THE HD TECH WAY

Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably

IS YOUR BUSINESS GIVING AI COMPANY DATA?

There's a lot of excitement about artificial intelligence (AI) right now, and for good reason. Tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot are popping up everywhere. Businesses are using them to create content, respond to customers, write e-mails, summarize meetings and even assist with coding or spreadsheets.

AI can be a huge time-saver and productivity booster. But, like any powerful tool, if misused, it can open the door to serious problems – especially when it comes to your company's data security.

Even small businesses are at risk.

Here's The Problem

The issue isn't the technology itself. It's how people are using it. When employees copy and paste sensitive data into public AI tools, that information may be stored, analyzed or even used to train future models. That means confidential or regulated data could be exposed, without anyone realizing it.

In 2023, engineers at Samsung accidentally leaked internal source code into ChatGPT. It became such a significant privacy issue that the company banned the use of public AI tools altogether, as reported by *Tom's Hardware*.

Now picture the same thing happening in your office. An employee pastes client financials or medical data into ChatGPT to "get help summarizing," not knowing the risks. In seconds, private information is exposed.

A New Threat: Prompt Injection

Beyond accidental leaks, hackers are now exploiting a more sophisticated technique called prompt injection. They hide malicious instructions inside e-mails, transcripts, PDFs or even YouTube captions. When an AI tool is asked to process that content, it can be tricked into giving up sensitive data or doing something it shouldn't.

In short, the AI helps the attacker – without knowing it's being manipulated.

Why Small Businesses Are Vulnerable

Most small businesses aren't monitoring AI use internally. Employees adopt new tools on their own, often with good

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intentions but without clear guidance. Many assume AI tools are just smarter versions of Google.

They don't realize that what they paste could be stored permanently or seen by someone else.

And few companies have policies in place to manage AI usage or to train employees on what's safe to share.

What You Can Do Right Now

You don't need to ban AI from your business, but you do need to take control.

Here are four steps to get started:

1. Create an AI usage policy.

Define which tools are approved, what types of data should never be shared and who to go to with questions.

2. Educate your team.

Help your staff understand the risks of using public AI tools and how threats like prompt injection work.

3. Use secure platforms.

Encourage employees to stick with business-grade tools like Microsoft Copilot, which offer more control over data privacy and compliance.

4. Monitor AI use.

Track which tools are being used and consider blocking public AI platforms on company devices if needed.

The Bottom Line

AI is here to stay.

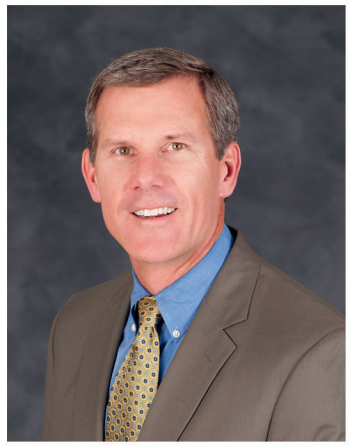
Businesses that learn how to use it safely will benefit, but those that ignore the risks are asking for trouble.

A few careless keystrokes can expose your business to hackers, compliance violations, or worse.

Operational Excellence:

Part 1: "What is Operational Excellence?"

By Thomas Willingham, The Hampton Group, www.thampton.com



Is your business the best it will ever be, or do you honestly recognize there are opportunities for improvement? Are you the type of organization that wants to do things better than your competition? Acknowledging you can improve your processes, products and services and establishing a **Culture of Continuous Improvement** is the first step towards **Operational Excellence.**

In the Olympics, a Gold Medal vs. no medal can be decided by thousandths of a second. The difference between a 0.300 hitter and a 0.200 hitter in baseball is connecting with the ball once more out of ten at-bats. Operational Excellence leverages the **"small change principle"** which suggests that small, incremental changes over time will compound and produce significant long-term improvements. If the swimmer can shave one thousandth of a second off their start or each turn, the aggregate improvement becomes significant.

The business world is ripe with opportunities to apply this principle. For example, UPS monitors driver activity and routes extensively to find small improvements which will drive delivery efficiencies and improve capacity. Other examples include:

- **Healthcare:** Reducing time for lab or imaging results will impact patient length of stay.
- **Service Organizations:** Accuracy of invoices will reduce complaints and follow up time.
- **Manufacturing:** Faster machine setups will increase capacity and throughput.

Change is hard…and can take time to fully permeate an organization. Senior management needs to commit to and support a systematic approach to increasing efficiencies, reducing waste and cost, and improving quality and customer satisfaction.

Over the next few months, we will share some of the tools and processes you can utilize to begin your transformation.

Contact us at info@hdtech.com if you have an article you think would be great to publish in The HD Tech Way.

BILLY BEANE

SHARES HIS WINNING DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS

A failed 2001 draft led former Oakland A's General Manager Billy Beane to overhaul how he managed talent—sparking a transformation that revolutionized baseball and inspired industries worldwide.

Using a data-driven strategy, Beane turned the low-budget Oakland A's into consistent playoff contenders. The team won seven American League Western Division titles and made 10 postseason appearances, all while operating with one of the lowest payrolls in Major League Baseball.

Beane's approach, known as the "Moneyball" philosophy, emphasized objective analysis over tradition and intuition. It gained widespread recognition through a best-selling book and Oscar-nominated film chronicling his unconventional path to success.

At a recent leadership event, Beane outlined how businesses can adopt similar principles to build high-performing teams despite resource limitations.

