**IT Security Assessments**

What you don’t know could hurt you.

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How well do you know the security state of your IT infrastructure?

Depending on where you live, financial or healthcare organizations may be required to provide compliance reports to government agencies on the security posture of their IT infrastructure and provide proof of how they are handling personal identifiable information (PII) and/or medical records (HIPPA). Non-compliance could result in fines and even jail time.

Large IT enterprises are looking at their IT maturity progression with the understanding that IT security is the foundation of any IT maturity model. Setting assessment baselines and conducting annual security assessment is now a part of the way they maintain a high level of IT security in the evolving security threat landscape. IT Directors and Managers are looking for ways to reduce their IT security cost while increasing their IT maturity, improving returns on IT investments.

Small to mid-sized businesses are the most vulnerable when it comes to understanding their security state. Similar to large organizations, an IT security issue could impact their business productivity, revenue, customer trust, market status and company brand due to a lack of responsibility to secure their IT infrastructure. The issue could be so severe for a small business that their whole business could be lost. Small to mid-sized businesses have limited resources and funds to purchase complex reporting systems to help them meet the reporting needs of the business which adds additional overhead to the already taxed IT administrator.

Many small to mid-sized companies do not have dedicated security personnel and rely on their IT administrator to understand IT security. A security assessment needs to be easy to conduct but comprehensive. It should look for security vulnerabilities from the networking perimeter down to the data. It should help the organization identify security issues with laptops and other mobile devices since they also access corporate resources.

Gaining access to proven and trusted security guidance is another issue that plagues small to mid-sized businesses. Understanding where to go and how to get information to help them solve their security issues is a daunting task and adds another level of overhead for the small to mid-size business IT Administrator.

Recently, Microsoft released a new, free tool to help small to medium sized businesses in the discovery of their IT security posture called the Microsoft Security Assessment Tool (MSAT). MSAT is an easy to use tool that provides a 250 question IT security assessment focused on 4 primary areas: People, Process, Operations and Technology.

MSAT can assist companies sustain their security posture through periodic assessments after their initial assessment baseline is created. It provides organizations with a list of proven recommendations which can be used to help prioritize, budget and schedule remediation activities.

The Microsoft Security Assessment Tool provides IT personnel with current and self explanatory security guidance that is aligned to the MSAT report recommendations to facilitate execution against urgent remediation activities.

To learn more about Microsoft’s Security Assessment Tool and download it for free visit,

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/msat>