Downtown is Calling

Good Times Await

Join us for the RDP luncheon at Noon on

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

at Loft.84, 3840 Lemon Street,

featuring

Riverside Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson

Call the RDP office at 951-781-7335

for reservations

RIVERSIDE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

Downtown Events

Fourth of July Spectacular

Celebrate our nation's independence with The City of Riverside Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department with a spectacular array of fireworks at two separate locations:
- La Sierra Park (5215 La Sierra Ave.)
- Mt. Rubidoux (Mt. Rubidoux Dr. at 9th St.)

Shows begin promptly at 9 pm. No access will be available at Carlson Dog Park or Mt. Rubidoux after 7 am on July 4th.

Want to be closer? **Evergreen Memorial Historic Cemetery** offers Front Row Fireworks for $15 for adults, $5 for ages 3 to 12, and free for kids 2 and under and military with ID. Attendees can enjoy food vendors, live music, as well as free activities for the kids in a safe, family friendly location.

Riverside Home and Backyard Show Returns

Celebrating nearly thirty years of success, the Riverside Home & Backyard Show returns to downtown Riverside and the Riverside Convention Center. Attendees can view the latest in home improvement and remodeling on Friday, July 12th from 12 pm to 6 pm, Saturday, July 13th from 10 am to 6 pm, and Sunday July 14th from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free.

International Food Festival Returns

The International Food Festival returns to downtown Riverside. It will take place Saturday, July 27th and Sunday, July 28th from 11 am to 9 pm on Mission Inn Avenue from Orange Street to Lime Steet. Food offerings will include International, Food Trucks, Vegan, BBQ, Fine Dining, and Dessert. Other offerings include beer and wine, plus retail vendors. The event will also have live music, street performers, food demos, plus a Train and Fun Zone for the kids.

For more information, check https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091593956809

Supervisor's Message – Kevin's Corner

Contributed by Supervisor Kevin Jeffries

Hefty Pay Raises for We, but not for Thee! Being an elected official is a choice. You enter the political arena knowing the workload and the pay. You work hard and generally spend a lot of money in an election to land the job so you can serve the public. To then turn around and seek a large pay increase seems—well—tacky. Yes, I am a stick in the mud, and I realize very well the amount of responsibility that comes with these jobs and the all-consuming demands on your time that come with it. But unlike the professionals in various County Departments, elected positions are not jobs to be sought as stepping stones in your income and career ladder, and they do not need to be paid as such. Elected officials shouldn't have to take a vow of poverty, and we don't want a situation where only the wealthy or retired can afford to serve in elected offices, but in a County where the median income is less than $40,000, it is hard to justify new salaries that will range from just over $200,000 (for

elected Supervisors) to $350,000 (for District Attorney and Sheriff). And to have future pay raises kick in any time we grant an increase in the salary range for our own Chiefs of Staff or Chief Deputies seems—well—tacky. I voted no, and I will once again refuse to accept the pay increase.

Local Control Under Attack Again in Sacramento. Riverside County employs over 25,000 people in positions including deputies, code officers, social workers, doctors and nurses, custodians, maintenance workers, accountants, and just about every other classification you can think of. But we also have about $1 billion annually in contracts for various services, from firefighting (through CAL FIRE) to foster care to cultural outreach to community center management. These contracts provide services that sometimes are major cost savers and other times are just more specialized than our existing staff is able to handle effectively.

Unfortunately the heavy hand of Sacramento is considering sticking their nose into local government contracts, setting up a series of new hoops and red tape to make it more difficult for local agencies and contractors alike. While the biggest contractors can handle the new paperwork and reporting requirements, many of our contracts are given to small non-profits for whom this will be a burden. And while the goal in Sacramento is to turn all of these into government jobs, the reality is that if the costs go up and the number of vendors/non-profits willing to participate goes down, some of these services just won't be offered any more. Assembly Bill 2557 has already passed the Assembly Floor and is now moving through the Senate, but there is still time to kill it before it becomes a law. ⚐

Mayor's Message - 'Riverside Magic': Exceptional Service Shapes our City's Future.

