complex password is your best defense against the common dictionary or brute-force attack methodologies."

- Brute-force attacks are when hackers run automated programs that plug in various potential password combinations. They're particularly effective against obvious username data and simple passwords.
- A dictionary attack is a refinement of brute-force attacks, trying every word in the dictionary as a potential password. For instance, NordPass' 2021 list of the most common passwords showed that "dragon" was used over 2 million times.

Strengthening your organization's passwords immediately reduces the risk of a successful cyberattack against your business, and it doesn't take long. You can change a weak password to a secure one in seconds.

"All passwords should have at least 10 characters or more, including at least one uppercase, one lowercase, one number, and one special character," said Myles Keough, CEO of Spade Technology. Since each online account or service should ideally have a different password, it's often easier to use a password manager tool to remember them all through your web browser.

Long passwords with different symbols and capitalization of letters combat brute-force attacks because every extra character or symbol hugely increases the number of possible combinations. Using strong passwords is a critical step in improving cybersecurity and preventing cyberattacks. Passwords represent the frontline of cybersecurity.

4. Implement multifactor authentication on business accounts.

"One quick win for small business owners is setting up multifactor authentication on their accounts, especially those related to financial transactions," said Stacy Clements, founder of Milepost 42. "Multifactor authentication provides an extra layer of security beyond a username and password to protect your accounts, usually by requiring you to enter a code sent to your mobile device or provided by a separate hardware security key.

"Most banks and credit card online services offer this capability, as do most email and social media services. Enabling this extra security protection only takes a few minutes and protects your important accounts. It helps to ensure that it's really you accessing the account, not a cybercriminal who stole your password."

Two-factor authentication means a criminal would have to deeply embed themselves in your system architecture to gain access, and there's a good reason that blue chip brands like Google have started implementing it by default.

There's no excuse for small businesses to completely ignore cybersecurity in 2022. Over 300,000 new pieces of malware are created every single day, and many of these malicious software codes don't discriminate between larger or smaller enterprises. Irrespective of its size, your business can – and must – protect sensitive data by improving cybersecurity.

Source - <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/15046-quick-cybersecurity-tips.html>





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