

# THE RENTAL OWNER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO ONLINE BUSINESS



Rental™



# INTRODUCTON

**E**ven before the COVID-19 pandemic, having an online presence was pretty much a necessity. Add to that the increase in technology for both business practices and equipment/fleet management, and being digitally savvy is practically a business pre-requisite.

But understanding technology and the online world doesn't always come easy for rental business owners. That's why we've compiled this guide for the digital world.

Find out why your rental business needs an online presence and how you can successfully bring your business online. Then, read up on how social media and business apps can improve your business. Finally, learn about the biggest cybersecurity threats and how you can stop them.



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# WHY YOUR **RENTAL BUSINESS** NEEDS AN **ONLINE PRESENCE**

By Sasha DeMoss

**Studies show that 70-80 percent of people research companies online before visiting a small business or making a purchase with them. Here are three ways to bring your business into the 21st century and ensure that it is meeting its sales potential.**

**C**hances are, you often use the internet to compare the price of a product before you purchase it. You may even find yourself on a new restaurant's social media page, checking out the menu and hours before visiting. Shoppers no longer discover businesses just by passing by, and if they do happen to see a new establishment on their way home from work, a lack of an internet presence is likely to dissuade them from visiting.

So, let me cut right to the chase. Your business needs to be discoverable online.

Studies show that "70-80 percent of people research companies online before visiting a small business or making a purchase with them." A statistic even more staggering is that 97 percent of shoppers go online now to find a local business or service.

Even if your company is a pillar of the community that has gained repeat business for years, you are losing new customers every day if you're not easily accessible online. You may have shied away from using internet tools out of inexperience or fear, and that is completely understandable. The world of social media can be very intimidating to a new user. But social media isn't going anywhere, and it's not as scary as you might think.

Here are three ways to bring your business into the 21st century and ensure that it is meeting its sales potential.

## **Invest in a Website**

A website is a digital storefront for your business. These days, your customers are located online too,

not just outside of your building. Your business must be located where customers are searching for you. Having a website will gain your company organic leads and the opportunity for even more business.

Even more importantly, a website provides credibility. I don't know about you, but whenever I need a new product or service, I compare businesses online. Sometimes I go as far as requesting multiple quotes. Other times, I simply view websites, so that I can get a feel for the brand and its reliability. Don't let the lack of a website send customers over to your competition.

Another great thing about a website is that it presents an ideal space for a blog. Every company is trying to position itself as an industry authority, and one of the easiest ways to sell yourself as an expert is to write what you know. Articles showcasing helpful tips for your audience can significantly improve your engagement. As a bonus, you can require email addresses in exchange for white papers, which can be used for future advertising campaigns.

## **Create a Google My Business page**

Customers are eager to learn more about your business and employ your services, but they must be able to find you first! If a customer types your business name into Google and nothing comes up, they are going to assume that you are either no longer open or not as legitimate as your competitors.

One of the best ways to become discoverable is to make sure the king of search engines, Google, knows that you exist. A Google My Business

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them.



listing is a simple, editable form that allows you to claim your business and add your contact information.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Go to Google.com/business.
- Fill out the form in its entirety.
- Make sure your business information (like hours and phone number) is consistent across all websites and social media pages.
- Get your Google My Business listing verified. This simply involves receiving a postcard in the mail at your business address; Google will walk you through it.
- Write a few well-thought-out sentences in the introduction section.
- Include a photo of your business.
- Encourage customers to write reviews of your business on Google

### Utilize Social Media

TikTok, Pinterest, Instagram – the world of social media can seem like a black hole, especially for a novice. Social media is not just the way your son or daughter communicates with their friends; businesses use it to establish themselves as industry experts and gain customer trust. In the world of construction and rental equipment, adding a humanizing tone to your business can go a long way.

### What platform should I use?

There are a lot of social media website options, with the most popular for businesses being Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Knowing which ones to use depends on your target audience.