Contributed by Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson

As Mayor, I am proud of Riverside's success, as it is a testament to our unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional customer service. Each of our 2600 employees serves as a brand ambassador for the City of Riverside, embodying our values and vision. Why does this matter? Economic development drives regional growth, and every employee plays a pivotal role in fostering an environment conducive to expansion, investment, and achievement.

The minute someone comes to the City of Riverside they decide if it is worth their investment and effort to stay here. Business owners, property investors, and residents all have choices on how to invest their time and money, and it is on all of us to encourage them to choose Riverside. As I often say, when you choose Riverside, Riverside chooses you! Recently, 600 city employees and I participated in the City of Riverside's Customer Service Excellence Academy hosted by our Community and Economic Development Department. We had the privilege to learn from Dennis Snow, a former Disney executive and customer service expert. Snow shared invaluable insights from his tenure at Disney, demonstrating how the 'Disney Magic' can extend far beyond the castle. After all, Disney is not renowned as the happiest place on earth solely because of the attractions, but because of the lasting emotional impact it leaves on visitors. Snow demonstrated how each of us can infuse Riverside with its own brand of magic.

By looking at current processes through the perspective of the customer, we can collaboratively pinpoint and address obstacles. Experiencing procedures through the eyes of the customers allows us to effectively remedy the hurdles that are keeping average customer service from being world-class. The development and refinement of the One Stop Shop truly exemplifies this approach. While traditional local government processes may be convenient for employees, they often pose challenges for businesses and residents. The adoption of a customer-centric approach to our operations proved to be transformative.

Every aspect of our city speaks, from the cleanliness of our streets to the organization of our offices. These details leave a lasting impression on the customer and subconsciously clue to the culture and brand of Riverside. The notion that "everything speaks" underscores the importances of initiatives like Beautify Riverside. Community clean-ups and the incorporation of public art not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of our city to tourists but also instills a sense of pride among residents. Snow's message resonated with us, prompting reflection on how we can each leave lasting impressions of Riverside magic.

Snow left us with the notion that the pinnacle of excellent service is small memorable gestures, turning brief interactions into moments of wow. Creating these moments is not about spending more money or time, but about shifting your mindset and seeking opportunities to elevate a customer's experience.

Following Snow's insightful message, I had the pleasure of moderating a panel with Nick Adcock, President, and CEO of Riverside Chambers of Commerce. We spoke with City Hall frequent fliers and local business experts Rich Erickson, Michelle Rubin and Andrew Woodard. Together we called attention to the direct link between customer service and the city's economic success. Highlighting the significance of relationship building and cultivating customer loyalty in attracting new businesses, creating job growth, and maintaining economic success. While there are 100 ways to get to 'no,' our panelist shared that what makes Riverside different is our problem solving, creative thinking and ability to work together to get to 'yes'.

I want to end with my sincerest gratitude to City of Riverside staff for striving to be better each day and recognizing that each of you make a significant difference in the prosperity of our beloved city. ⚐

COUNCIL CORNER
Ward One Council Update
Contributed by Councilmember Philip Falcone

Review of City Ordinances Will Make for More Welcoming Downtown

Last month I shared a laundry list of some of the improvements we are prioritizing for downtown—everything from monies for road repaving to new landscaping to new businesses to park projects and more. This month, I would like to switch gears and share with you about a couple city policy and ordinance initiatives I am taking on in the coming months.

First, I begin with the overhaul of our city sign code. Every city has a sign code—this is the ordinance that provides rules on what types of signs are acceptable and which are not acceptable for both display on public and private property. The last major update to this code was in 1998 so a refresh is needed. Currently, our sign code is a dense read without saying much of substance. Our goal is to be more explicit in what the look is we are going for in downtown and across the whole city. Here are quick examples of dos and don'ts for business signage.