Make Data-Backed Decisions

"Baseball had been tracking stats since the 1800s, but none of it influenced decision-making," Beane said. "I turned running a team into a math equation." He replaced gut instinct and subjective scouting with analytics, reshaping how talent was evaluated.

Identify Undervalued Assets

"There's a championship team you can afford—you just need to find what others undervalue," Beane explained. He focused on on-base percentage, a metric more predictive of winning than traditional stats, uncovering overlooked players who delivered strong results.

Be Relentless With Execution

"You can't go back and forth," Beane said. "If you commit to data, you have to use it every time." His team stayed disciplined throughout each season, trusting the math to guide decisions rather than reacting emotionally to short-term outcomes.

Maximize The Middle

Rather than spending big on stars, Beane focused on building depth. "We couldn't afford top players, so we made sure we didn't have bad ones," he said. "A strong middle roster outperforms one with gaps."

Hire Differently

Beane recruited talent from outside traditional pipelines. One example was hiring a Harvard economics major as assistant GM—unusual in a role typically filled by former players. This fresh thinking helped the A's stay ahead.

Redefine Culture With Data

"If we did what everyone else was doing, our results would match our budget," Beane said. "We challenged the norm, used data to value skills differently and changed our outcomes."

Lead With Transparency

"Data explains decisions," he noted. "Even when you're not always right, clarity builds trust."

Level The Playing Field

Beane's philosophy proves that success isn't solely dictated by budget. With innovation, discipline and a data-first approach, even smaller organizations can compete with giants.

As he put it: "Data isn't an opinion. It's a fact."

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

Logitech MX Mechanical Wireless Keyboard

The Logitech MX Mechanical Wireless Keyboard delivers a premium, quiet typing experience with tactile mechanical switches for precise, low-noise feedback. Its low-profile, full-size layout enhances comfort and ergonomics, while smart backlit keys illuminate as your hands approach, adapting to lighting conditions. Seamlessly pair with up to three devices across multiple operating systems via Bluetooth or the Logi Bolt receiver. Customizable through Logi Options+, it supports efficient workflows, and its rechargeable battery lasts up to 15 days with lighting or 10 months without.

Celebrating 30 Years on Duty

What's on the Horizon?

For three decades, HD Tech has stood guard on the digital shores –protecting, guiding, and empowering our clients and end users through the ever-changing tides of technology. This milestone is built on your trust, your partnership, and your belief in our mission.

As we celebrate this incredible anniversary, we'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who's helped us stay afloat and thrive.Whether you've been with us since the early days or just joined the beach crew, your support means the world. Here's to the next wave of innovation, growth, and shared success!

WHY PHISHING ATTACKS SPIKE IN THE SUMMER

You and your employees may be getting back from vacation, but cybercriminals never take a day off. In fact, data shown in studies from vendors ProofPoint and Check Point indicate that phishing attempts actually spike in the summer months. Here's how to stay aware and stay protected.

Why The Increased Risk?

Attackers use your summer travel bug to their advantage by impersonating hotel and Airbnb websites, says Check Point Research. They've uncovered a sharp increase in cyberthreats related to the travel industry – specifically, a 55% increase in the creation of new website domains related to vacations in May 2025, compared to the same period last year. Of over 39,000 domains registered, one in every 21 was flagged as either malicious or suspicious.

August/September is also back-to-school time, which means an uptick in phishing attempts imitating legitimate university e-mails, targeting both students and staff.

While these threats might not affect your industry directly, there's always a chance that employees pursuing their master's degree or planning a vacation will check their personal e-mail on their work computer – and it takes only one wrong click for cyberattackers to have access to all of your business's data.

What To Do About It

While AI is making cybersecurity stronger and workflows smoother, it's also making phishing attacks more convincing. That's why it's important to train yourself and your team on what to look for, to avoid clicking on a malicious link.

Safety tips to prevent attacks:

- **Keep an eye out for shady e-mails.** Don't only check for misspellings and poorly formatted sentences in the body of e-mails; AI can write e-mails for attackers just like it can for you. Also examine the e-mail address of the sender and the text of the link itself, if visible, to make sure everything looks legitimate.
- **Double-check URLs.** Misspellings in the link text or unusual domain endings, like .today or .info, can be an indicator of an attack. Domain endings like these are often used in scam sites.
- **Visit websites directly.** It's always better to search for the website yourself, rather than clicking on links in any messages or e-mails.
- **Enable Multifactor Authentication (MFA).** Setting up MFA ensures that even if a breach does occur within your company, your login credentials will remain protected – and so will any data secured behind them.
- **Don't be afraid to pick up the phone.** If you have a 'feeling' something isn't right on a wire transfer or website link, take the time to call the person that emailed you to verify that information/request.
- **What is SAT?.** Security Awareness Training. This is a system that most companies run that educates and tests people on email and other cyber security issues. If you don't have a system like this ask your manager why not. The employees are the first and best line of defense!
- **Ask your MSP about Managed Detection and Response.** Endpoint/managed detection and response (EDR/MDR) software can monitor your desktops and mobile devices as well as your entire email system to detect/block phishing attempts, malicious downloads and alert your MSP immediately in the event of a breach, limiting your data's exposure.

Phishing attempts become more sophisticated every day, and AI is only speeding that process along. Because of this, it's essential to keep your team well-informed of the risks; knowledge is the best defense against phishing attacks. Stay informed and stay safe!