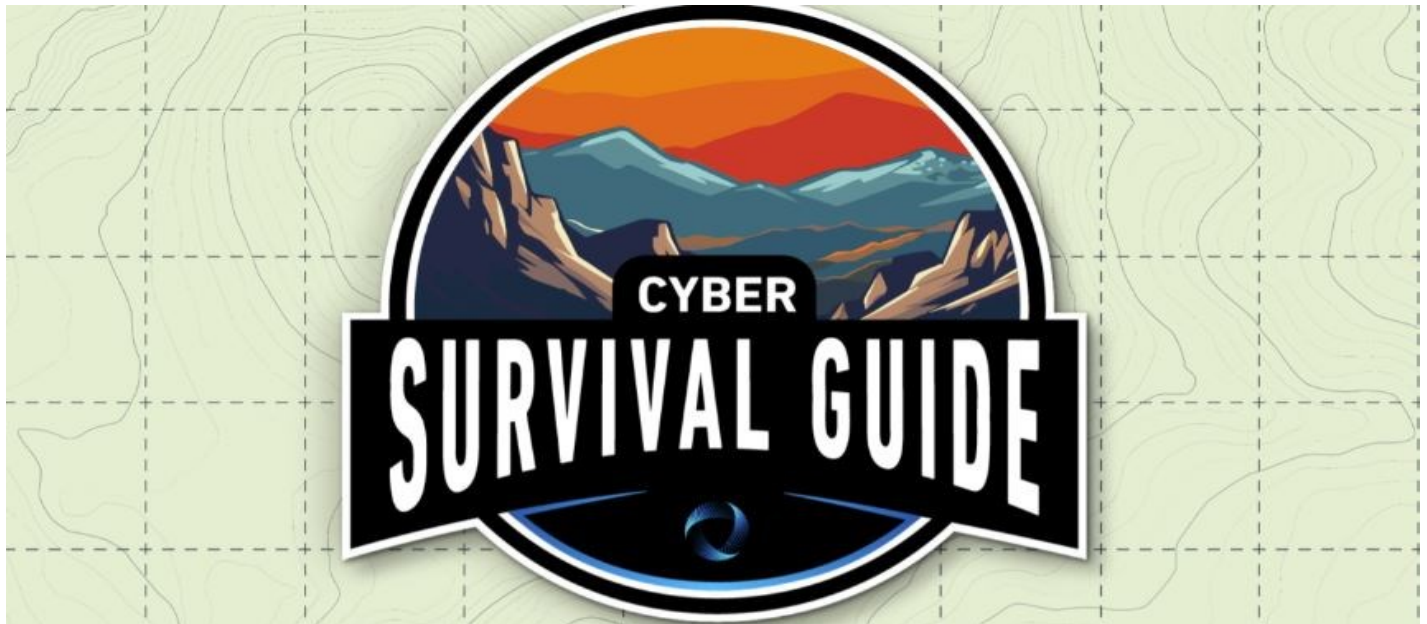




The spirit of adventure beckons you online!

You have funny GIFs to find, emails to ignore, pants to buy. But perils lurk in the dark corners of the web. Even when you try to maintain good habits, you can encounter packs of cybercriminals and malicious software..

What is there to do? Don't despair! We're here to help! Use the following as a survival guide for when you think you downloaded a virus, when you suspect an online account has been hacked, you've lost control of a social media account, your sensitive data was lost in a data breach, or a cybercriminal is threatening you with ransomware.



Stay safe online by being prepared

As with most things, preventing a cyberattack is easier than dealing with the fallout in many cases. By practicing some good cyber hygiene behaviors, you can stay on the trail headed to amazing internet experiences!

Remember, with all these situations, the most common way hackers get access to your private digital life is through phishing – no, not the kind at a lake. Keeping calm and collected when a suspicious message slithers into your inbox helps stop a hacking attempt before the hook is set.