Don't

• Install tall feather/sail signs that flap in the wind outside your business—these are unprofessional and gawdy. The sign code currently does not allow them.

• Have any kind of vinyl banner up for longer than 30 days. Temporary signs are discouraged in the code because they are often cheaply made and quickly fade or fray.

• Have flashing lights or blinking marquee signs as they are discouraged by the California vehicle code and look unprofessional. We don't want to be Las Vegas!

Do

• Utilize vintage neon signs that give a nod to our past. These are not as expensive and challenging to maintain as people claim. And customers love neon signs for the nostalgia!

• Solicit a professional company who uses quality materials—it is worth paying a little more up front for quality products.

• Look to the architecture of your building and have a permanent mounted or hanging sign that compliments the era and style of your building. People come downtown for the history and character—don't diminish that with ultra-modern flashy signage that doesn't belong in a historic area.

Opportunities for community input on the sign code changes will occur later this year as well as at the City Council's Land Use Committee and the full City Council meeting—dates on these TBA.

Another ordinance change I am currently working on is a tightening of our sound code as music, speakers, and bands have become too loud in Downtown. There should not be microphones, amplified sound, drum sets, or full bands set up in downtown without a city permit — this loud noise is not an enjoyable environment and is not neighborly. The same goes for bars, lounges and nightclubs — music should not be heard from a block away. The tightening of these rules paired with enforceable measures will also be coming to the City Council's Land Use Committee and full City Council this year.

I understand and agree that the government should not be in every aspect of one's life or business, but it is imperative to have strong city ordinances to ensure that when someone seeks to threaten the type of downtown we wish to have, that we can correct course. This is just a snapshot of early work on these ordinances. Keep an eye on my social media or email blast for dates on when these meetings with occur and how you can get involved!

I am on Instagram and Facebook under "Councilmember Philip Falcone."

Ward Two Council Update
Contributed by Councilwoman Clarissa Cervantes
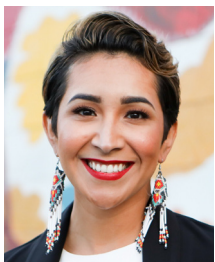
It is officially summertime, Riversiders! Hoping that you all had a happy Pride Month and Juneteenth holiday!

WARD 2 NEW BUSINESS: Handel's Ice Cream

Handel's Ice Cream had their grand opening on June 15th, just in time for the raising summer temperatures! My office was happy to attend their grand opening event and sample their delicious homemade ice cream. Make sure to stop by the Canyon Crest Towne Center for a cool, sweet treat! Located at 5225 Canyon Crest Drive Suite 7A.

WARD 2 PROSPERS SUCCESS HIGHLIGHT: Riverside Pride LGBTQ+ Inc.

Our office was happy to recognize Riverside Pride as our Ward 2 Prospers Success Highlight. Riverside Pride LGBTQ+ Inc. has grown exponentially in the past few years and their growth is a testament to the incredible work, heart and soul they've put into the Inland Empire to ensure those in the LGBTQIA2S+ community have safe spaces and the resources they need to thrive. We couldn't be more delighted to honor them!

GRAND OPENING: TruEvolution's Inland Empire LGBTQ+ Resource Center

The Inland Empire LGBTQ+ Resource Center, established by TruEvolution Inc., has officially opened. On Thursday, June 20th, community members joined federal, state, and local leaders to commemorate the grand opening. The center's launch was made possible by a $3.063 million state investment, obtained through the efforts of co-founder Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes, and partnership with co-founders Jesse Melgar and Gabe Maldonado.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the projects or events in Ward 2 please call my office at 951-826-5419 or email me at ccervantes@riversideca.gov.

Wishing you all a fun and memorable summer season!

