

Temp workers are the weakest link

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Organisations risk email and internet abuse by uniformed short-term staff

09/06/03, UK: Firms employing high numbers of temporary and short-term staff are putting themselves at a high risk of an internet or email security breach because newcomers are not made aware of security policies, warned corporate compliance specialists PolicyMatter today.

According to PolicyMatter, many UK organisations are not sufficiently geared up to ensure that temp workers are made aware of expected behaviour when using the company's email and internet systems. PolicyMatter marketing manager, Matt Fisher, explained: "With the majority of firms deploying policy through an employee handbook, or ad hoc hard copies, it's a good bet that most temporary workers are never made aware of the company's policies on internet and email use. Temps, who are often hired as a short-term emergency measure, are frequently let loose on sensitive applications with no prior instruction."

But failing to ensure that workers are fully aware of their obligations can be a recipe for disaster. Not only are uninformed staff more likely to inadvertently cause a security breach, but if the employer cannot prove that an individual was made aware of corporate policy, it can be extremely difficult to limit the organisation's legal liability.

The solution, according to Fisher, is to ensure that all temporary workers are made aware of their expected behaviour before they are allowed to access sensitive systems, such as email: "This sounds burdensome, but it needn't be. It is possible to inform employees of relevant policies as soon as they start up their PCs. Within 10 minutes they could have read and signed up to an email policy – giving the employer peace of mind that their systems are being used properly."

PolicyMatter is a solution for the creation, deployment and management of all types of corporate policy. The software framework deploys policy statements directly to the employee's desktop, where it cannot be ignored or deleted. By attaching multiple-choice questions to the policy, it is easy to assess whether the employee has understood the policy or not – and whether access to certain applications should be granted. Finally, the employee is required to electronically 'sign' a binding agreement with the employer that they will act in accordance with the policy they have just read.

PolicyMatter costs from £5.00 per user and more information is available from www.policymatter.com.

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