- Facebook users skew more male than female, and recently, the platform has had an influx of “boomers.” So, if your customers are more distinguished, this may be the spot for you.
- LinkedIn is a popular networking site for B2B sales. If you are trying to reach other businesses as opposed to individuals, it would be worth your time to create a profile and advertise your services. And don't forget to interact with other professionals and businesses, too!
- Instagram users are more likely to be millennial women, but because of the network's popularity, businesses of all industries often utilize this platform.

### What will I post?

Besides the time involved, the biggest reason businesses neglect using social media is because they do not know what to post. At the end of the day, customers want to know who you are and what you offer. Below are a few post ideas. Don't forget that adding personality and humor will make your posts more engaging.

- Introduce your team and tell us a little about your employees
- Show before/after pictures of completed jobs
- Advertise new services or equipment.



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### The Final Word

Yes, you need an online presence, and no, it is not as complicated as it may seem. Brands with websites, social media pages, and an updated Google My Business page enjoy more visibility, which converts to more customers and hopefully more dollars in your wallet.

Businesses can no longer rely on a brick-and-mortar store and word of mouth to efficiently grow their business. Digital marketing is necessary for every type of business, including yours. Over time, you will find that advertising online is more cost-effective than the printing and mailing costs associated with traditional marketing methods.

Don't get left behind in the shuffle. Utilize a member of your team or a well-respected company to build your online presence and enjoy effortless marketing and higher earning potential! □



# CAN **SOCIAL MEDIA** REPLACE YOUR **COMPANY WEBSITE?**

By Pam Haskell

**Do you need a website, social media profiles, or both? There are pros and cons for using both social media and websites in business.**

**B**eing online is no longer a nice-to-have as a business owner – it's a necessity. Today, you have so many options when it comes to giving your business an online presence. But what type of presence suits your business the best? And what type of medium will match the needs of your customers?

The endless options are usually cut down to two choices – a website or social media profiles.

The most common question asked is, "What can a website do that social media can't?" Social media has overtaken many other forms of marketing and communication online over the last decade. Many business owners wonder if a website is even needed now.

So, do you need a professional website to run a business, or will your social media accounts do the job?

## **Can a Company Survive on Social Media Alone?**

Social media comes in so many forms these days, and each profile only takes a couple of minutes to set up and get started. There are already millions of potential customers swarming Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms, and this huge opportunity can be taken advantage of by your business in no time at all.

### **ADVANTAGES**

- **Cheaper:** Social media pages are quick and easy to set up, and business owners can usually set up accounts free of charge. This means a person can get a basic online

presence started quickly with little effort.

- **No Commitment:** There is little to no commitment to your social media profile, and if a business owner no longer thinks the profile is doing the job they want it to, they can just delete it. Businesses can also just switch to another platform or have multiple social media profiles going at once – they are not stuck with one provider.
- **Real-Time Customer Interaction:** Social media enables and encourages back and forth interaction between businesses and their customers. It makes companies more approachable and human, which allows them to easily communicate and build relationships with clients. Customers will learn more about a company's values and purpose as they read daily or weekly updates, and that same business will then be at the top of their list when they need to hire someone that does that type of work.
- **Brand Loyalty:** Interacting with a business on a daily basis will help create a sense of loyalty to your company and its way of doing business.

### **DISADVANTAGES**

- **Limited Customization:** Social media platforms generally follow the same layout and leave little to nothing to be customizable. Yes, business owners can add a profile photo and company details, but there isn't much they can do with the basic layout of the page. This limited design stops

**Social media** comes in so many forms these days, and each profile **only takes a couple of minutes to set up and get started.**



businesses from showing their originality and makes the page look exactly the same as everyone else's.

- **Open Forum:** Consumers can ask questions and voice their opinions (feedback and possible complaints) on companies' social media pages. This means that someone must monitor the pages and keep a close eye on what the audience is saying. The public has complete control over what they comment on a business profile and can also link the company profile to a comment they are making on their own profiles.
- **No Control:** A lack of ownership is probably the number one issue when it comes to social media platforms. Small businesses don't own their social media profiles. The social media sites control will be presented on the business pages, and owners must follow strict guidelines to keep their pages afloat. Companies could be building a strong social media presence for years and within an instant they could take it all away. Consider what would happen if the social media provider shut the site down and ruined a company's online presence. Especially if that was the company's only online presence. While it's difficult to imagine a world without Facebook, there have been plenty of other social media sites that have been incredibly popular before disappearing into the mists of time, such as Myspace or Bebo.