Sincerely,

Clarissa Cervantes

BUSINESS BUZZ

How to Write Email Subject Lines – *Email subject lines can make the difference between a user opening your message or scrolling past.*

by Chad Brooks

If you're sending marketing emails that aren't delivering the results you hoped for, weak subject lines could be to blame. Without a catchy email subject line, the likelihood of someone taking the time to open and read the message drops considerably. In fact, subject lines are so important that many of the best email marketing software come with tools that help you perfect them. If you're looking for ways to improve your open rates, this guide to creating compelling email subject lines has the advice you need.

How to write an effective subject line

With so much on the line, it's crucial to put some serious thought into your subject lines. Here are the factors to consider when writing subject lines to give you a better chance of enticing recipients to open your email, click through your links, and become long-term, engaged customers.

1. Personalization boosts open rates.

Personalizing your subject lines is an excellent start when you're trying to boost your open rates.

"By doing something as simple as adding the subscriber's first name in the subject line, it makes the individual feel as though the email was specifically made for them," said Leah Miranda, lifecycle marketing manager at Zapier. "When you're looking to advance beyond the first name, you can personalize it based on your subscriber's interests in a certain product, topic or service."

Research from DMR shows that email open rates increase by 17 percent when the subject line is personalized, while click-through rates rise by 29.6 percent.

2. Length impacts a reader's engagement.

The number of words in your subject line can impact whether or not someone decides to open the email. According to Dave Charest, director of content marketing at Constant Contact, it's important to have short subject lines of four to seven words.

Mobile devices have made this element especially important. While the average desktop client shows about 65 characters in a subject line, according to Miranda, a mobile phone displays only 30 to 50 characters. Keeping your subject line short prevents it from being cut off when read on a smartphone.

To keep your subject line concise, make it only five or six words with no more than 35 characters total.

3. Use important words first.

You don't have a lot of time to grab the attention of someone scrolling through their inbox. With that in mind, Miranda encourages putting the most important information first to grab their attention.

"For example, if the subject line is 'Summer clothes are 50% off,' your subscriber doesn't find out about the deal until the end. If you simply swap the order, then the first thing they'll see is '50% off,' and who doesn't love a good deal?"

4. Avoid certain words.

Many words have been so overused in email subject lines that readers might decline to open the email or, worse, delete it. Many email service providers use these words to identify spam messages.

While your subject lines should indicate the value your emails offer readers, don't oversell your products or services. "Additional income," "be your own boss" or "no catch" are among hundreds of email spam trigger words and phrases to avoid. These words might seem unbelievable and scam-like.

5. Avoid excess punctuation.

To write effective subject lines, you can't focus on the words alone. Charest recommends avoiding excess punctuation and symbols in subject lines. He also discourages writing your email subject line in all caps.

6. Engage in A/B testing.

Instead of guessing what makes a great subject line, you're better off trying multiple options with A/B testing tools. This allows you to see which subject lines garner more interest.

"Subject lines are one of the easier emailing differentiators to test," said Len Shneyder, vice president of industry relations at Twilio SendGrid. "Always A/B test your email campaigns to measure what's working and what's not."

Along with A/B testing, it's important to study your email list and campaign analytics to determine the optimal time to send your messages.

7. Think about the preheader text.

In addition to the work you put into the subject line, Miranda said you need to think about the preheader text, which is the copy that follows the subject line. An effective preheader can increase your email's open rate by 7 percent.

"If you have a great subject line and the preheader text says, 'View message online,' that sounds like a poor user experience," Miranda said.

This text can be a quick summary of your email or a call to action. The purpose of this text is to present the most important points and give your recipients significant details of your email before they open it.

To create an effective preheader, personalize the text to your readers. Ask questions that encourage your recipients to open your message. For example, for the subject line "How to get 10 new clients," the preheader text could ask, "Ready to reach more people?" This text can spark your subscribers' interest in how your strategies can help them expand their business.

The importance of a catchy subject line

Email subject lines are important for a few reasons. Here's why experts recommend putting a lot of thought into crafting effective subject lines for your email marketing campaigns.

Subject lines can grab attention.

