# THE TECH CHRONICLE

## INSIDER TIPS TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS RUN FASTER, EASIER AND MORE PROFITABLY



# SHADOW IT:

## How Employees Using Unauthorized Apps Could Be Putting Your Business At Risk

Your employees might be the biggest cybersecurity risk in your business – and not just because they're prone to click phishing e-mails or reuse passwords. It's because they're using apps your IT team doesn't even know about.

This is called Shadow IT, and it's one of the fastest-growing security risks for businesses today. Employees download and use unauthorized apps, software and cloud services – often with good intentions – but in reality they're creating massive security vulnerabilities without even realizing it.

### What Is Shadow IT?

Shadow IT refers to any technology used within a business that hasn't been approved, vetted or secured by the IT department. It can include things like:

- Employees using **personal Google**

- **Drives or Dropbox accounts** to store and share work documents.

- Teams signing up for **unapproved project management tools** like Trello, Asana or Slack without IT oversight.

- Workers installing **messaging apps like WhatsApp or Telegram** on company devices to communicate outside of official channels.

- Marketing teams using **AI content generators** or automation tools without verifying their security.

### Why Is Shadow IT So Dangerous?

Because IT teams have no visibility or control over these tools, they can't secure them – which means businesses are exposed to all kinds of threats.

- **Unsecured Data-Sharing** – Employees using personal cloud storage, e-mail accounts or messaging apps can accidentally leak sensitive company information, making it easier for cybercriminals to intercept.

- **No Security Updates** – IT departments regularly update approved software to patch vulnerabilities, but unauthorized apps often go unchecked, leaving systems open to hackers.

- **Compliance Violations** – If your business falls under regulations like HIPAA, GDPR or PCI-DSS, using unapproved apps can lead to noncompliance, fines and legal trouble.

- **Increased Phishing And Malware Risks** – Employees might unknowingly download malicious apps that appear legitimate but contain malware or ransomware.

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- **Account Hijacking** – Using unauthorized tools without multifactor authentication (MFA) can expose employee credentials, allowing hackers to gain access to company systems.

### Why Do Employees Use Shadow IT?

Most of the time, it's not malicious. Take, for example, the "Vapor" app scandal, an extensive ad fraud scheme recently uncovered by security researchers IAS Threat Labs.

In March, over 300 malicious applications were discovered on the Google Play Store, collectively downloaded more than 60 million times. These apps disguised themselves as utilities and health and lifestyle tools but were designed to display intrusive ads and, in some cases, phish for user credentials and credit card information. Once installed, they hid their icons and bombarded users with full-screen ads, rendering devices nearly inoperative. This incident highlights how easily unauthorized apps can infiltrate devices and compromise security.

But employees can also use unauthorized apps because:

- They find company-approved tools frustrating or outdated.

- They want to work faster and more efficiently.

- They don't realize the security risks involved.

- They think IT approval takes too long – so they take shortcuts.

Unfortunately, these shortcuts can cost your business BIG when a data breach happens.

### How To Stop Shadow IT Before It Hurts Your Business

You can't stop what you can't see, so tackling Shadow IT requires a proactive approach.

Here's how to get started:

### 1. Create An Approved Software List

Work with your IT team to establish a list of trusted, secure applications employees can use. Make sure this list is regularly updated with new, approved tools.

### 2. Restrict Unauthorized App Downloads

Set up device policies that prevent employees from installing unapproved software on company devices. If they need a tool, they should request IT approval first.

### 3. Educate Employees About The Risks

Employees need to understand that Shadow IT isn't just a productivity shortcut – it's a security risk. Regularly train your team on why unauthorized apps can put the business at risk.

### 4. Monitor Network Traffic For Unapproved Apps

IT teams should use network-monitoring tools to detect unauthorized software use and flag potential security threats before they become a problem.

### 5. Implement Strong Endpoint Security

Use endpoint detection and response (EDR) solutions to track software usage, prevent unauthorized access and detect any suspicious activity in real time.

### Don't Let Shadow IT Become A Security Nightmare

The best way to fight Shadow IT is to get ahead of it before it leads to a data breach or compliance disaster.

Want to know what unauthorized apps your employees are using right now? Start with a Network Security Assessment to identify vulnerabilities, flag security risks and help you lock down your business before it's too late.

## CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"I understand your concerns, but there's a chain of command. Have you spoken to the sheepdog?"

# CULTURE AND TRUST:

## *A $1M GROWTH FORMULA*

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE AT SANTRAC TECHNOLOGIES!

When it comes to entrepreneurship, sometimes your biggest obstacle is you—and getting out of your own way and empowering employees is the recipe for success. Here are a few tried-and-true entrepreneurial mindset shifts from other business owners that pushed them closer to success.

### The Biggest Entrepreneurial Challenge: Delegation

Learning how to step away—and get out of your own way—is one of the biggest lessons many entrepreneurs must learn. When you start a business, you're running everything. You're wearing all the hats. However, in order to grow, you have to face the fact that there's only so much time in a day. You simply don't have time to work in the trenches and scale the business.

Hiring good, capable people and trusting them enough to take tasks off your plate is critical to your business' success. After all, as the company's leader, it's important to strategically spend your time—not just stay busy. Delegate what you can, and focus on setting the vision and strategies that will keep your business moving forward.

### Shaping The Culture With A Family Dynamic

There are a few factors that are key to a healthy company culture. An open line of communication is one of the biggest. Listening to what your team needs—even if it's unconventional—and giving it a fair shot can make all the difference. Just be sure to clarify up front that if productivity or the quality of your deliverables slips, it'll be straight back to the way things were before.

If it works, your business has a thriving new dynamic, potentially increasing productivity and workplace satisfaction. But even if it doesn't, your team will feel heard, respected and like you've got their backs. And that makes all the difference when it comes to creating a strong, trust-based company culture.

