THE CYBERSIDE BRIEF

Insider Wisdom from 20 Years of IT Defense for Your Business Prosperity and Security

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This monthly publication is provided courtesy of Patrick Birt, President of AdRem Systems Corporation.

HOW TO PUT GENERATIVE AI TO WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS

20 ANNIVERSARY

The rapid evolution of AI over the past year has been nothing short of revolutionary, particularly generative AI – technologies that generate text, images, video, 3-D models and even code – which saw a breakout year in 2023. In ChatGPT's first month, it amassed 57 million users, making it the fastest-growing consumer application in history, according to research from investment bank UBS.

Despite its popularity, there's an undercurrent of uncertainty among some business leaders. SMB leaders are asking big questions: What's the real deal with AI (beyond all the buzz)? How do I actually get it to work for my business? How do we use this responsibly and keep our customers' data safe?

The key to navigating these questions is all about experimenting with AI, focusing on the big wins it can bring to the table and learning best practices for using the technology responsibly.

What AI Can Do For Your Business

Of businesses using the generative AI platform ChatGPT today, one in four have already saved more than $75,000. That's according to a 2023 survey by ResumeBuilder, which also found that 49% of companies are already using ChatGPT and that an additional 30% plan to use it in the future.

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude and DALL·E are popular because they're affordable (subscriptions run around $20 per user/month) and effective. Generative AI's versatility allows it to take on many valuable roles, like whipping up content. Businesses save a lot of money creating engaging content for their audience without paying more for ads or agencies. AI can also quickly examine market trends and crank out reports, cutting down on research and paperwork

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costs so leaders can spend more time on higher-value activities.

More ways AI can go to work for you:

- **Content Assistant:** Tools like ChatGPT and Claude can create marketing materials, blog posts and social media content, ensuring a consistent brand voice and tone across all channels. They can also analyze thousands of online resources to craft the perfect job description and write SOPs, proposals, contracts and leases.

- **Get To The Point:** Generative AI can distill lengthy documents, articles and e-mails into concise summaries, making it easier to grasp key points quickly.

- **Personalize Your Marketing:** Generate tailored e-mail marketing campaigns or personalized product recommendations to enhance customer engagement and increase sales.

- **Product Discovery And Innovation:** Leverage AI to analyze customer feedback and market trends for new product ideas or improvements, speeding up innovation.

- **Data Analyst:** Employ AI for deep data analysis, uncovering insights into customer behavior, operational efficiencies and market opportunities.

- **Automate Routine Tasks:** From scheduling to invoicing, AI can automate repetitive, time-consuming tasks, such as drafting meeting summaries or generating reports, allowing teams to focus on strategic work.

AI Best Practices

While AI can dramatically enhance efficiency and creativity, there are best practices to ensure its use is both effective and ethical:

- **Never Share Sensitive Information:** To protect privacy, avoid using personally identifiable information (PII) or protected health information (PHI) with AI tools. Assume anything that you input into ChatGPT is public information.

- **Verify and Review:** AI is a powerful tool, but it's not infallible. It can sometimes inherit biases from training data or generate fabricated or wrong answers. Always review its outputs as you would a human co-worker's work.

- **Experiment:** The best way to understand AI's potential is to experiment. Start small, like using ChatGPT prompts to write a social media post. As you gain confidence, integrate generative AI in places where it can add the most value, like automating routine tasks, enhancing creative processes or improving decision-making with data analysis.

The Consequences Of Ignoring AI

AI isn't coming – it's arrived. Driven by billions in investment and some of the brightest minds on the planet, it's reshaping the business landscape in ways we're only beginning to understand. Choosing not to integrate AI into business operations would be like refusing to use e-mail in the 1990s. Without it, you might soon find yourself in a world you don't know how to work in.

Instead of viewing AI as a looming threat, see it as an opportunity to tackle old problems with novel solutions. Yes, AI is changing the business playbook, but it's also empowering us to deliver extraordinary value to our customers in new ways, dream bigger and achieve more.

Compliancy Navigator

Get Ready
FOR CMMC REQUIREMENTS NOW

Anyone offering a sure-shot solution to all your Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) woes is trying to pull a fast one on you. The CMMC is a comprehensive move by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) that involves many moving parts and will take years to implement fully.