The subject line of an email is the first thing your audience will see, and if it isn't compelling, they're not going to click. Unopened emails amount to a waste of your marketing dollars, so you need to write subject lines that cut through the inbox clutter and get users' attention.

"If it's well written, attention grabbing and fulfills a need, then the individual will likely open the email and interact with the content inside," said Miranda. "If the subject line is the opposite of that, then there's a good chance it will end up being unread or in the trash."

Subject lines can convey legitimacy.

Charest said that other than the email's sender, subject lines are the most critical factor in the message being read.

"If an email recipient doesn't recognize the sender, the subject line needs to work extra hard to entice that person to open it," he said. "But if an email recipient recognizes the sender and has a

good relationship with the person or business, then that person is more likely to open the email regardless of the subject line."

Subject lines are the first touchpoint in an email.

Email inboxes are filled with dozens, if not hundreds, of promotional email messages every day. This is why Shneyder says he stresses the importance of subject lines in grabbing recipients' attention. A good subject line can start the type of chain reaction businesses are hoping for when launching marketing campaigns.

"Subject lines are part of a chain of microdecisions that lead to opening the email, clicking a link in the message body and hopefully converting the user to the brand," Shneyder said.

Along with poor subject lines, common email marketing mistakes include selling too hard, forgetting to optimize your emails for mobile devices and avoiding customer segmentation.

Effective email subject lines from popular industries

To help you implement the above tips into your subject lines, consider the following email subject line examples and how they adhere to our suggestions:

1. **"3 ways to improve your pins":** This subject line from a Pinterest email is concise, yet it clearly explains the value you can expect from reading this email.

2. **"Feed your guests without breaking the bank":** This Pizza Hut subject line focuses on a pain point its audience might have and presents a solution. It starts with the main point of the email (feeding your guests) and has an ending that appeals to recipients (affordability).

3. **"Learn a language with only 5 minutes per day":** Duolingo's pitch makes learning a new language sound easy. This subject line is straightforward but prompts users to learn more about Duolingo by mentioning one of its benefits.

Negative effects of bad subject lines

The importance of a catchy subject line can't be overstated. A good subject line can result in an engaged and long-term customer, while a bad one can lose you a customer forever.

Weak subject lines reduce open rates.

Miranda said the subject line will make or break your email open rates. "But beyond this, it will also affect your click-through, click-to-open rate and even your unsubscribe rate. While subject lines may seem like only one small piece of the entire email marketing strategy, they hold a substantial amount of responsibility in terms of success."

Bad subject lines impact your brand.

It's important to remember that the more emails you send, the more your name and brand will become tied to your subject lines, according to Shneyder. As a result, notoriously bad subject lines have a lasting negative impact on you and your brand. They can also breed disengagement.

"For example, if I know that a company's subject lines are misleading or overhyped, I might delete the email before reading what it's about," Shneyder said. "Getting your reader to click – to engage – is vital. Breed engagement with good subject lines, and you will keep your spot in the inbox."

Bad subject lines can reduce deliverability.

Bad subject lines can also draw the ire of mailbox service providers, including Gmail. Shneyder said Gmail analyzes which unopened emails a user deletes. In a move to streamline your inbox, it could send future emails from that company straight into the spam folder.

Then, when you have an important announcement, the chances of engagement are almost zero. You will never have effective email campaigns if your messages get caught in spam filters.

You can also improve customer engagement by connecting with consumers on social media, offering help over live chat and monitoring your web analytics.

Why you should avoid clickbait subject lines

Previous research from email deliverability firm Return Path found that while clickbait subject lines like "You won't believe this shocking secret" are successful at garnering web traffic, they don't provide the same results over email.

Specifically, the phrase "secret of" in a subject line results in an 8.69 percent decrease in read rates compared with messages containing similar content with different subject lines.

Additionally, using the word "shocking" had a 1.22 percent decrease in read rates.

