CYBER READINESS
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# Creating a Cyber Ready Culture in Your Remote Workforce: FIVE TIPS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) around the world have closed their offices and told people to work from home. **Many organizations and their employees were not prepared for this sudden shift to remote work, nor are they prepared for the possibility that remote work will become far more common in the future.**

In this new reality of remote working, cybersecurity needs to be a priority today - and every day going forward. Hackers are rapidly finding ways to cause damage by taking advantage of security vulnerabilities exposed more frequently through remote working. Organizations can respond to this threat by building a cyber ready culture for remote workers and embedding the basics of cyber readiness into how every employee does his/her job.

The challenge, of course, is building a cohesive culture when your entire workforce may be spread across cities and towns, and even countries and continents. In this guide, we offer tips for getting your remote workforce to understand the importance of cybersecurity and to commit to it under challenging and sometimes unfamiliar working conditions.

Now more than ever, every organization needs to have a designated Cyber Readiness Leader – someone appointed to create a culture of cyber readiness within your organization. Employees need to know who to turn to with questions or concerns about cybersecurity. They may need guidance on using newly introduced technologies, like Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), or new procedures, like using multi-factor authentication (MFA).

But beyond responding to questions and influencing how people behave when working remotely, the Cyber Leader needs to understand how people are reacting to this new working environment. Fatigue from a blurred line between work life and personal life can impact productivity and the ability to create a culture of security and cyber readiness.

The building blocks of creating an organizational culture are Awareness, Commitment and Knowledge. Frequent, short communications are needed to build awareness. A clear commitment from senior management and the Cyber Leader needs to cascade through the organization to build commitment. Only after there is a foundation of awareness and commitment in the organization, can you effectively provide employees with the specific knowledge of what they need to do and how to do it.

The building blocks of Awareness, Commitment and Knowledge don't change in a remote workplace. What does change is how to do it. Also, remember that cyber readiness requires everyone's commitment, including full-time employees, part-time employees and contractors.

The free CRI Cyber Readiness Program guides the Cyber Leader through the basics of building a cyber ready culture. Here are five practical tips that build on the Program and focus on extending the cyber ready culture to your remote workforce.

1. **Focus on changing one behavior at a time with a monthly cyber readiness theme.** Prioritize one behavior - like strong passwords/passphrases – to change or reinforce and make it the monthly cyber readiness theme. Provide the necessary training so employees know what to do and how to do it. This approach is especially important if you are introducing new technology (like cloud-based file-sharing, VPN, etc.) or allowing workers to use a combination of company-issued and personal devices while working remotely.

2. **Update your cyber readiness policies and procedures for remote work,** as needed. You can conduct this update in alignment with your monthly behavior to change. Make sure to incorporate any new technologies that were introduced in the shift to remote work into the policies and procedures. It is important that your policies and procedures are aligned with how your employees need to operate remotely, otherwise you run the risk of creating a "work-around" culture.

3. **Send a short weekly alert to highlight new cyber threats and reinforce the importance of cyber readiness.** This alert should come from the Cyber Leader and other senior managers. It's important to visibly show ongoing senior management commitment. A remote work environment will perpetuate an increase in certain types of threats and vulnerabilities and it is important to keep your workforce informed.

4. **Hold a weekly 30-minute Cyber Readiness video meeting to share good practices** for remote work and answer any questions. Use video conferencing to build a community of cyber ready remote workers. It is important to find ways to build and maintain a sense of community with a remote workforce. Make it a lunch meeting or virtual Happy Hour.

5. **Hold a friendly competition for Cyber Readiness Star of the Month** with a video conference "Awards Ceremony." Tie the topic to the monthly cyber readiness theme.

We are committed to being a key resource in helping SMEs balance remote work and cybersecurity. Check out our website (www.cyberreadinessinstitute.org) to learn more about our free cyber readiness program and the role of the Cyber Leader. Feel free to contact us with questions, comments, or success stories (support@cyberreadinessinstitute.org).

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## About the Cyber Readiness Institute

The Cyber Readiness Institute is a non-profit initiative that convenes business leaders from across sectors and geographic regions to share resources and knowledge that inform the development of free cybersecurity tools for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The self-guided, online Cyber Readiness Program is available in Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Japanese. To find out more, visit www.becyberready.com.

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