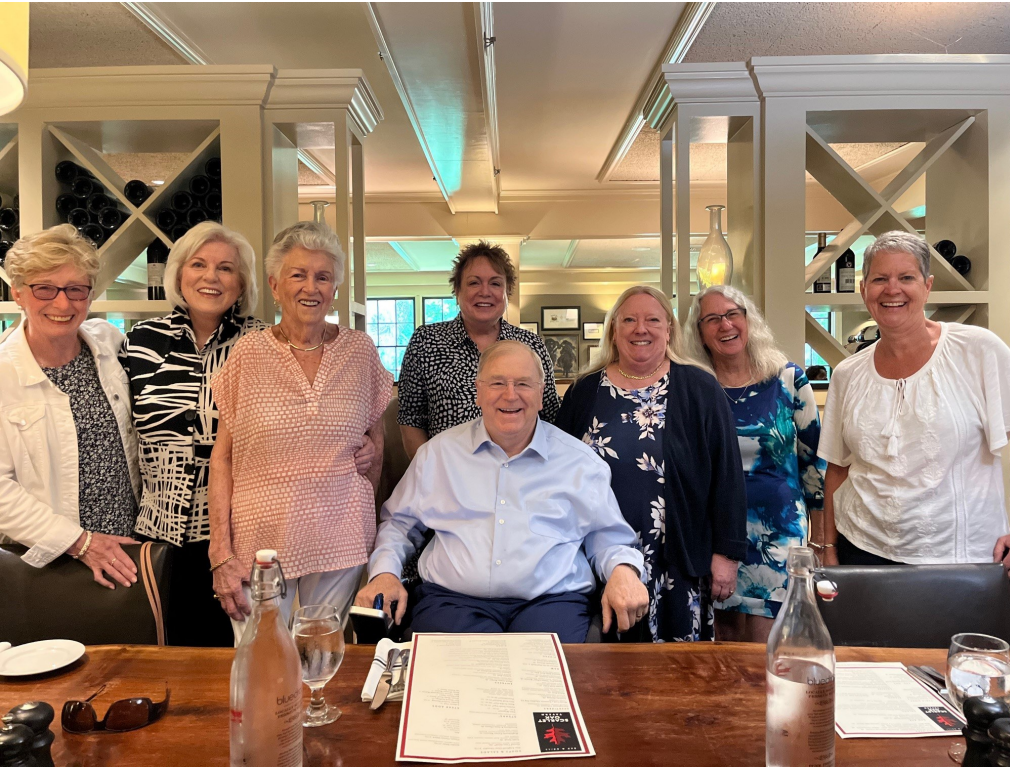


How to Survive a Hacked Account

Fearless internet explorers, you can reclaim online accounts even if a hacker sneaks in! With some quick, sure-footed action, shoo cybercriminals out of your social media, email, or other

From The Desk of David Snell

Last month, we lost our dear friend and mentor, Dr. Barry Brodil. We worked for Barry at Creating Ultimate Smiles in Hanover for over 20 years. During that time, he gave us the opportunities to learn and grow, something that we have never forgotten.



At his wake, people waited in line over an hour or more. Every one had a "Barry story" to tell. Those of us who lingered were able to also enjoy and reminiscence with others.

The next day, it was truly a Celebration of Barry's Life! Even though we thought we knew him well, we heard about more

wonderful acts of kindness, wise counsel and compassion.

As one person said, "When we think of Barry, we see his smile, his sense of humor, his energy and enthusiasm for life, and his love of adventure and people. He will be missed by all who knew him."

Barry, we love you!

David &
Pam



Cyber Survival Guide

(or several) of your accounts have been compromised and how you can restore order to your online basecamp.

Look out for telltale signs that your account has been hacked. There are a few common signs that an online account has been compromised:

- Your social media profile publishes posts that you didn't create.
- Your account sends phishing emails or DMs to others that encourage them to click on a link, download an app, or buy something.
- Friends and followers say they've received emails or messages that you never sent.
- A company alerts you that your account information was lost or stolen in a data breach.

