

Servers and shredders protect privacy

Intranets and trash bins are favoured hunting grounds for thieves

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New privacy laws and the rise in identity theft and corporate espionage have heightened the urgency for small business owners to effectively manage customer information.

Most small business owners know that two new privacy laws carry six-figure fines that could kick in if they don't get customer consent to collect information, or if they release that information without getting consent.

The federal government passed its Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) to come into effect in January, 2004. B.C. added its Personal Information Privacy Act (PIPA) to regulate the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by businesses, nonprofits and private sector organizations in this province.

The net result is that protecting both paper and electronic documents is more important today than it was a few years ago.

"If you're keeping your computer in your office or in a warehouse, one of the big fears small business owners have is that someone will break in and steal them," said Peer 1 Network president Lance Tracey. "A majority of people come to us after that's already happened."

Tracey's fast-growing company operates out of two floors in the Harbour Centre complex on Hastings Street and has made two recent acquisitions that have propelled it from a small business to one with approximately 200 employees.

Most of his clients are small business owners who come to him because they are concerned about privacy laws and because they don't want their businesses to be shut down temporarily while they struggle to recover lost data.

Tracey assures clients that their data is backed-up and that they need not fear disruption after a break in.

Simply Marketing CEO Steve Curtis said an additional reason he co-locates his company's servers with Peer 1 is that they do a better and more cost-effective job maintaining the server than he could.

"A lot of small business people think of security as an after-thought," he said. "Primarily, they co-locate their servers because they think about the cost savings they can achieve by outsourcing server maintenance."

But protecting electronic documents is only half the battle. Paper document protection is just as important.

Air Canada and WestJet hurled charges of espionage against each other last year. After Air Canada accused



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Bailey Jung: "Companies are starting realize they can't just throw information into trash cans."

WestJet of stealing confidential electronic files, WestJet retorted that Air Canada had hired private detectives to sift through recycling bags of a senior WestJet executives, collecting confidential shredded documents and then paying to piece the shreds back together.

"Companies are starting to recognize that you can't just throw information into trash cans," said Bailey Jung, who founded the one-man Silver Bullet Shredding last summer. "When you use a company like ours, your documents get co-mingled with those from a number of other

businesses. Then it becomes virtually impossible to put the pieces back together."

Tossing paper in a recycling bin is dangerous, he said, because recycling companies often don't shred documents.

His client list now includes automobile insurance agencies, medical clinics and small law offices. He supplies locked document bins that have slits at the top. He visits his clients' worksites and shreds disposed documents immediately in a shredder in his truck. ■

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