Seeking solutions to secure remote working

In our new normal, with millions of employees working remotely, businesses are more reliant on technology than ever before. Collaboration solutions have made it easier for businesses to function more effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic, however companies are still exposed to vulnerabilities and risks associated with unprotected data.

Herman Kriel, general manager of CyberTech, a division of Altron

"People are becoming more aware of external threats such as ransomware attacks and attacks on companies as easy sources of large amounts of data, and as a result, are starting to ask how they can protect their data. The old thinking is that if you have the basic protection solutions that used to work in place, you're still protected, but this is no longer the case because the attack approach has become so sophisticated that these technologies cannot hold up successfully," says Herman Kriel, general manager of CyberTech, a division of Altron.

Staff can be a security threat

"Your organisation has two major assets – your data, which includes critical information such as financial documents or board resolutions and private data and your workforce. The latter is often the reason your data is compromised, and not always maliciously.

"Smart devices that legitimately connect to the company network allow access to sensitive data. Emails are still sent to external parties, customers, board members, staff and even the odd incorrect recipient. Companies need to apply a simple application to protect their emails, the main source of information that often forms the basis of communication, both internally and externally."

Kriel explains security through an analogy of an onion, with data located in the middle and protected through different layers (solutions and technology) around it as protective measures. "You require multiple security solutions, and a key to this is proper encryption of data through the use of decent encryption hardware."

Leave the old paper trail behind

With the need to empower employees to work from home and be productive through the use of collaboration solutions, companies should look at migrating from antiquated paper-based approaches to digital solutions to keep data safe, and

admin and projects on track.

"Many companies have found it problematic during the lockdown because they could no longer push paper from one office to the next for anything from a simple administrative requirement to contracts to be signed. The next alternative is to email these documents, which have to be printed, signed, just to be scanned again and mailed to the next signatory in line to have the process repeated. Where does the extra electronic data and hardcopy document resides and what do we do with that data if workers are not sitting inside the protected domain?" asks Kriel.

With the availability of collaboration tools, organisations can migrate from hard copy to digital documents. Workflows can be established to lessen the burden on an already overworked workforce.

Documents can now be sent, signed electronically and returned within a matter of minutes regardless of where the recipients are, a feat that could not even be matched when everyone was still at the office. The user can even set up automatic reminders for documents to be signed and have documents expired after a pre-determined period of time. "This is one huge step forward for any organisation that aims to move the business forward despite having to work in the diaspora."

Seeing the need for companies to have historic documents in electronic form, to get rid of the cost associated with storage, and recovery of documents, CyberTech has partnered with Altron Bytes Document Solutions and is working to help companies digitise their old paper-based documents.

"We have a solution where the drafter loads into the system, scans the documents and through a pre-determined process "certifies" the new "master" document. A verification system determines that a document hasn't been tampered with and it is signed digitally in a matter of minutes. The process is automated and cleaner, just one of the ways that the Altron group of companies works together to help its customers to work better and more efficient."

Seeing value in data encryption

Kriel said Covid-19 had brought an influx of interest from companies asking about automated encryption as well as digitisation processes. "Where this was usually seen as a grudge purchase that companies can do without for a little longer, companies are starting to investigate ways to secure their information, therefore a must-have tool. People are starting to see the value in new technology tools such as digital documents and signatures, email encryption and encryption hardware to protect personal data, a requirement enforced through legislative pressure."

The way we do business has changed forever. There is more collaboration than ever and ways of working have changed from face-to-face to online and collaborative engagements. "There is a need to ensure that sensitive data is managed correctly and that the data that is communicated is encrypted and therefore protected even if it lands in the wrong hands.

"Once you get used to these new ways of working, you can hardly work without them, they make your life easier and your data more secure," concludes Kriel.