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Dave McClure • May. 02, 2013



From *CPA Practice Advisor's* **Bleeding Edge Blog**.

There is a lot of protection in being “off the grid” – in being so small and insignificant that no one even know you are there. And that is true even when it comes to CyberSecurity. I once ran a server connected to the Internet for three years, with mail server, web site, FTP site and more, without a single shred of protection.

I did it to show that average users don't need to spend hundreds of dollars on

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by the National Cyber Security Alliance and Symantec. The survey, of 1015 small and medium-sized businesses, found that 77 percent believe they are protected, but 83 percent have no formal cybersecurity plan. And who is in charge of cybersecurity at these firms? Two-thirds of the time, it is the business owner.

The survey gets worse. Among those surveyed:

- 87 percent don't have a formal written Internet policy for employees.
- 62 percent said they were very confident that their employees nonetheless were aware of the company's formal Internet security policy and practices.
- When it comes to social media: 75 percent of SMBs have no policy governing employee behavior
- 77 percent feel their companies are safe from cyberthreats
- 77 percent describe a strong cybersecurity and online safety posture a positive for their brand.
- 59 percent have no contingency plan how to respond and report data breach losses.

Your average plumber or landscaping business might be able to exist in such an environment; your average accounting firm cannot. Accountants and tax preparers must of necessity have and store all of the information that data thieves most want to obtain – personal and financial details that enable them to easily commit identity theft or raid a client company's bank account.

Which only means that tax, accounting and financial planning firms cannot ever afford to be without protection, a plan and a good set of procedures. And that the same goes for many of their clients, making a cybersecurity assessment a critical part of the annual audit of any small or medium-sized business.

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