Change the account's password right away.

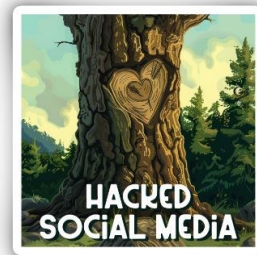
You can lock out a cybercriminal by changing the account's password. Unfortunately, this also works the other way around: the hacker might change the password to lock you out. If this happens, use the account's "Forgot my Password" function to reset it. If more help is needed, contact the online platform or website ASAP about the situation.

Notify your contacts that your account was hacked and that they might receive spam messages that look like they came from you.

Instruct your friends, family, colleagues, followers, and other contacts not to open these messages or click on any links contained in them. When the situation is cleared up, let everyone know your accounts are secure again.

Get help. If you suspect someone has stolen money from you, contact your bank and the local police. If a work account was compromised, contact your company's IT department. If you think your identity was stolen, contact the three credit bureaus and the FTC. Contact the respective online platform regarding the hacked account. Contact trusted friends and family about the

matter so they can be on the lookout for weird communications from your online profiles.



How to Survive Losing Control of a Social Media Account

For many of us online, social media is how we unzip our tent flaps and enjoy the beauty of the online world. Social media is how we communicate with friends and family (and remember their birthdays). For some of us, it is an integral part of our business. Losing control of a social media account is like annoying hacker mosquitos invading your digital tent! When a cybercriminal takes over your socials, they can pretend to be you online and have access to your sensitive personal data. If you've lost control of a social media account, here are our tips to get it back.

1. Determine if you've truly lost control of the account.

Don't take any unexpected urgent message about a social media hack at face value, but it is something to investigate. Also, a friend might say that your profile is making posts or sending messages that seem strange, like posting about a deal on sunglasses. Try to log into your social media account. If you can, immediately do the following:

- Reset your password, and make it unique to the account, at least 16 characters long, with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols.
- Enable multi-factor authentication, which adds a whole new level of security to your login beyond your password.
- Report the incident to the platform – you can even use screenshots as evidence.
- If you've reused the old password for any

Continued on page 6

How Mobile-First Indexing Impacts

Have you recently noticed that nearly all the websites with high search visibility look fabulous on mobile devices? If so, it should come as no surprise. With most people now using smartphones to browse the Internet, search engines like Google have shifted to a mobile-first indexing approach. But what does this mean for you, a business website owner? Let's break it down.



The Shift to Mobile-First Indexing

Think about the last time you used your phone to browse the Internet and struggled with a site that didn't respond and fit your screen. Frustrating, right? Search engines want to provide searchers with a smooth experience, so in 2024, mobile-first indexing is the priority. What does this mean for website owners? Mobile-first indexing means search engines rely on the mobile version for ranking and indexing pages.

Why Mobile-First Indexing Matters

Now that we've explained some of the basics of mobile-first indexing let's discuss all of the different reasons it matters:

User Experience: Mobile-first indexing ensures users can easily browse your website using their Smartphones, tablets, or other mobile devices. Website load time matters because people usually don't stick around and wait. When this happens, it creates a higher bounce rate and negatively impacts your rankings.

Lower Search Visibility: Everyone prefers websites that offer a great mobile experience. If your website struggles on mobile devices, search engine crawlers will likely stop visiting, making your entire site unproductive, even if the desktop version works without

significant issues.

Accessibility: Search engines strive to provide the best results and answers for people who use their platforms. Inclusion in search results is never guaranteed, so if your website doesn't meet the minimum requirements, your site will remain stuck in a dark corner of the internet.

Critical Factors of Mobile-First Indexing

Multiple factors impact the mobile-friendliness of a website. To make sure that your site is functioning on all levels, here is some helpful advice:

Responsive Design: Ensure your website adjusts seamlessly to different screen sizes. A responsive site makes it easier for users to read and navigate your site, whether on a phone, tablet, or desktop.

