SECURE INNOVATION

QUICK START GUIDE

Security is a necessary investment for a tech startup. It will evolve as your company grows, but laying strong foundations from the start will help to protect your business from the get-go. Putting protections in place now will save you time and stress further down the line and will give you peace of mind that your valuable assets are secure.

We know that startup business owners often have limited time, which is why we've produced a concise quick start guide to help you implement better security measures as quickly and as simply as possible.

This guidance is a valuable starting point for security in your business. Remember, strong security measures can protect your competitive advantage, and make your company more attractive to investors and customers.

Why does your innovation need to be protected?

The UK has a strong record in research and development and a vibrant startup ecosystem. This can make innovative UK companies attractive targets for:

State actors

- Seeking to fast-track their technological capability, undermining your competitive edge
- Looking to target, harm, and repress their own people to prevent dissent or political opposition, damaging your reputation
- Aiming to increase their military advantage over other countries, risking our national security

Competitors

- Seeking commercial advantage.

Criminals

- Looking to profit from companies with weak security.

Taking the right steps now will enable you to embed good security practices into your business, protecting you from those who might target your technology.

1 APPOINTING SECURITY LEADERSHIP

2 IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY ASSETS

3 ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS FOR POTENTIAL RISKS

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More detailed guidance on how to keep your business secure can be found here

National Protective Security Authority

National Cyber Security Centre

1. APPOINTING SECURITY LEADERSHIP

WHAT

Appoint a dedicated security lead at board level who is responsible for factoring security into business decisions and initiating conversations about security across the company.

WHY

- Having a senior representative take ownership of security means it will be factored into all future business decisions, giving you reassurance that it is always top of mind and won't slip to the bottom of the priority list.
- Starting a conversation about security right from the start is a great step towards creating a positive security culture that will evolve as your business grows and will help your team to learn from any security incidents should they arise.

HOW

- Establish responsibilities that are specific to your business, then decide who within your company would be the most appropriate person to hold the position.
- Make sure your dedicated representative understands the true importance of strong security practices so they can be your security advocate and communicate effectively to the wider business.

1

IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY ASSETS
2

ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS FOR POTENTIAL RISKS
3

National Protective Security Authority
National Cyber Security Centre

APPOINTING SECURITY LEADERSHIP

1

2. IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY ASSETS

WHAT

Conduct an audit of your assets to identify those which are critical to your business' success to ensure appropriate protective measures can be put in place.

WHY

- Technology companies and particularly startups will have assets that might be targeted by third parties, such as competitors, criminals, and state actors.
- Third parties with access to your key assets could use them to gain commercial advantage at the cost of your company's profitability and chances of success.
- Identifying your critical assets early on will help you to prioritise your resources when it comes to security planning.

HOW

- All organisational assets and systems that hold commercially sensitive information should be identified. This might be physical items, data or personnel with specific knowledge and skills. Categorise your assets in relation to how important they are in supporting your business. Think about how your business would be affected if this asset was lost or destroyed.
- Information should be assessed in a similar way. Think of the impact on your business if certain documents or data were lost or destroyed.

2

ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS FOR POTENTIAL RISKS

3

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APPOINTING SECURITY LEADERSHIP

1

IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY ASSETS

2

3. ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS FOR SECURITY RISKS

WHAT

Make security part of your business risk assessment. Security risks should be assessed based on their level of threat to the business, and any existing protective measures should be documented.

WHY

- Documenting and managing risks is essential to effective decision-making in your business.
- Assessing these risks in relation to the likelihood of them occurring and how impactful these would be will ensure that prevention strategies are being implemented.
- A detailed risk register will reduce the likelihood of a breach and inform your counter strategies, minimising the potential damage caused by a third party.

HOW

- Start by identifying any third parties that might pose a threat to your business. These may be national security threats, such as state actors, or more local and specific threats such as competitors and criminals.
- Risks should be identified as threats or vulnerabilities aligned to assets. This should include the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact to the organisation and/or third parties.
- The identified risks, threats, and any protective measures that are currently in place should form part of your business' risk register. This will inform new protection strategies as your business evolves. The more detailed the risk register, the more useful the risk assessment will be.

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