

Cyber Security Awareness Month – strengthening defenses together

September 16, 2024

As we enter the 4th quarter of 2024, October brings with it Cyber Security Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of cyber security for both individuals and businesses. Our theme this month, “Strengthening Defenses Together,” emphasizes the power of collective effort in enhancing our digital security. With cyber threats continuing to evolve, collaboration is key to building resilient defenses against malicious actors.

Cyber security isn’t just the responsibility of IT departments or cyber security firms – it’s something everyone must prioritize. Whether you’re an individual safeguarding personal data or a business protecting critical infrastructure, collaboration across the community is essential. By sharing knowledge, adopting best practices, and participating in awareness campaigns, we can create a unified defense against ever-growing cyber threats.

Key collaborative initiatives

We have set out below some of the ways that individuals, businesses, and organizations can participate in Cyber Security Awareness Month:

- Participate in public awareness campaigns – many organizations offer free resources and training materials during Cyber Security Awareness Month. For example, the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) run a month-long campaign offering toolkits, social media assets, and interactive events that promote awareness.
- Join industry webinars and workshops – throughout October, various cyber security firms and nonprofits host webinars and workshops that explore current threat landscapes and offer actionable advice. These events are designed to engage both technical and non-technical audiences and are often free to join.
- Engage employees with cyber security training – for businesses, offering employees cyber security training can be a game changer. Many cyber security vendors provide free or discounted training programs during Cyber Security Awareness Month, helping businesses educate staff about phishing attacks, password hygiene, and secure online behavior.
- Information sharing – industry collaboration through information-sharing platforms can reduce the impact of cyber attacks. For instance, the Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) play a crucial role in disseminating threat intelligence across sectors. By staying informed of the latest threats, businesses can strengthen their defenses in real time.

Practical tips for enhancing cyber security

To support both individuals and businesses in improving their cyber security posture, here are a few practical tips to implement during Cyber Security Awareness Month:

- Use Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) – MFA adds an extra layer of security, requiring users to provide two or more verification factors to gain access to accounts. This is a simple but effective way to reduce the likelihood of unauthorized access.
- Regularly update software – keeping software and devices updated with the latest patches can close security gaps that attackers exploit. Businesses should enforce automatic updates across all devices and systems.
- Conduct regular security assessments – for businesses, regularly conducting internal penetration tests or audits is a proactive way to identify vulnerabilities. Individuals can benefit from running basic antivirus and malware scans on personal devices.
- Improve password practices – strong, unique passwords are critical. Encourage using password managers and implementing company-wide policies that enforce complex, regularly changed passwords.
- Back up your data – regular backups are essential for both individuals and businesses, ensuring that data can be recovered in the event of ransomware attacks or data loss incidents.

Resources for Cyber Security Awareness Month

We have set out below some useful resources for both individuals and businesses to utilize in order to enhance their cyber security efforts during Cyber Security Awareness Month:

- CISA Cyber Security Awareness Month Toolkit – CISA provides free [downloadable toolkits](#) that include social media templates, infographics, and presentations.
- National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) [Stay Safe Online](#) – NCSA offers tips and resources focused on personal cyber security and corporate policies.
- Cyber security webinars and training – platforms such as BrightTALK and SANS Institute often provide free webinars and training sessions during Cyber Security Awareness Month, covering everything from cloud security to insider threats.
- Join a local cyber security community – check with local chambers of commerce, IT groups, or cyber security associations for events and activities in your area. Networking with local businesses and professionals can help you stay up-to-date on regional threats and security trends.

Strengthening defenses – a shared responsibility

As we observe Cyber Security Awareness Month, it is important to remember that cyber security is a shared responsibility. By staying informed, collaborating with peers, and committing to proactive measures, we can all contribute to a safer, more secure digital world. Whether you're a small business owner, a cyber security professional, or a concerned individual, now is the perfect time to get involved and strengthen your digital defenses.

Waystone Compliance Solutions is a leading provider of cyber security consulting and compliance services to the financial services industry. If you would like to find out how Waystone can help you to assess your current cyber security measures, please reach out to your usual Waystone representative, or contact us below.

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