### Do Companies Need a Website?

If a small business owner wants complete control over the company's authority online, then a website is the better choice over only having social media profiles. It's important to note that a well-laid-out digital strategy will include both a professional website and regularly updated social media accounts.

What's great about a website is that it belongs to the company. Owners decide where it goes and what it looks like, and it provides an unbeatable level of credibility for the business. A website can be as simple or as complex as you want. Customers want to put their trust in a business that looks professional, and a website can help achieve this.

# WEBSITE VS SOCIAL MEDIA

ARE WEBSITES EVEN NEEDED NOW?  
CAN SOCIAL MEDIA REALLY DO IT ALL?



A professional website shows you are a legitimate company.

Your website is the foundation of your marketing strategy.

You own your website. It's not going anywhere.



Social Media pages are quick and easy to set up so you're online quickly.

Social Media is a marketing tactic.

You risk losing years of work if your page is suddenly shut down.



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## ADVANTAGES

- **Credibility:** Websites are an important way to demonstrate the legitimacy of a company. People expect companies of all sizes to have an up-to-date, mobile responsive website. People will put more trust in a business if it has its own site – and trust is essential before they hand their hard-earned cash over to a company they’ve never worked with before. In 2018, 64 percent of small businesses obtained a website. Of those, 94 percent were expected to make them mobile-friendly this year.
- **Controls:** When a business has a website, it owns it. The owner has full reign over how it looks and what features are displayed on it.
- **More Marketing Opportunities:** Through a website, businesses have an opportunity to create better marketing campaigns. There is more freedom to communicate and sell to customers. At its core, a website is a space to market a business through use of videos, blogs, customer feedback, and even some promotional offers. Other options include pay-per-click campaigns which are used to drive traffic and the advertiser pays a publisher when the ad is clicked. Sending clicks to a business homepage is a waste of money. Once people land on the homepage, they have no idea what to do next. Having a website allows business owners to create a custom landing page to direct all paid-for traffic to. This means they are able to target specific audiences with specific services and have a much higher chance of turning them into customers.
- **Full Availability:** Websites are available for customers 24 hours a day. Many customers now prefer to get information about a business online, and if they have a website full of all their information, it makes it easy for customers to get in contact. Having a website full of helpful information about the company, as well as contact information can seriously reduce the amount of time spent answering common questions.

## DISADVANTAGES

- **Maintenance:** Depending on how big a company’s website is and what content

management system it’s built on will dictate how much time and effort it will take to maintain. It’s important to maintain a website at all times from both a security point of view and a customer point of view, and this can become quite a time-consuming task.

- **Websites Cost Money:** No matter who you choose as your website developer, it’s going to cost money. For the love of all things professional, do not get a free website. Customers will know when a company has not paid a penny for its website, and they’ll make their own judgements about the company’s choices and why they were made. It might even cost the company some potential business. Cost ranges widely from \$500 to \$100,000 or more depending on what the business is looking for.
- **More Time, More Effort:** Business owners have to make more of an effort with websites in regard to effective marketing. To get people to find a company’s site and get Google recognizing it takes time and patience. To achieve this takes planning and a marketing strategy implemented to get a website to fuel company sales.

## Who’s Taking Home The Win?

When it comes to what’s best for your business, only you can make the final decision on how you present yourself online. Whether you choose to solely rely on social media for your business or you decide to create your own website is your decision. Based on the advantages and disadvantages of both, you will probably be thinking that a website is vital for your business. Even if a business is small and growing, a website can help eliminate some of the growing pains.

Social media shouldn’t just be forgotten about, though. It is an incredibly powerful tool to help you run your business. It helps you engage with customers, share new products/services, and bring visitors onto your website.