We have highlighted some crucial aspects you should immediately focus on to remain eligible and in good standing with current regulatory requirements. You'll also find some strategic steps that you should implement throughout your business to be ready for the enhanced cybersecurity practices required under the new CMMC 2.0 framework.

THE DFARS INTERIM RULE

The Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) Interim Rule was established because new requirements under CMMC 2.0 will not be fully rolled out for years. The Interim Rule immediately establishes the DoD Assessment Methodology to get a measure of a contractor's implementation of the existing cybersecurity requirements. According to DFARS Case 2019-D041, effective November 30, 2020, the Interim Rule requires all DoD prime contractors and the estimated 300,000+ DIB supply chain members to perform a minimal self-assessment of their current cybersecurity posture and document their results in the Supplier Performance Risk System (SPRS) at https://www.sprs.csd.disa.mil/.

All contractors and subcontractors with existing contractual obligations related to the NIST SP 800-171 framework standards must complete a self-assessment using the standard assessment and scoring methodology to assess their organization's implementation of the NIST requirements. Contractors must then upload the assessment to the federal Supplier Performance Risk System (SPRS) database to qualify for new or renewed defense contracts.

To help you better understand the DFARS Interim Rule requirements, you must familiarize your organization with these critical components:

- **Self-assessment:** This assessment involves evaluating the implementation of 110 different cybersecurity controls defined by the NIST SP 800-171. Organizations must perform self-assessments using the new NIST (SP) 800-171 DoD Assessment Methodology.
- **Scoring methodology:** The scoring methodology begins with a "perfect" score of 110 for each NIST (SP) 800-171 control that the organization must implement. Weighted points are deducted for every control that has not been implemented. Each deduction holds a point value ranging from one to five based on the individual control's importance. No credit is given for partially implemented controls, except for multifactor authentication and FIPS-validated encryption.
- **Submission of the score:** You must upload the self-assessment score to a governmental Supplier Performance Risk System (SPRS) database within 30 days of completing the assessment to qualify for new contracts and contract renewals.
- **System Security Plan (SSP):** This is a required document that contains thorough details of implemented NIST 800-171 controls, such as operational procedures, organizational policies and technical components.
- **Plan of Action and Milestones (POA&M):** If you have not fully implemented a control, you must provide a POA&M document as an appendix explaining how you plan to address the deficiencies and when you will complete the implementation. You can post updated scores once previously deficient controls have been addressed and remediated.

Eligibility to win new federal or defense contracts issued includes requirements with respect to the completion of the Interim Rule standards.
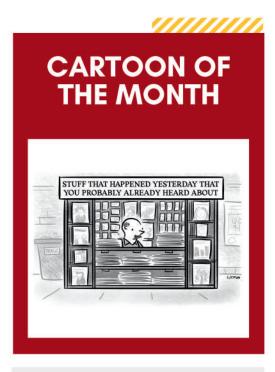
IMMEDIATE STEPS TO TAKE

If you haven't already, your organization should prepare to conduct a thorough and accurate self-assessment to measure your cybersecurity posture score to ensure you are adequately securing and protecting your information assets. This is the first step in preparing for the enhanced cybersecurity requirements and certification process rolling out under the new CMMC framework. To ensure you don't miss out on new contracts or renewal opportunities, you must start preparing and implementing the necessary security controls and policies now.

Here are some steps you need to take to prepare your organization right away:

- **Establish a Systems Security Plan (SSP):** Building an SSP will help you map your network and information assets (hardware and software) and will mark the beginning of knowing how many controls (out of the 110) your business has implemented so far.
- **Assess how you deal with controlled unclassified information (CUI):** Ask yourself questions on how your business manages CUI — who accesses it, where CUI lives, how it's shared, etc.
- **Conduct a DoD self-assessment:** You can utilize a tool to conduct a self-assessment and obtain a score as per the NIST (SP) 800-171 DoD Assessment Methodology.
- **Build a POA&M document:** In this document, list all the steps you will take to mitigate the deficiencies that prevented you from getting a perfect score of 110 (along with the estimated completion time).

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

STUFF THAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY THAT YOU PROBABLY ALREADY HEARD ABOUT

- **Upload the self-assessment score:** Don't forget to upload the results to the governmental SPRS database within 30 days of conducting the self-assessment.
- **Document everything:** This step is non-negotiable. Ensure you document every crucial aspect of your journey — from preparation to self-assessment and remediation.

