6 Ways to Help Employees Be Privacy Aware

Promote awareness about privacy, safeguard data and enable trust throughout the workplace with these tips.

1. Empower a culture of privacy

Supporting privacy awareness in the workplace starts with your culture. To kickstart your privacy culture, get leadership support for your program. Executive support might even come from someone outside of your reporting line, like your legal department. If you're starting from scratch, build a business case for having a culture of privacy. Are there legal or regulatory concerns that affect your organization? Is privacy a concern for your prospects and customers? How would a privacy culture program drive your business or support business goals? If you can answer those questions, you'll have an easier time getting executive support.

2. Start Raising Awareness

A privacy awareness campaign can empower your colleagues to make the best cybersecurity choices. Share messages about privacy in places employees will see them: on internal social media, around the office, on employee intranet portals, in company newsletters, and emails. Consider starting a privacy ambassador program to help you get the message out across your organization. Use our resources or look for other resources online.

You shouldn't have to start from scratch, and there are a lot of materials available for free, especially leading up to Data Privacy Week in January.

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3. Organize some privacy training

Education is a lifetime pursuit, not a one-time event. And privacy is moving quickly. New legislation and regulations are always in the works, and your business doesn't stand still either. You may be launching a new product in a country or state that has privacy laws you'll need to comply with. Find privacy training that fits your culture. There are many providers and while the meat of the message is largely similar, the way it's delivered varies. It's a question of style and tone: do you want friendly and animated, or a more buttoned-down e-learning course?

Pick what's right for your organization, not just in terms of covering all the facts, but culturally as well. Some companies, like insurers, provide privacy training for free to their customers, and many security training companies also offer privacy training. This might cut short the process for you of bringing a new vendor on board.

To bolster your privacy awareness training, consider having guest speakers. Bring in experts. Invite outside speakers to talk to employees about why privacy matters, how they can protect themselves, and why a culture of privacy is easier to embrace than they might assume. Engage staff by asking them to consider how privacy and data security applies to the work they do on the daily.

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4. Help employees manage their individual privacy

Cybersecurity and privacy begin with the individual. Better security and privacy behaviors at home will translate to better security and privacy practices at work. Teach employees how to update their privacy and security settings on personal accounts. Answer their questions and be patient – remember, many people reject privacy best practices because they don't know much about them or, sometimes, are intimidated by everything cybersecurity. You are in the perfect position to change this for your coworkers and friends. Just talk to them like you would a friend – ditch the legalese and tech-speak for the tone of a trusted friend.

Need some help? Use our privacy settings page as a resource.

5. Add privacy to the employee's toolbox

Make it easier to prioritize privacy. Provide your employees with the tools they can use to improve their privacy, such as company-branded camera covers, privacy screens for their devices, and virtual private networks (VPNs) to secure their connections, or password management software. Many of these tools will cost the company money, but the peace of mind is well worth it. And the costs pale in comparison to dealing with an incident or breach.

6. Engage the experts

When you empower people, you must do some letting go. If your employees are embracing creating a culture of privacy at your workplace, let them run with it. Culture grows organically once you have the foundations in place. Still, remember that most employees aren't privacy or security experts. You will need to build in mechanisms that make it easy for them to report privacy and security concerns to your experts. Just like tools for preventing privacy incidents are critical, tools that easily empower employees to report are necessary in your company's privacy toolbox, too.