

THE HD TECH WAY

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

Your monthly newsletter,
written for humans not geeks.

REFINED CYBER THREATS...

...ARE HERE



Prepare your business for more refined cyberthreats.

Cybercriminals aren't simply causing chaos anymore.

They're getting smarter, more organized, and much better at finding weak spots in businesses of every size.

And while it sounds worrying, understanding what's happening is the first step to protecting your business.

One big change we're seeing is a shift from traditional ransomware to something far more damaging: Data theft and extortion.

Instead of locking your systems and asking for money, attackers are now

breaking in, quietly stealing sensitive files, and threatening to publish them unless you pay up.

This can include anything from financial records to customer details.

And because privacy laws are stricter than ever, the pressure on victims is huge.

Another trend is criminals taking advantage of unpatched devices. That's equipment that hasn't been updated. This could be a file sharing tool, a system that connects your office to the internet, or something else.

When these devices are out of date, they have gaps that attackers can slip through. In some cases, a single unpatched device has allowed criminals to break into dozens of businesses at once.

We're also seeing more attacks on virtual servers (the systems many businesses use to run their IT behind the scenes). If attackers get into these, they can cause serious disruption very quickly.

And to make matters worse, modern cybercriminals are getting better at hiding. They often use everyday tools already built into Windows or other systems to blend in, making it harder for security software to spot them.

It can sound overwhelming, but here's the good news: You can protect your business from these newer, more refined threats. You just need the right approach.

The strongest businesses are focusing on doing the basics well.

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That means keeping systems updated, watching for unusual activity, and having good visibility of what's happening across all devices (not just the obvious ones).

It also means knowing what you'd do if something went wrong. A clear incident response plan can dramatically reduce damage and downtime.

Cyberthreats may be getting more sophisticated, but your defenses can stay one step ahead with the right preparation. And for that, you need the right people supporting you.

If you'd like help understanding your risks or strengthening your cyber protection, we're here whenever you need us.



INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves."

Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady of the United States.

NEW TO

Microsoft

Agent Mode makes Excel easier to use



Microsoft has added a powerful new feature to Excel called Agent Mode. It changes how Copilot works with your spreadsheets.

Instead of answering questions like a chatbot, Agent Mode can carry out multi-step tasks for you inside Excel itself.

That means it can analyze large sets of data, fix broken formulas, create new ones, and even build charts that automatically update as your data changes.

You can see and check each step it takes, so nothing happens behind the scenes without you knowing.

Agent Mode is available now in Microsoft Excel on the web for businesses using Microsoft 365 Copilot, with Windows and Mac versions coming soon.



ANSWERS BY: TOM HERMSTAD, YOUR CYBER LIFEGUARD

Q: How often should we review our IT setup?

- Answer: **At least once a year.** Your business changes, and your technology should change with it.

Q: How soon should we remove old employee accounts?

- Answer: **As soon as someone leaves the business.** Unused accounts are easy entry points for attackers. If someone doesn't work for you anymore, their access shouldn't exist.

Q: Can cyber insurance replace good security?

- Answer: **NO.** Insurance helps with recovery, but not prevention or preparation. Insurers expect security basics (at the very least) to be in place.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

PART 6: CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION TO SUSTAIN EXCELLENCE



Over the past several months, we've explored the foundational tools of Operational Excellence:

- Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle
- Value Stream Mapping (VSM) and waste identification
- Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control (DMAIC) Framework
- Kaizen Blitz Approach

Each of these tools can deliver meaningful results. However, without a cultural shift that embraces continuous improvement, those gains often fade—dismissed as just another “management initiative.” Sustaining excellence requires more than projects. It requires leadership behaviors that reinforce improvement every day.

In, *In Search of Excellence* (1982), management gurus Tom Peters and Robert Waterman introduced the concept of “**management by walking around**”—encouraging leaders to leave their offices and engage directly with frontline employees. Toyota formalized this philosophy through “**Gemba Walks**, where *Gemba* means “the real place”—the location where value is actually created.

But effective **Gemba Walks** are not casual or unstructured. Toyota applied the PDCA cycle to leadership itself, creating a disciplined approach to cultural transformation.