The enhanced cybersecurity policies, controls and standards within the CMMC regulatory framework are vast and complex, making understanding your obligations and how or where to get started a daunting and overwhelming task.

Partnering with a specialist can help make the entire process less stressful and time-consuming. As a compliance consultant, we can provide you with the cybersecurity expertise to identity the specialized tools you need to prepare for and implement the cybersecurity controls necessary to satisfy and validate compliance with the DFARS Interim Rule and new CMMC 2.0 requirements.

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theSherpa.us | 571-360-3926 | info@thesherpa.co

YOUR PHOTOS ARE MORE REVEALING THAN YOU THINK!

Did you know that when you send someone a photo from your smartphone, you might be sharing information such as when, where and how the photo was taken? If that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can turn this feature off.

On an iPhone, open the photo, tap the share icon, then "Options." Switch off "Location," then tap "Done." You can also stop location tracking altogether in Settings > Privacy & Security > Location Services. Scroll to "Camera" and toggle to "Never." On an Android, click the photo you want to send, tap "Details" (look for a three-dot menu) and select "Remove location data."

Web Concierge

ENHANCE YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS FOOTPRINT WITH LOCAL SEO

Approximately 63% of the global population spend significant amounts of time online. That's why optimizing your online presence is crucial for capturing local customers.

Local SEO or Search Engine Optimization ensures your business appears in local search results, attracting nearby clients who are ready to convert. Here are a few strategies to enhance your local SEO and establish a strong online business footprint:

Claim and Optimize Your Google My Business Listing: Google My Business (GMB) is a powerful tool for local businesses. Claim your listing and ensure all information is accurate and up-to-date. Add photos, business hours, and a compelling business description. Regularly update your GMB profile to reflect any changes or promotions.

Consistent NAP Information: Consistency is key in local SEO. Ensure your NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) details are identical across all online platforms, including your website, social media profiles, and local directories. Inconsistent information can confuse search engines and potential customers, negatively impacting your local search rankings.

Gather Positive Customer Reviews: Encourage satisfied customers to leave positive reviews on your GMB listing and other review sites like Yelp and TripAdvisor. Reviews not only influence potential customers but also play a significant role in local search algorithms. Responding to reviews, whether positive or negative, shows that you value customer feedback and are committed to improving their experience.

Use Local Keywords: Incorporate local keywords naturally into your website content, meta descriptions, and headers. For example, if you run a bakery in Austin, use phrases like "Austin bakery," "best cakes in Austin," or "Austin cupcake shop." This helps search engines understand your business's relevance to local searches.

By implementing these local SEO strategies, you can significantly enhance your online business footprint. Local SEO not only boosts your visibility in search results but also drives more targeted traffic to your website, leading to higher conversions and increased sales. Stay ahead of the competition by continually refining your local SEO practices and staying updated with the latest trends in digital marketing.

TALENT, INNOVATION AND RELATIONSHIPS:
THE FORMULA FOR THRIVING BUSINESSES INSPIRED BY MARCUS LEMONIS

Something is always shaking up the business world, whether it's Covid-19, revolutionary tech advancements like AI or a financial recession. An unprepared business leader – never ahead of the game, emotionally exhausted, financially stressed and paralyzed by fear – may react to these disruptions. However, a leader focused on cultivating good habits can build resilience and agility into their core operations.

Marcus Lemonis – esteemed titan of industry, philanthropist, brain behind the success of Camping World and Good Sam Enterprises   and star of CNBC's The Profit – recently   shared his philosophy on leadership and resilience at an industry conference. Drawing from Lemonis's insights, we delve into actionable ideas that leaders can use to confidently navigate any challenge.

1. Create Good Talent

The key to any successful business is employing good people. However, many industries, from health care to education, are experiencing labor gaps. Leaders are left wondering where their next good hire will come from. Will they hire young people without experience or recruit talent from other companies?

Lemonis says if you recruit from other people, you can expect them to do the same. "We create this revolving door of people changing all the time for the next best offer. The labor market knows that, and they don't care if they bounce around," he says. "The problem for our business and our client relationships is that bouncing around creates insecurity for our customers…it creates a trust problem."

Lemonis's advice: Think about how you can create new talent in your industry. Write job descriptions that include not just technical skills but the type of person you're looking for, their characteristics, discipline DNA and EQ.

Then, think about how to put them through the training modules necessary to execute your business plan.