Website Speed: Mobile users expect pages to load quickly. Optimize images, implement browser caching, and reduce server response time. This attention to detail can boost speed and response time as much as possible.

Content: Keep the mobile version of your site consistent with your desktop version, including text, images, and videos.

Structured Data: Implement structured data across your website pages. Doing so helps search engines understand your content on a deeper level. Different examples of structured data include:

- Articles
- Events
- Products
- Recipes
- Reviews
- Videos
- Breadcrumbs
- FAQs
- Job Postings
- Courses

The Potential Consequences of Neglecting Mobile-First Indexing

Ignoring mobile-first indexing can be detrimental to your operations. Businesses and organizations with non-mobile-friendly websites can experience reduced

Website Visibility And Ranking

visibility in search results, leading to fewer visitors and potentially lost business opportunities.

The Bright Side of Making Website Updates

Now that we've discussed why you need a mobile-friendly website in 2024, rejoice in knowing there is a bright side!

You have the chance to get ahead as your competitors neglect their duty to upgrade their websites. A modern, well-designed website is not only more appealing to visitors, but it also keeps their attention longer.

Being on the right side of the technological curve can help you connect with the audience that your competitors are losing. This proactive approach ensures your business stands out, driving growth and securing a stronger online presence.

Tips for Mastering Mobile-First Indexing

Test Your Website: Use Google's Mobile-Friendly Test to visualize how your website renders on mobile devices. It's a free tool that provides insights into areas that need improvement.

Responsive Design Implementation: Work with a web designer to make necessary upgrades or updates to keep up with technological advancements.

Optimize Loading Speed:

- Compress images.
- Minify CSS and JavaScript files.
- Implement browser caching to boost site loading speed on mobile devices

Regular Audits: Regularly audit your site's mobile performance. Online tools, including Google Search Console, can help you monitor and improve mobile usability.

Frequently Asked Questions About Mobile First Indexing

Q: What is mobile-first indexing?

A: Mobile-first indexing means that search engines rely on a website's mobile to index and show in results. This shift reflects the need to adapt to changing internet browsing habits.

Q: How do I know whether my website is mobile-friendly?

A: You can use tools like Google's Mobile-Friendly Test to evaluate your site's mobile performance. Online tools provide detailed insights and recommendations for improvements.

Q: Does mobile-first indexing affect desktop rankings?

A: Yes, mobile-first indexing can affect desktop rankings. If your site isn't mobile-friendly, it may negatively impact your overall search engine rankings, including desktop results.

Q: What are some common issues that negatively impact mobile-first indexing?

A: Slow loading times, unresponsive design, and website errors are common issues that can negatively impact mobile-first website indexing. Addressing these issues can improve site performance and rankings.

Q: How often should I audit my website for mobile performance?

A: Regular audits are crucial. Consider auditing your site's mobile performance at least once a quarter to ensure everything works as expected and aligns with changing search engine guidelines.

Q: What if my site isn't mobile-friendly?

A: If your site isn't mobile-friendly, working with a web designer to make the necessary changes is essential. They can help you with a new responsive design, optimizing loading speeds, and ensuring content consistency across devices.



Kevin McNally, Interactive Palette

Mailing: P.O. Box 1007, Fall River, MA 02722

Physical: 25 Braintree Hill Park, Braintree, MA 02184

interactivepalette.com sales@interactivepalette.com

(781) 930-3199

Cyber Survival Guides

other account, change those passwords. Start using a password manager to generate and store all of your special, extra-strength passwords.

2. **Contact the platform.**

If you cannot log in to your account, you need the social media platform to help you.

- See if you can report the account takeover through the platform's website.
- Call the social media network's customer service line if they have one.
- Follow instructions on the platform's "forgot my account" or "account recovery" webpage. If contacting the platform doesn't work initially, be persistent. Unfortunately, social media platforms aren't known for their customer support. Take screenshots of anything your hacked profile posts, or have your followers record evidence, so you can better explain the situation to the platform.

