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Accounting Firm Cybersecurity: Training Your Staff and Protecting Your Business

By Christina Wiseman, Thomson Reuters

From the [Thomson Reuters blog](#).

It probably won't surprise you to hear that [tax identity theft is on the rise](#). In response to this increase in tax-related ID theft, last year the IRS rolled out new security requirements that recommended [multi-factor authentication](#) (MFA) for tax and accounting software.

While MFA has shown to be an effective tool in combating fraud, there's an equally important supplemental strategy that all tax and accounting firms should employ: educating their staff.

That's because humans — no matter how well-intentioned — remain the weakest link in the data security chain, as proven when a recent cybersecurity report revealed that approximately 95% of security breaches are caused by human error. So let's take a look at some of the changes that tax and accounting firms are making to improve awareness among employees.

Employee training: Simple, inexpensive, impactful

In 1794, Voltaire said, "Common sense is not so common." Today, we could update that quote to read, "Network security common sense is not so common." That's why it's imperative that your staff is trained before they interact with your information systems.

It's good practice to update your training regularly to include new and evolving data

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cybersecurity threats, experts recommend at least annual training (although more often is always good).

Awareness is key

Hackers thrive on ignorance — they want everyone to assume that life is safe and no one's out to get them. So it's a good idea to periodically ask your employees questions including — but not limited to — the following, to help them remain aware of potential security vulnerabilities.

- Do you have company email or other company data on your mobile device or portable drive?
- If so, do you have appropriate security precautions in place, such as data encryption and multi-factor authentication?
- How many of you are aware whether all the devices in the organization have the most recent updates for operating systems and security software?
- At work, do you lock your computer when you walk away from it, or do you leave it open and accessible to others?
- Could your passwords' security access questions be easily deduced from a look at your social media?

While this is only a start, it's an important one. Use the tools and resources mentioned above to educate your staff and close the door to hackers. We can work together to take steps to improve security in our industry.

Christina Wiseman serves as product manager of Web Services & Mobile Technologies for [Thomson Reuters Tax & Accounting](#).

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