

## **Password Protection**

If you think only big corporations and financial institutions need to worry about data security breaches, think again. Small businesses also have sensitive data to protect. Passwords provide an important layer of protection, as long as they are used effectively.

### **Password Protocols**

The rules for creating a strong password are simple. It should have seven or more characters and contain a mix of numbers, symbols, and uppercase and lowercase letters. Never use your name, a pet's name, your address, your phone number, or your birthday.

Unfortunately, creating passwords is the easy part. Ensuring their effectiveness is more complicated.

- The same password should not be used to log in to more than one program, website, etc.
- Passwords should be changed frequently (at least every 90 days, preferably more often).
- Keeping a physical list of passwords, written or electronic, is a security risk.
- Passwords should *never* be shared.

You can increase internal security by training your staff to follow proper password protocol. Draft a list of dos and don'ts for your employee handbook and distribute copies as a reminder.

### **High-tech Solutions**

The growing need for more and more complex passwords has given rise to the development of software and technology solutions, such as one-time password tokens, enterprise sign-on systems, and smart cards, to name a few. The level of sensitivity of your data is a key factor in determining the level of security you need.

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