An effective digital strategy combines the professionalism of a website as well as multiple social media profiles to give your business what it needs to grow and flourish online. □

*This article was written by Pam Haskell, owner of the website design & development company Chili Pepper Design (cpdesignco.com). This article originally appeared on GreenIndustryPros.com.*

Even if a **business is small** and growing, a **website can help** eliminate some of the **growing pains**.





# DO **ONLINE** **REVIEWS REALLY** **MATTER** FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

By Pam Haskell

**In the digital age, 93 percent of customers say that their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews. And as a small business, your online reputation can directly influence your bottom line.**

**A**s a business owner, you already know how important your reputation is in your industry. For many of us, we're only as good as the last job we worked on.

What people say about your business matters, and that's especially true about what customers are saying online. Instead of a happy customer telling five of their friends how amazing your company is, they write an online review and hundreds, possibly thousands, of potential customers see it.

Sound great? It is. There is a downside to online reviews, too. If you leave a client on not-so-great terms, they can do serious harm to your reputation with a negative review.

But just how important are online reviews? How influential are they to potential clients? Is there a way for you to control what's said about you online?

You might think that online reviews don't really matter to your customers, especially if they can see your equipment in their neighborhood, visit your website showcasing photos taken by a professional photographer, all while providing the best value services. But if you have a reputation for bad service, all that isn't worth much.

The market has changed. When people are looking for a specific piece of equipment or a rental equipment business, they go online.

If you've invested in your website, it might pop up as the number one result on Google. If you've claimed and optimized your Google My Business listing, it might be the highlighted option on the right of the search results.

But what happens if Google and social media is riddled with one-star reviews of your company? All that hard work you've invested in online has to battle against a bad review to persuade a customer to part ways with their hard-earned cash and visit your store.

While online reviews may seem like a small piece of the bigger picture that makes up your online presence, people are relying on reviews more and more when deciding what companies to hire.

## **How Customers Utilize Online Reviews**

In the digital age, 93 percent of customers say that their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews. These reviews have major implications on many different things, including:

- Your website's ranking on search engines
- Your company's ranking in search engines
- Which search results get displayed (and clicked on)
- Consumer purchasing decisions

By the time someone is looking at the reviews of your company, they've already decided they need someone that provides your services. If

**The market has changed.** When people are looking for a specific piece of equipment or a **rental equipment business**, they go online.



they're not using Google to find their next rental business, they're going to be using a review website (Yelp, Facebook, Angie's List, etc.)

Half the battle is already won! They know they need the services you provide; they just need to be persuaded you're the best company to go to. The buying decision from reading your reviews and hiring you is incredibly quick. Customers typically decide yes or no almost immediately.

For many people, checking online reviews is the last hurdle for a company to overcome before they hire them. A recent study found 68 percent of people form an opinion of a company after reading between one and six online reviews. An overwhelming 84 percent of shoppers said they trusted online business reviews as much as a personal recommendation from friends or family. Now that's some serious power of persuasion.

All in all, as a small business, your online reputation can directly influence your bottom line.

### A Powerful Tactic to Gain Trust

Every small business owner should welcome and actively encourage online reviews. Had a great interaction with a client? Ask them to leave a review online.

If you don't ask your customers to write online reviews for your business, you're missing out on a powerful tactic to gain prospective customers' trust and persuade them to visit and rent from your company.

You also run the risk of letting the few customers who do write reviews have a huge effect on what everyone else thinks of your business. If hardly anyone writes reviews, one bad review has a much bigger effect than it otherwise would.

Before you start asking customers to leave you reviews, you need to claim your business on the

main review sites. There's probably already an entry for your company on the likes of Google My Business, Yelp, etc. – all you have to do is follow the instructions set out by each site and claim it.

Once you've got your profiles optimized (like adding high quality photos, opening hours, and directions to your main office), you can start directing customers to leave you reviews.

The secret to getting happy customers to leave good reviews? Make it simple and make it easy.