If you're not sure where to go next, don't underestimate the value of picking up some books on creating a strong culture. Take advice from entrepreneurs who have been there, done that and begin incorporating the ideas you like best into your own business. After all, if it worked for them, it might just work for you.

### Focus On "Done", Not "Perfect"

From creating processes to marketing, things are better done than perfect. Perfectionism can seriously hold you back. Instead, come up with a plan and implement something. It doesn't have to be exactly right. You can always make tweaks along the way, but if you never take the leap and execute, you'll never get anywhere. So put the planning notebook down, and get implementing!

Entrepreneurship will never be the easy road, but with some essential shifts to your mindset and a great team around you, many challenges don't seem quite so insurmountable.

This year marks a major milestone for SanTrac Technologies — **20 years of delivering trusted IT services and solutions to businesses throughout Arizona.**

Founded in **2001** by **Abdullah Sanders**, and transitioning to a full-time operation in **2005**, SanTrac Technologies began with a clear mission: to provide small to mid-sized businesses with reliable IT support, strategic technology guidance, and top-tier cybersecurity protection.

Over the past two decades, our team has grown, our services have evolved, and our commitment to excellence has only deepened. We've built long-standing relationships with clients — some of whom have been with us since the very beginning. Whether we're safeguarding networks, implementing compliance standards, or troubleshooting IT challenges, one thing has always remained the same: **our clients are at the heart of everything we do.**

Here's what **Abdullah Sanders**, President of SanTrac Technologies, had to say about this milestone:

*"It's incredible to look back and see how far we've come — from setting up basic IT support to now being a trusted technology partner for growing companies across Arizona. I'm proud of our team, grateful for our clients, and excited for what the future holds."*

Thank you to everyone who's been a part of our journey. **Here's to the next 20 years of innovation, service, and success!**

# IS YOUR PRINTER THE BIGGEST SECURITY THREAT IN YOUR OFFICE?

If I asked you to name the biggest cybersecurity threats in your office, you'd probably say phishing e-mails, malware or weak passwords. But what if I told you that your office printer –yes, the one quietly humming in the corner –could be one of the biggest vulnerabilities in your entire network?

It sounds ridiculous, but hackers love printers. And most businesses don't realize just how much of a security risk they pose – until it's too late. In 2020, Cybernews ran what they called the "Printer Hack Experiment." Out of a sample of 50,000 devices, they successfully compromised 56% of the printers, directing them to print out a sheet on printer security. That's nearly 28,000 compromised devices – all because businesses overlooked this "harmless" piece of office equipment.

## WAIT, WHY TARGET PRINTERS?

Because printers are a goldmine of sensitive data. They process everything from payroll documents and contracts to confidential client information. And yet, most businesses leave them wide-open to attack. Here's what can happen when a hacker gains access to your printer:

• **Printers store sensitive data –** Every time you print, scan or copy a document, your printer keeps a digital copy. Many printers have built-in hard drives that store years' worth of documents, including payroll files, contracts and employee records. If a hacker gains access, they can steal or even reprint those files without your knowledge.

• **Default passwords are a hacker's dream –** Most printers come with default admin logins like "admin/admin" or "123456." Many businesses never change them, making it easy for cybercriminals to take control.

• **They're an open door to your network –**Printers are connected to your WiFi and company network. If compromised, they can be used as an entry point to install malware or ransomware, or steal data from other devices.

• **Print jobs can be intercepted –** If your print jobs aren't encrypted, hackers can intercept documents before they even reach the printer. That means confidential contracts, legal documents and even medical records could be exposed.

• **They can spy on your business –** Many modern printers have built-in storage and even scan-to-e-mail features. If a hacker compromises your device, they can remotely access scanned documents, e-mails and stored files.

• **Outdated firmware leaves the door wide-open –** Like any device, printers need security updates. But most businesses never update their printers' firmware, leaving them vulnerable to known exploitations.

• **Data mining from discarded printers –**Printers that were improperly disposed of can be a goldmine for cybercriminals. Residual data stored on discarded printers can be mined for sensitive information! This can result in potential security breaches. Printers need to have their storage wiped clean to avoid being vulnerable to data breaches and legal liabilities.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR PRINTERS FROM HACKERS

Now that you know printers can be hacked, here's what you need to do immediately:

**1. Change The Default Password –** If your printer still has the default login credentials, change them immediately. Use a strong, unique password like you would for your e-mail or bank account.

**2. Update Your Printer's Firmware –**Manufacturers release security patches for a reason. Log into your printer settings and check for updates or have your IT team do this for you.

**3. Encrypt Print Jobs –** Enable Secure Print and end-to-end encryption to prevent hackers from intercepting print jobs.

**4. Restrict Who Can Print –** Use access controls so only authorized employees can send print jobs. If your printer supports PIN codes, require them for sensitive print jobs. You can also add a guest option.

**5. Regularly Clear Stored Data –** Some printers let you manually delete stored print jobs. If yours has a hard drive, make sure it's encrypted, and if you replace a printer, wipe or destroy the hard drive before disposal.

**6. Put Your Printer Behind A Firewall –** Just like computers, printers should be protected by a firewall to prevent unauthorized access.

**7. Monitor Printer Activity –** If your IT team isn't already tracking printer logs, now is the time to start. Unusual print activity, remote access attempts or unauthorized users printing sensitive documents should be red flags.

## PRINTERS AREN'T JUST OFFICE EQUIPMENT – THEY'RE SECURITY RISKS

Most businesses don't take printer security seriously because, well, it's a printer. But cybercriminals know that businesses overlook these devices, making them an easy target.

If you're protecting your computers but ignoring your printers, you're leaving a huge hole in your cybersecurity defenses.

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