"Marketers should always avoid clickbait subject lines because if subscribers are over- or underpromised about what will be inside the email, they are likely to unsubscribe or, worse, report the email as spam," Miranda said.

The research also revealed that value-based subject lines highlighting prices and discounts don't perform as well as you might expect. Subject lines containing the keywords "discount," "save," "sales," "clearance" and "free," as well as those with dollar signs and percentages, yielded lower read rates than comparable messages with alternative subject lines.

While you might get some initial traction with a clickbait subject line, it's a poor strategy for building and tracking audience engagement. Businesses want to foster long-term engagement with email marketing campaigns.

"You should avoid clickbait subject lines because they only work once, maybe twice," Charest said. "Then you lose the trust of your email subscribers, which is so important to maintain long term."

The research, based on the analysis of more than 9 million subject lines received by more than 2 million subscribers, revealed that a better option is to use subject lines that are benefit based or have a sense of urgency. The study discovered that subject lines featuring superlatives like "fastest" generate 5.3 percent higher read rates than similar messages with different subject lines.

Urgency-based subject lines with words like "limited time," "last chance" and "expiring" also increased open rates.

Shneyder said email marketers should consider their audience's perspective before using a clickbait subject line. Think about your reaction to clickbait subject lines. Would you trust the sender of such an email?

"As the sender, you want the receiver to find comfort in your brand popping up in their inbox," Shneyder said. "Be honest with your receiving party, and they will be more willing to listen, to open and – hopefully – to engage."

Benchmarks for email open rates

How do you determine if your subject lines are making enough of a difference with your open rates? One answer is looking at the average open rates for emails from businesses in your industry.

According to Campaign Monitor, emails from advertising and marketing agencies averaged an open rate of 18.5 percent. Wellness and fitness companies had a 21.6 percent average email open rate. Financial services averaged a rate of 24.8 percent, while media, entertainment and publishing agencies averaged a 20.8 percent open rate.

Effective email marketing begins with strong subject lines

Email marketing is one of the most effective ways to reach your audience and stay in touch with them for the long term. However, your email marketing efforts are only as effective as your open rates, and those are largely dependent upon your ability to write catchy, compelling email subject lines. Armed with the advice above, you'll be able to create subject lines that incentivize users to click through into your emails and engage with them, ultimately building a stronger connection with your brand and driving sales.

Source: https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7942-clickbait-email-marketing.html

SECURITY CORNER
Have You Been Hacked? How to Recover From a Data Breach
– Learn how to assess the impact and survive after your network is compromised.
by Sammi Caramela

All businesses, including small ones, face a risk of cybercrime. This constant state of vulnerability is terrifying, but the reality of a security breach is even worse. Handling the aftermath of a data breach — including dealing with the costs, reputational damage and legal consequences — can be overwhelming, and some businesses don't survive.

However, preparing for an attack and outlining a data breach recovery plan can help your business mitigate the damage and survive the onslaught. We'll explain more about data breaches and share tips for assessing the impact and recovering with your reputation and customer base intact.

What is a data breach?

A data breach is an incident in which an unauthorized party bypasses a business's cybersecurity measures to view or steal confidential information. Data breaches can take many forms, ranging from unintentional access to protected information to the deliberate penetration of a database to copy or steal corporate secrets or intellectual property.

Cybercriminals may even try to corrupt an entire system.

While you may not be able to prevent cyberattacks entirely, proper preparation can help you mitigate the damage of a data breach and resume normal operations.

Remember the SolarWinds data breach? In this supply chain cyberattack, bad actors used a third party to infiltrate the SolarWinds system. The cyberattack affected over 18,000 organizations and interrupted supply chains worldwide.

Unfortunately, many businesses don't realize they've been attacked until months later, if not longer.

"Often, businesses discover that they have been breached for the first time months after it happened when they are informed by law enforcement, business partners, banks or the media, who themselves discover the businesses' data being sold on the black market," said David Zetoony, co-chair of the U.S. data privacy and cybersecurity practice at law firm Greenberg Traurig. "Other businesses may have been breached months or even years ago and still do not know."