If something is too difficult to do or takes up too much time,

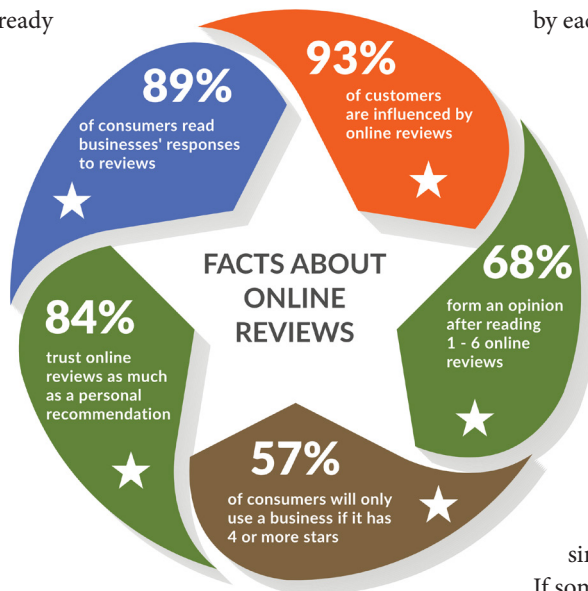
they won't bother. Give them easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions and link to the profile you want them to leave a review for.

Here are some tried, tested, and proven simple ways to encourage customers to write online reviews for your business:

- Add prominent links on your website where customers can review you (like a link to your social media accounts or your entries on Yelp and local directories)
- Put signage up in your store, such as Yelp decals, to let customers know which review sites you're featured on and where they can find you
- Add a special note onto your receipts, contracts, or invoices saying where to review you

A golden rule for online reviews: always respond. Always. Let your customers know you hear them. People like to be heard and feel like they're the only customer that matters to you.

If someone leaves you a negative review, respond to them in a positive way. Do not take a bad review as a personal insult. Ask them how you can make their experience better in the future. If needed, apologize for their bad experience, let them know it won't happen again, and you've dealt with the problem personally.



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**People like to be heard and feel like they're the only customer that matters to you.**

Whether the person that left the bad review will change their mind on your company is up for debate, but anyone that reads the exchange will see how professional and responsible your company is. Keeping a level-head and being polite will help turn a bad PR event into a positive advert for your company.



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### Getting Maximum Exposure for your Business

Once you've managed to secure a positive review from a customer, you want to use it to get maximum exposure for your company.

- Promote your latest positive reviews on your social media profiles
- Change copy to "Display positive reviews on your website's homepage"
- Create a case study to highlight the work completed and use the good review as a testimonial
- Ask customer's to be in video testimonials
- Include latest reviews in your company's newsletter

Getting a positive review from a customer is an amazing achievement and a boost for you and your team. So, make sure you take advantage of that boost!

Online reviews aren't something to avoid; they should be embraced. Getting online reviews is a opportunity to promote your business, on so many levels, so get started today. □

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally appeared in the July/August 2019 issue of GIP, and was written by Pam Haskell, owner of the website design and development company, Chili Pepper Design. It was edited for Rental by Editor Alexis Sheprak.*

## NEGATIVE REVIEWS AND COVID-19

Right now, there's a lot going on in the world and people are scared, frustrated, and confused as to how their daily lives are going.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, you might notice a rise in angry or negative reviews from customers who are upset that they don't have access to the usual services you provide. For those forced to close due to the restrictions related to the coronavirus, or alter their normal business practices, customers may be angered or complain about not getting service.

The best thing to do in this situation is to remain calm, no matter how hurtful the words are. Respond in a professional manner by addressing their concerns, apologize for the inconvenience, and assure them that as soon as you can reopen and continue business as usual you will.

During the pandemic, the safety of your employees and your customers should be the top priority. By showing your clients that you care about their safety and their concerns, you'll gain more of their trust and their respect.



# HOW TO **MANAGE** **YOUR BUSINESS** WITH APPS

By Bryce Gill

**Using apps for your business will allow you to gain insights on exactly how your prospects and customers are engaging with your service.**

**T**he idea of using apps as the central system for your business is absolutely essential in today's marketplace. The results it garners will allow you to gain insights on exactly how your prospects and customers are engaging with your service.

