



Subject: Access Control - You Practice it Everyday

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Dear Real Estate Executive,

You may not realize it but you experience access control regularly in your daily life. Whether it's unlocking the door to your office or logging into your computer, access controls either allow or prevent you from getting somewhere or something. Access controls properly identify you and verify your identity with the primary objective of preserving and protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information, systems and resources. There are three types of access control that are important to understand and factor in to your business practices:

Network Access

From PDAs to laptops, employees and agents have myriad options for connecting to their network. At its core, network access controls are a pretty simple concept. The idea is that the network should be able to control access to your systems and applications depending on who you are and whether your access device conforms to your security policies.

If, for example, you come back from vacation with a virus-infected laptop, the network should know enough to keep you quarantined until the virus is removed. Network access controls can be set to open up some resources and not others. Case in point: I'm a visitor at your office and I plug my laptop into your network. You might let me browse the Internet, but not access any internal resources.

Bottom line: Formal procedures must be in place to control network access to ensure that members of your workforce have only access to the resources that they need to perform their job functions.

Physical Access

Not all attacks on your data come across the network. Whether it's a stolen PDA or lost documents, you become vulnerable once someone gains physical access to your data. It's imperative to remember that maintaining a network security program doesn't immunize you against the physical assault or theft of property or data. Nothing emphasizes this point more than the recent theft incidents at [ING](#)

and the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), both of which began with the theft of a company laptop. When attackers are able to access a system physically, they can wreak a world of havoc. Given the trend toward smaller, more lightweight computers, physical security is growing increasingly important. Nowhere is this more apparent than in our industry that is among the largest consumers of PDAs and smart phones.

Bottom line: Not only should you implement a physical access control program in your office, but it's vital that you also strictly enforce the measures you apply. Because so much real estate business is conducted outside of the office, you must think about how your policies address physical access outside of the friendly confines. At minimum, these measures should address both personal access and information and equipment access.

Remote Access

Remote access gives you the ability to log onto a network from a distant location that is increasingly prevalent in our industry. But there's a double-edged sword when it comes to remote access. The good: Employees enjoy the benefits of telecommuting from their homes and staying connected while on the road. The bad: Security can be compromised as data and applications live on lightly-protected remote computers like laptops and PDAs.

Bottom line: Business and security requirements for remote access control should be defined, documented and enforced. Then remote access to your systems and applications can be controlled on the basis of these business and security requirements.

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REALTOR Secure program resources
<http://www.realtor.org/crtsecure.nsf/pages/resources?OpenDocument>

Primer on access controls
<http://www.windowsecurity.com/articles/Access-Controls-What-is-it-how-undermined.html>

Description of access control:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Access_control

Articles dedicated to the topic of access control:
<http://www.securitysolutions.com/>

Whitepapers on access control:

http://www4.bitpipe.com/rlist/term/Access-Control.html?src=ggbp104573a&CMP=KNC-GoogleAdwords&HBX_PK=access+control&HBX_OU=50