

Security breach? It'll never happen to me. Why small British businesses need to be more concerned over the impact of a potential information breach

In this issue we will take an in-depth look at new insight into the security habits and attitudes of small and medium sized businesses operating in Britain.

The results from the independent survey – the Shred-it Information Security Tracker - conducted by Ipsos Reid and commissioned by Shred-it across Britain indicates that while small British business operators may understand the legal requirements of keeping information secure, many are failing to recognise the potentially devastating effects that a breach could have on their own business.

Given that the renowned Ponemon Institute estimates that a data breach costs, on average, £4.5 million to be put right¹, the fact that half of all British businesses surveyed believe that their business would not be seriously impacted in the event that data from the company was lost or stolen. The unnerving fact however, is that if the correct procedures and protocols are not followed, a breach could very well occur to any business, be it large or small.

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Being compliant – is your business aware?



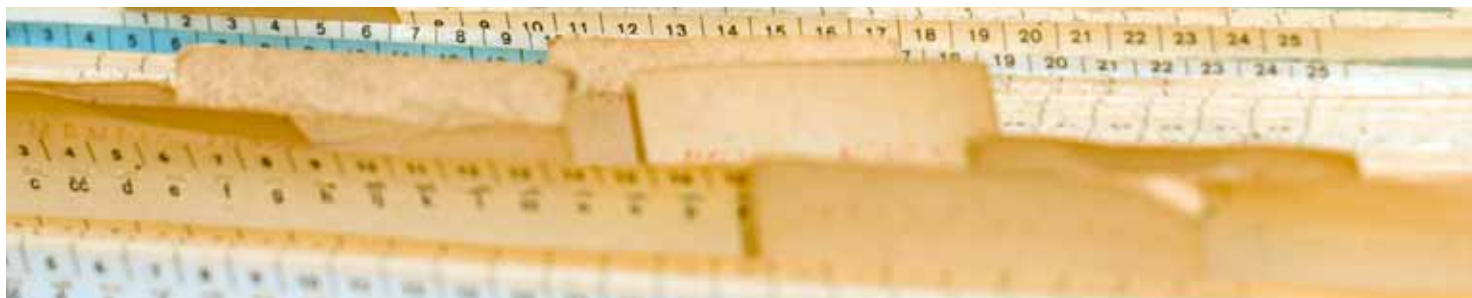
Ensuring that an organisation is compliant with legal requirements regarding data destruction policies is a basic necessity for any business but the research highlighted that **over a fifth (22 per cent) of firms classify themselves as either ‘not at all aware’ or ‘not very aware’ of their legal responsibility to keep secure confidential information relating to staff and customers.**

So what can British organisations do to increase their awareness around legal data security policies? Some first steps to consider are:

- Stay informed – country legislation can change – a great resource is the Information Commissioner’s Office’s site.
- Make sure you have formal information security policies in place; train your employees to know the policies well and follow them rigorously.
- Limit the number of people who handle confidential documents. Be careful when hiring new employees. Perform full reference checks and background checks and, where warranted, ask your new hires to sign confidentiality agreements.
- Demonstrate a top-management commitment to the total security of your business and customer information.



Implementing document destruction policies and protocols



Just half (48 per cent) of firms polled were able to confirm that they had undertaken a review of their secure document destruction processes during the last 12 months and, remarkably, a further 37 per cent conceded that they had either never reviewed these processes (21 per cent) or did not know when or if a review had been undertaken.



In order to avoid the risk of a data security breach it is important that small organisations implement information security policies and protocols:

- Introduce a “shred-all” policy that means all unneeded documents are fully destroyed on a regular basis.
- Conduct a periodic information security audit.
- Don’t overlook hard drives on computers or photocopiers. Erasing your hard drive does not mean that the data is gone. Physical hard drive destruction is proven to be the only 100 per cent secure way to destroy data from hard drives.
- Hire a reliable vendor that is well-informed and keeps you compliant with pertinent legislation, training requirements etc. Finding a vendor that provides you with a certificate of destruction upon completion is ideal.

Training your employees



Ensuring that an organisation is compliant with legal requirements regarding data destruction policies is a basic necessity for any organisation and the research found that **more than two thirds of British SMEs (68 per cent)** either never train their employees on company information security procedures and protocols (30 per cent), or do so only on an ad hoc basis (38 per cent).



Safeguarding data does not need to be an onerous task and there are simple steps any organisation of any size can take to minimise its risk factor. These include:

- Securely shredding confidential data – not simply placing it in the blue recycling bins.
- Having a locked confidential paper receptacle in your office will ensure that no one has access to sensitive documents after they have been disposed.
- Limit physical access to storage closets and online access to sensitive or confidential files.

By taking such steps and regularly reviewing security policies, organisations large and small can protect themselves from the significant long-term impact of a data breach. If staff are not aware that there are policies and procedures in place, mistakes may occur, which could prove potentially fatal to the future of the business.

About Shred-it

In the UK alone, Shred-it has 16 branches, employs over 400 people and operates over 120 shredding trucks, providing the most secure and trustworthy data destruction services possible for its customers. Shred-it UK has customers which span the sectors, from government agencies to financial and legal institutions, taking each customer's unique needs into account and bringing secure on site document destruction services direct to their door, thus ensuring total confidentiality in security and shredding. Shred-it is a world-leading document destruction company that ensures the security and integrity of our customers' private information. The company operates 140 branches in 16 countries worldwide, servicing over 150,000 global, national and local businesses, including the world's top intelligence and security agencies and more than 500 police forces, 1,500 hospitals, 8,500 bank branches and 1,200 universities and colleges.

To learn more about Shred-it document destruction service, contact us at:
0800 028 1164

Or visit our website at
www.shredit.co.uk

We'll be happy to hear what you think and what other information security topics you are interested in.

Please email us at:
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Your Free Data Security Survey

To learn more about Shred-it services or to book your FREE Data Security Survey, visit <http://www.shredit.co.uk/Contact>

¹ http://www.symantec.com/about/news/release/article.jsp?prid=20110308_01&om_ext_cid=biz_socmed_twitter_facebook_marketwire_linkedin_2011Mar_worldwide_costofdatabreach