Most new business apps have been designed with the layperson in mind. Many smart business app makers have spent countless hours and capital making sure that the navigation, or the journey, on their app is a welcoming and friendly one.

"There is data, that for the betterment of your business, you need to look at and take a look at all your software systems that you have, whether it's QuickBooks or Google Analytics, or constant contact for your email. There's a lot of data that sits in there," says Bill Furlong, CEO and founder of SquareStack.

Of small businesses who use small data, 83 percent use email marketing reports, 64 percent use website analytics, 52 percent use social media analytics, and 48 percent use sales trends, according to Small Data and Small Business.

"You should make it a daily, if not weekly, ritual to understand how much money is in the bank, how many new followers you have on Facebook, [or] did your employees submit their expense reports?" he says.

This data will help you understand what's doing well in your business: what's selling, what's not selling, and how your customers prefer to hear from you.

As you begin to save time by using apps to run your business, it's essential to have real-time access to these key metrics within each component software. For instance, consider your website. Analyze

the data around elements such as:

- Number of visitors
- What time they're coming to your site
- What parts of your site they're looking at



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## **CRM Systems Matter**

It's important to have all of your contacts within a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. That then becomes the anchor, the lifeblood, of everything else you do, whether it's social media marketing, online email newsletters, a blog, or traditional mailing.

As much as the CRM system is needed to actually do all of this, the essential commitment you need to make is to analyze the data that comes out of the platform. Every one of your software partners can lead you to tutorials, as well as other educational platforms like webinars and white papers, so that you understand how to use that software better and how to mine that data even more effectively.

"All these data points that you become more ingrained into checking out, you will be more strategic, you'll be able to lean into your business and make more informed decisions," Furlong says. □

This article was written by Bryce Gill, assistant editor, and originally appeared on [greenindustrypros.com](http://greenindustrypros.com).



**You should make it a daily, if not weekly, ritual to understand how much money is in the bank.**



# THE **BIGGEST** **CYBERSECURITY** **THREATS** FOR RENTAL BUSINESS OWNERS

By Alexis Sheprak

There has never been a better time to make sure that your rental business' data and cybersecurity practices are up-to-date and running efficiently. The first step is learning about the threats like phishing, insider threats, and more.

**C**ybersecurity is a hot topic these days and something that many rental business owners may not be considering when it comes to their business strategy.

But with the global pandemic forcing more people to work from home and stay more digitally connected than ever before, cyberattacks have skyrocketed and business owners need to be aware and cognizant of better protecting their data.

In fact, the FBI reported that the number of complaints about cyberattacks to their Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) has increased to around 3,000 to 4,000 a day. That is equivalent to a 400-percent increase from what they were reporting before COVID, which was around 1,000 complaints daily.

The pandemic has also caused an increase in COVID-19 themed attacks, where cybercriminals get access to a system using phishing or social engineering attacks. Microsoft reported that these attacks have jumped to 20,000 to 30,000 a day in the U.S. alone. And Zohar Pinhasi, a cyber counter-terrorism expert and founder of the cybersecurity firm, MonsterCloud, says ransomware attacks, or the act of cybercriminals holding computer data or network hostage until a ransom is paid, are up 800 percent.

There has never been a better time to make sure that your business' data and cybersecurity practices are running effectively. Learning the best ways to protect yourself and your assets, and figuring out your vulnerabilities, is critical.

## PHISHING

*The terrifying emails from the terrifying No.1 scam tactic.*



**Phishing is when an attacker sends a phony email that looks legitimate in order to get the victim to click through to a malicious website or into malware.**



Insert Varonis, a data security and software provider, who's on a mission to focus on securing data. As their website states, "Data assets are the most valuable – and vulnerable – components of the global economy. Along with employees, data is at the heart of almost every organization, yet conventional cybersecurity solutions, by themselves, have failed to protect it."

