How to Succeed in Business (Security) Without Really Trying

When it comes to protecting your business, you're bombarded with advertising about risk and technology solutions that promise to solve all your problems. The reality is that most problems can be solved with just a little forethought and planning, and maybe a little help from the experts.

Step One: Identify your critical assets and tools.

Do you have a list somewhere of all the things you really need for your business? The first step in protecting your critical assets is knowing what they are. You'll eventually want to list all of your critical assets, but for now, start with listing just three for each category below.

What tools do you need to be open for business?
a.
b.
c.

How about vendors, suppliers, and business partners?
a.
b.
c.

Employees?
a.
b.
c.

Information?
a.
b.
c.

Step Two: Assess the impact.

For each item on the list, how would your business be affected if it were suddenly gone? The best approach is to literally imagine the situation – one fine Tuesday morning, this asset is suddenly no longer available to you.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST	Tools			Partners			Employees			Information		
	a.	b.	c.	a.	b.	c.	a.	b.	c.	a.	b.	c.
It's not a big deal.												
It's inconvenient but my business can function.												
I'm forced to close for a while but can recover.												
My business is closed forever.												

Step Three: Make a plan to cover your assets.

For each asset that has a major impact on your business, there's a way to mitigate the impact. Maybe you can eliminate the risk, maybe you can't, but having a plan you can rely on in the moment will pay off in reduced stress and improved response.

Think about the cost of *each asset* on your list. How fast could you replace it? *Can* you replace it? Do you have alternatives? Can they be obtained quickly?

For each asset on your list, complete the following checklist:

- ☐ I have an alternative available on hand.
- ☐ I can replace it quickly.
- ☐ I can implement a workaround.
- ☐ I have insurance to cover the costs.
- ☐ All of the above.
- ☐ None of the above.

Tip: If you checked "None of the above" for any of your critical assets, consider addressing this immediately.

Step Four: Test the plan.

If the best time to plan for an emergency is well before the emergency happens, the worst time to find out your plan has a problem is when you really need it.

So once you have a plan, *test the plan*. Gather the people who matter for your plan to work and walk through the steps. Does everyone understand it? Are all the pieces in place for this to work? Can anyone point to an issue that could be dealt with before the day it's needed?

Checklist: Testing the plan for each asset.

- ☐ The plan works without the missing piece it's designed to address.
- ☐ There are no critical components of this plan that don't have their own backup plan.
- ☐ The plan costs less than the emergency itself.

Once you've tested the plan and found its weaknesses, *revise the plan* and test it again.

Step Five: What don't I know?

You are the best person to decide what the critical failure points are for your business, whether those are key suppliers, essential tools, or physical locations. But when it comes to determining how those critical points can fail, we're all limited to our own knowledge and experience – which means we tend to over-prepare for the things we know are threats and be blindsided by the risks we didn't know about.

As with this checklist, sometimes all it takes to solve a problem is the right framework for thinking through the situation. Let us help you by providing the framework and the benefit of our experience solving these problems.

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