A Structured Approach to Gemba Walks

- 1. Drive Leadership Commitment:**
Establish a regular schedule—weekly or monthly—to demonstrate consistency and reinforce that operational excellence is a priority.
- 2. Foster Employee Empowerment:**
Clearly explain the purpose of the walk. Ask employees about inefficiencies, obstacles and waste. Listen actively.
- 3. Integrate Improvement Methodologies:** Identify areas for training and collaborate on which tools—VSM, DMAIC, root cause analysis—can address the areas discussed.
- 4. Ensure Strategic Alignment:**
Reinforce company goals and customer commitments. Help employees see how their work directly creates value.
- 5. Provide Continuous Feedback:**
Before leaving, agree on next steps and measurable progress. Follow up during the next walk to maintain accountability and momentum.

Operational excellence becomes sustainable when leaders model curiosity, accountability, and engagement. The question isn't whether you have the right tools. It's whether your culture reinforces them. The first step starts with you. **Step onto the floor. Ask questions. Listen. Lead.**

GADGET OF THE MONTH

CZUR ET24 Pro Professional Book Scanner

Still work with a lot of paper? the CZUR ET24 Pro is here to help.

It's a fast, dedicated book scanner that captures clean, searchable digital files—even from curved or bound pages that phone apps and flatbeds struggle with.

Ideal for manuals, contracts, reference books, and archival documents you can't take apart.

A simple, efficient way to preserve important paper materials.

\$649 from [Amazon](#).



Technology Update

Windows 11 gets Faster, Friendlier, & Smarter

Microsoft is working on a big upgrade to Windows 11. It will make new laptops faster, more efficient, and better at using AI, with longer battery life too.

They're also improving everyday features, like a cleaner dark mode and a taskbar calendar that shows your upcoming meetings.

And in Microsoft Teams, new updates will make hybrid working easier by automatically recognizing when you're in the office.

PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM DIGITAL FRAUD

IMPORTANT

1. Scams aren't what they used to be.

They're not always obvious, they're not always clumsy, and they don't always come with spelling mistakes or odd graphics.

Today's digital fraud is faster, smarter, and often created with the help of AI. Which means it's becoming harder for even the most careful people to spot.

And it doesn't matter whether it's Christmas, summer, or an ordinary Tuesday. Scammers don't take days off.

That's why it's so important for every business, no matter the size, to understand the basics of staying safe online.

2. Scammers try to rush you.

They love creating pressure. Countdown timers, "urgent" warnings, messages that say your account will close in minutes, or delivery alerts claiming you must act right now.

The moment they make you panic, your guard drops. That's why one of the most powerful habits you can build is slowing down! Stop. Think. Verify.

If anything makes you feel rushed or stressed, pause immediately. Then check what's going on using a trusted source.

Don't click the link inside a suspicious email or text. Instead, visit the company's official website or call their real phone number.

3. Scammers often use tiny tricks, like slightly misspelled website addresses, to fool you into thinking they're legitimate.

It also helps to know what scammers are usually after. Most of the time, they want your money or your data. That's why so many fake messages claim there's a problem with your bank, a missed delivery, a locked account, or a prize waiting for you.

Real companies won't ask for your full bank details, passwords, or remote access over email, text, or unexpected phone calls. If someone does, it's a scam.

But awareness isn't enough on its own. You also need good defenses in place.

Thankfully, modern tools make this much easier.

Using an authenticator app (for multi-factor authentication) adds an extra lock to your accounts, even if someone steals your password.

A password manager can generate strong passwords for you and remember them safely, so you don't have to reuse simple ones.

And keeping your software updated means you're closing known weaknesses that scammers love to exploit.

Another smart habit is regularly checking which apps and devices have access to your accounts. Especially if you use Google or Facebook to sign in to other services. Sometimes old devices or unused apps stay connected without you realizing, and that's a risk worth clearing up.

4. There's one final step many people forget: Reporting Scams.

It's not just for your benefit. It helps protect everyone else too. Every report helps experts take down dangerous websites and warn others.

Digital fraud is getting more advanced, but the good news is that simple, consistent habits can keep you and your business safe. Stay calm, stay cautious, and stay informed.

Need help with that?
Get in touch.