We spoke with Kilian Englert, a technical marketing manager at Varonis, about cyberattacks, data security, and how rental business owners can be better prepared.

**Q: Tell me more about cyberattacks. What are they, what do they do, what do they target?**

**A:** Cyberattacks are criminal and intentional attempts to disrupt a computer network. In most cases, the goal is to steal, encrypt, change, or delete information. Once attackers are in, they're often able to access any files that aren't protected—and for many companies, that's millions of files.

**Q: What is phishing?**

**A:** Phishing is when an attacker sends a phony email that looks legitimate in an attempt to deceive a victim into clicking a link to a malicious website or opening a document that runs malware or establishes a connection back to the external attacker as a launch point for a wider attack. It could happen to anyone, and it happens to companies every day.

When phishing emails are targeted and seem plausible, people let their guard down. Unfortunately, phishing emails are the perfect delivery mechanism for malware—and attackers have plenty of options at their disposal. They can hide malicious code in a macro in an Office document. They can link to a website that installs malware on the user's computer. Once they've established themselves, attackers will often lay low to expand within the network. Other times, the malware delivered is ransomware that quickly begins to encrypt every file available

**Q: Can you explain the difference between insider threats versus external threats?**

**A:** An insider threat is malicious activity caused by someone within your organization, like an employee or contractor. Insiders can be after sensitive information they can use or sell for personal

gain. Sometimes, they will change or delete important information before they leave a company. It's hard to spot an insider intent on doing harm—insiders often do a good job blending in. But if you're not watching what files people are opening, you can miss the early signs of an internal attack. If someone in your company starts to access files they have no business looking at, you might have an insider on your hands.

However, the line between "internal" and "external" threats is blurry. An external threat would be an attacker who does not have legitimate access to an organization's network or resources; however, once an external attacker compromises an account or machine belonging to an "insider" or a piece of hardware or software connected to an internal network, there is little distinction.

The external threat becomes an inside threat with different motivations, but often similar goals – to steal valuable information either to sell outright or as part of an extortion operation directly or as part of a ransomware campaign.

To minimize risk, organizations should reduce access to a least-privilege model. That means restricting access to sensitive information to only those people on a need-to-know basis.

External attackers are bad actors coming from outside your organization. They can be a lone, amateur attacker or a well-funded cybercriminal group. They will find a way inside a company through various methods, like a well-crafted phishing email. Once inside a network, they will slowly "land and expand" and elevate their credentials, essentially giving themselves more access and control. If the attacker's goal is to deploy ransomware, files will be quickly encrypted. It's becoming more common for attackers to exfiltrate data first before deploying ransomware because of the idea that victims will be more likely to pay to get their data back and a promise not to leak the data.



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## ANATOMY OF A PHISHING EMAIL

From malware-infected zip files to malicious links that take you to fake landing pages, phishing emails can put you on the hook for some major security damage. Can you spot a fake?

### Can You Spot All of the Errors in This Phishing Email?

1 Payment Declined -- Update Required Immediately!

2 From: **ApplePay Support** <customer\_support\_ref\_@apple.com>

3 Dear Apple User,

4 It has come to our attention that you're recent payment was declined. An update is required immediately..

To make this change, visit the support section at the link below.

5 <https://www.applepay.com/subscriptions/payment-update>  
<http://944.535.32/index/apple.html>

6 **If you do not update your payment information in the next 24 hours, your account will be deactivated.**

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ApplePay Support

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- 1 **Sense of urgency**  
Fear tactics
- 2 **Imitating known brand**  
Fake email address
- 3 **Impersonal**
- 4 **Urgency**  
Punctuation and grammar mistakes
- 5 **Rollover shows malicious link**
- 6 **Scare tactics**
- 7 **Impersonal**  
Not real customer service
- 8 **Copyright date is incorrect**  
Location is incorrect
- 9 **ZIP file**