How to identify a data breach

You can't start recovering from a breach unless you know you've been hacked. Keep an eye out for these signs of a security problem or a computer infected with malware:

- Slow or lagging computer response times
- Pop-up windows that users can't close
- Client reports of spam texts and emails
- Websites or programs asking for your credentials
- Files appearing to change for no apparent reason

What to do when a breach occurs

Recovery from a data breach will look different for every business, depending on the attack and its consequences. However, every organization's first step will be to piece together exactly what happened and determine the extent of the attack and which customers were affected.

Three resources will be essential to handling the crisis and starting your business's recovery: a response team of data breach specialists, legal counsel, and a communications team. You must contact or activate these parties immediately so they can guide you through the vital next steps.

1. Hire a data breach specialist.

You may have a robust internal IT team or IT manager who's ready to step in to handle the data breach and its aftermath, or you may need to seek outside help. Consider hiring a forensic expert, who can find, preserve and analyze electronic equipment and data to assess precisely what happened and prevent future network threats and vulnerabilities.

Aside from analyzing the breach's cause, a data breach specialist will ensure you take these essential steps:

- Stop using any infected equipment. When you discover a breach, you should immediately stop using any compromised devices and physically disconnect any affected technology from the internet. These measures will help preserve evidence for the investigation and prevent further breaches in the short term.
- Back up essential data. Once your machine is disconnected from the internet, you can create redundancy of critical information, like access and activity logs, customer lists, payment information and trade secrets. Protecting this data can help you get back on your feet faster.

2. Contact your legal department to guide customer notifications and legalities.

If you don't have an internal legal department, seek out a lawyer who specializes in data security breaches to help you handle all of the legalities involved. For example, your legal counsel can guide you through the process of notifying consumers, the public, insurance providers, business partners, vendors, regulators and any other stakeholders.

"Besides the technological aspect, one of the most important ways to recover a company's reputation and relationship with its customers and clients is to ensure these parties are properly notified and taken care of," said Michael Bruemmer, head of global data breach resolution at Experian. "Companies should send clear and concise notification letters that help affected parties know what to do and how to protect themselves from identity theft."

Your legal counsel will advise you on what you must provide to affected parties. "The breached company should always offer a remedy, such as an identity theft protection product so they receive free monitoring and access to their credit report as well as assistance with resolving fraud," Bruemmer noted.

3. Put a communications team in place.

Your business may have internal public relations and legal resources you can tap to handle your crisis communications. However, many businesses must patch together a crisis response team with outside help to communicate with customers, the media, stakeholders and more. In any case, a cohesive communications strategy is crucial to withstanding the storm and moving forward.

Nicholas Gaffney, a lawyer and founder of legal media relations firm Zumado, said a response team should be activated immediately to work quickly to preserve and enhance your business's reputation. A team member or hired representative should serve as the point person for official responses to inquiries about the breach. All communications must be transparent and consistent.

Consider choosing a reputation management service to help you respond to a data breach and preserve your brand image and customers' trust. You also may want to invest in reputation insurance to help with the fallout costs.

What is the impact of a data breach?

Cyberattacks cost small businesses dearly. In fact, according to an IBM study, the global average cost of a data breach stemming from a cyberattack is $4.45 million. Businesses can suffer devastating financial repercussions, reputational damage and legal consequences.

- **Economic costs:** A breach can financially devastate a business's operations. Costs can include legal fees, fines, lawsuit expenses, loss of income, payments to experts who help to repair the breach, and costs to reenter or replace data lost during the breach. You also may have to spend money on advertising and other communications to reassure customers and business associates that such a breach won't happen again.

- **Reputational damage:** A data breach can shatter a company's reputation. Customers may be wary of doing business with you if they're concerned about data security. Additionally, employees and partners may try to extricate themselves from the situation as quickly as possible.