"If we don't cultivate new entries into our space, new people who can come in and add to the supply of our labor, all we're going to do is play merry-go-round, and the prices are going to go up," Lemonis adds.

2. Diversify

Six years ago, you probably had an idea that was the cusp of innovation – and then everybody caught up. Lemonis encourages leaders to ask their teams what the new idea of the day is. What's the latest concept that you can bring to your clients? How can you stack new ideas onto your current revenue streams?

Brainstorming new ideas is critical to survival, "because somewhere else, there's a less sophisticated, less collaborated room… whiteboarding what new things they can come up with to beat you," he says.

3. Take Care of Your Home And Relationships

During Covid restrictions, Lemonis was reminded of the power of being close to the people he cares about and focusing on relationships. He encourages us to care for what matters most: our homes and families. If those aren't healthy, your business will feel the effects.

Lemonis says, "The health of your home and the health of your relationships in your home are in direct correlation with the health of everything else in your life."

Another challenge will eventually rock the business world. Take Lemonis's advice and focus on creating new talent, fostering innovative thinking and nurturing relationships if you hope to face this next challenge with greater resilience.

AR AdRem® SYSTEMS

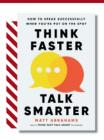# 4 POPULAR SCAMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

OUR MISSION

To apply our 20 Year Legacy of knowledge and innovation, to defend Critical IT Networks, and encourage a more secure nation of Tomorrow by delivering Today's technologies with respected, trusted, and proven individuals.

THINK FASTER, TALK SMARTER:
How To Speak Successfully When You're Put On The Spot

By Matt Abrahams

Think Faster, Talk Smarter by Matt Abrahams is a lifeline for anyone who's ever been tongue-tied in moments that count, like work presentations, pitches or at a dinner party. Abrahams, a Stanford lecturer and communication guru, offers a trove of actionable advice for mastering the art of impromptu speaking. With science-backed strategies to tackle anxiety and make your words count, this book is packed with real-world examples, making it both relatable and practical. Whether for professional growth or personal confidence, it's an essential read for navigating life's unplanned speaking moments with grace and impact.

Keeping up with cybercriminals is like trying to nail jelly to the wall. Just as you think you're up to speed, a new scam hits the headlines. Using new tech innovations like AI, scammers are getting much better at impersonating banks, health care providers and…us. This year has been no exception, with a slew of fresh scams hitting cell phones and bank accounts everywhere. Here are four scams to watch out for this year.

1. Phony Cell Provider E-mails

Increasingly, cybercriminals are taking advantage of cell service outages to scam customers. It's happening all over the US with AT&T customers, who, after an outage, receive bogus e-mails offering refunds or credits.

How to avoid it: Never click on links or payment instructions in an e-mail. Always verify that any communication from a provider is coming from an official domain, like @att.com, or call AT&T directly using their official number or website.

2. Grandparent Scams

Grandparent scams have been around for a while, but the FCC reports more advanced versions involving impersonators or AI "clones" using a loved one's voice (usually a grandchild) and sometimes a spoofed caller ID. The caller claims to be a loved one who's in jail or has been in an accident. Grandparents are often given a phony case number and are instructed to call an attorney. If they do, a series of other criminals conspire to trick them out of thousands of dollars.

How to avoid it: If you receive an urgent call like that, call your loved one directly to verify that they are safe. If they don't answer, call other family members to see if they can verify the situation. Remember, the criminals will try to convince you to keep it a secret – don't.

3. Check "Cooking"

Banks reported nearly 700,000 instances of check fraud in 2022, according to reporting by Associated Press. We've talked about criminals stealing checks from mailboxes, but recently they've started taking pictures of checks instead. Then they use off-the-shelf digital tools to make counterfeit checks, deposit the digital one using a mobile banking app or sell the checks online.

How to avoid it: Use your credit card as much as possible. When a paper check is unavoidable, skip your mailbox and take it directly to the post office.

4. Home Improvement Scams

In 2023, a study by JW Surety Bonds reported that one in 10 Americans had been a victim of a contractor scam, losing an average of $2,500. These scammers often demand up-front payments or deposits and then fail to complete the work, deliver substandard results or disappear altogether, leaving homeowners out of pocket and with unfinished projects.

How to avoid it: Ensure the contractor is licensed and insured, get everything in writing, don't skim the contract and never pay the full fee up front.