### How to Spot a Malicious Landing Page

1 <http://appel-pay.com>

2

3 ApplePay

4 Apple ID

5 Password

6 Sign In

7 I forgot my Apple ID or password

- 1 Not a legitimate Apple website address
- 2 Missing navigation bar and footer
- 3 "Apple Pay" is misspelled
- 4 Apple ID homepage doesn't require password



### Q: What are the biggest threats in terms of data security to rental business owners?

**A:** The biggest data security threats to rental business owners are internal and external attackers seeking to steal, encrypt, alter, or delete sensitive information. That information includes the personal identifying information (PII) and payment card information (PCI) for customers, information on employees, and other data like financial information. Imagine if you had to run your business with pen and paper with no access to computers or digital files – that's what companies are forced to deal with after they fall victim to ransomware.

### Q: What happens if your data is stolen? How does that affect business owners?

**A:** Customer confidence and trust in your business can take a hit if your data is stolen. Breaches need to be reported to the proper authorities, and in some cases, fines can result. It's beneficial to think ahead and be in the position to show you take cybersecurity seriously—so if something does go wrong, having good detective controls can alert an organization to an attack in progress, and having good preventative controls in place can minimize the damage. Plus, this puts the business in a good position to demonstrate that they took reasonable steps to keep information secure.

### Q: What can business owners do to protect their data? How can they be the most proactive regarding data security?

**A:** Let the principle of least privilege be your guide—limit access to those who need it and no more. Regularly review who has access and validate the business need is still valid — especially for users with access to sensitive data. Use and enforce a password management policy. Ensure your network does not have any “ghost” users, or former employees and older accounts no longer needed. Hackers can brute-force — or essentially try to crack—these accounts, and if no one notices, they can keep trying until they're inside your network. Archive or delete data that you no longer need for your business, especially if it's sensitive.

### Q: In terms of software, is it expensive to invest in cybersecurity?

**A:** There is no one-size-fits-all approach to cybersecurity. Many companies are under-invested in cybersecurity or lack solutions that work together



# 7 TIPS FOR AVOIDING A SPEAR PHISHING ATTACK



**1** Be **skeptical**.



**5** Be smart with your **passwords**.



**2** Be aware of your **online presence**.



**6** Keep your **software updated**.



**3** **Inspect** the link.



**7** Implement a **company-wide data security strategy**.



**4** **Don't click** the link.



Follow these tips to avoid falling into a phishing trap.

Varonis

and “talk” to each other. Antivirus and firewalls are no match for today’s cybercriminals. Even amateurs can use off-the-shelf hacking tools or deploy ransomware-as-a-service.

The best recommendation is to take a defense-in-depth approach and select solutions that monitor for signs of attack across the environment – the perimeter at ingress and egress points, at the endpoint level, and monitor the data itself. This gives defenders more at-bats to spot attackers as they jump through more hoops to try to get to their target. In addition, there’s no defense like a good offense either, as strong preventative controls like locking data down to least privilege will reduce potential risks as well. The right solution will augment your security team and help ensure success if you are hit by ransomware, a malicious insider, or another kind of attack.

### Q: How is staffing an issue given the high demand for cybersecurity experts?

**A:** It’s challenging to fill cybersecurity roles given the constant, high demand for experts. So, it’s critical to set up the team you have up for success. It is common for organizations to push people

from other disciplines into cybersecurity roles due to demand, so it’s important that solutions have enough automation to empower people new to cybersecurity to be effective without in-depth training.

Don’t assume a cyberattack won’t hit your company or that you aren’t interesting to attackers. You need to proactively check for vulnerabilities, educate staff, patch all your systems, and—because attackers are typically after data—restrict access to sensitive information on a need-to-know basis.

### Q: What does the future look like for cybersecurity?

**A:** Two recent attacks hold clues to what the future of cybersecurity looks like. The SolarWinds supply chain attack hit a minimum of 18,000 companies, but the damage was likely far worse. In 2021, Microsoft announced a Zero Day threat—an active but previously unpatched vulnerability—affecting organizations using Exchange on-premises. In both cases, the victim organizations did nothing to set off the attack. Once tools and techniques are used, it’s not long until other attackers use similar methods □



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