- **Legal consequences:** Your business may face legal consequences after a data breach, including lawsuits and fines if employee or customer data is exposed. You may face additional penalties and repercussions if data belonging to other businesses is exposed, especially if that data includes trade secrets or other information protected under nondisclosure agreements. And if you mishandle the situation, your legal woes may be exacerbated. It's crucial to secure legal representatives early on in the process.

How to prepare for and mitigate future breaches

Whether you've survived a data breach and want to ensure it doesn't happen again or you're being proactive, take these steps to prepare for and mitigate future breaches:

1. Provide cybersecurity training for your staff.

A highly trained and vigilant staff is vital to minimize the risk and damages of future breaches. Your employees should take extra care when using company equipment and learn to recognize signs of compromised information. If team members telecommute, enact remote cybersecurity measures, like multifactor authentication and secure network access.

2. Audit connected devices regularly.

Conduct a periodic sweep of your staff's equipment to catch malware and security holes. If your office has a BYOD (bring your own device) policy, you should enact extra security measures, such as installing antivirus software, using firewalls and limiting access.

Auditing connected devices is similar to performing periodic equipment maintenance. Regularly checking for obvious vulnerabilities helps prevent breaches by securing your devices from hackers.

3. Use a VPN.

A virtual private network (VPN) can prevent a targeted attack on your systems. Installing a VPN connection creates a private path to the internet. It acts as a tunnel to prevent anyone outside the network from seeing who you are, what you're doing and where you're located.

4. Obtain cyber insurance to help you recover if a breach occurs.

Cyber insurance is a type of business insurance that helps you recover from cybercrimes such as extortion, fraud and data breaches. These policies can reimburse you for data breach expenses while offering a barrier against liability to customers or clients.

When you're considering cyber insurance providers, ask them how they'll help you lessen your business's risk of cyberattacks. Insurance providers can often provide guidance and training to reduce your company's risk.

5. Install antivirus software and other protective measures.

Antivirus software isn't fail-safe, but it can help protect businesses from malware, ransomware and other malicious attacks that can lead to a data breach. If your business is budget-conscious, several reputable free antivirus solutions can help protect your systems. Firewalls and intrusion-detection systems are also advised.

To avoid vulnerabilities, it's crucial to keep all antivirus and other business software platforms updated and compliant with corporate security policies.

6. Set up a data breach response plan.

Adding a data breach response plan to your corporate policies — and practicing it regularly — can help you detect attacks sooner and lessen the damage. Like any business disaster plan, a data breach response plan can help you get back to work faster. Appoint team members to handle IT functions, legal issues, PR responses and customer communications so you can spring into action at the first sign of an attack.

"Since it is really more of a question of when than if, when it comes to data breaches, we always recommend having a detailed and thorough data breach response plan in place," Bruemmer said. "And not only should that plan be created, but it needs to be practiced and updated on a regular basis to ensure it accounts for the latest threats, including attacks like ransomware."

Consider working with an IT managed services provider to help you implement cybersecurity policies, firewalls, intrusion-detection systems and antivirus software.

Dealing with data breaches

Data breaches can be scary, but businesses can take steps to make them less likely and reduce the damage if one occurs. It's similar to preparing your business for any other kind of emergency or disaster.

Zetoony reminded businesses that although most companies will experience a data security incident at some point or another, they can learn from these experiences.

"If you view each breach as a learning exercise, you won't be able to stop them necessarily, but you can learn how to respond to them more efficiently, quickly and with less impact to your business and your customers," Zetoony noted.

Source: https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/9104-business-laptop-security.html

RDP Welcomes
New Businesses to Downtown

Juan Picazo Trujillo (Property Rental)

The Sweet Stop (Food)

Kingstone Recovery (Property Rental)

Prospect Canine LLC (Animal Care & Supply)

R & J Antiques

Collaborative Psychology Group, A Professional Corp. (Counseling)

Larose Skin Studio Inc

Setty & Associates (Engineering, Architecture)

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