3. **Once you have your formerly hacked account back, contain the damage by changing your password and turning MFA on.**

Look up recent activity on your profile page and in the accounts settings:

- Delete anything posted or sent by the hacker after taking a record.
- See if privacy or security settings were changed and adjust them to your comfort level.
- Check to see what devices have logged into the account and make a record of anything suspicious.

Take records of everything through screenshots. You can send this evidence to the social media platform or to law enforcement.

Let your audience know you were hacked, even if it is embarrassing. People understand, and it is the best way to staunch any reputational damage the hacker did to you. Let them know they should be suspicious of any weird messages or odd posts coming from your profile.

Finally, review any personal data that was stored in the social media account, like credit card numbers or private DM communications. If that data was compromised, you might want to take further steps, like contacting your credit card issuer to cancel your card.

Other Cyber Merit Badges Include:



How to Survive a Ransomware Attack



How to Survive a Data Breach



How to Survive a Computer Virus



How to Survive a Phishing Attempt

You will find the full guides to earn each of these Cyber Merit Badges at:

<https://programs.staysafeonline.org/cyber-survival> | <https://www.ACTSmartIT.com/survival>

Our thanks to the Cyber Security Alliance for "Empowering a Safer Digital World"
www.StaySafeOnline.org

PLANNING AHEAD – Yes, in August

NOW is the time to think ahead regarding your policies and practices, rather than waiting until the end of the calendar year.

Many employers have traditionally chosen to issue performance reviews in December of each year. Such reviews, if positive, are usually accompanied by a raise and/or bonus. On the other hand, if the review reflects performance that is unsatisfactory, that leaves the business entity in a bit of a quandary. What does one say? "You're not meeting expectations, so we're not giving you a raise or bonus. Happy Holidays."

A better HR practice would be to conduct performance reviews at the end of September or beginning of October. If an employee is underperforming, that allows the business to consider issuing a performance-improvement plan. The timing provides the employee with the ability to work on specific areas that are deficient. A fall review also presents an opportunity to discuss possible coursework or certifications in which the employee can enroll, making this a "goal" for



the coming year.

An employer, while writing up a review in August or September, may unfortunately realize that an employee is underperforming or is not a "good fit" and is one that the company does not wish to rehabilitate or retain. Addressing the need to terminate an employee can be done in a more thoughtful and time-appropriate manner in the fall and this alleviates the pressures of a company having to deal with a reorganization, advertising for a new employee, or making major staffing changes at the very end of the year.

In addition, this is also a preferable time to revise old handbooks or create new policies. Moreover, it may be more convenient to schedule annual anti-harassment training sessions during this time as well. Think about getting these programs done before the period from Thanksgiving through the New Year, when many employees are utilizing PTO.

They say that timing in life is everything. That definitely applies to best practices in the workplace.

Attorney Helene Horn Figman combines specialized legal knowledge in employment law with the skills and perspectives uniquely suited to Human Resources Consulting. www.figmanlaw.com

Information about her anti-harassment and anti-discrimination education programs can be found at www.workplaceawarenesstraining.com

This article has been prepared by the Law Offices of Helene Horn Figman, P.C. for general informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice and is presented without any representation of warranty whatsoever.



Helene Horn Figman

Law Offices of Helene Horn Figman, P.C.

Employment Law & HR Resource Management

45 Bristol Drive Suite 207, South Easton, MA 02375

FigmanLaw.com hfigman@figmanlaw.com

508-238-2700

In This Issue:

- **Cyber Survival Guides**
- **How Mobile-First Indexing Impacts Website Visibility and Ranking**
- **Planning Ahead—Yes, In August (Your HR Policies and Practices)**
- **And More**

*This newsletter was thoughtfully edited by
Susan Rooks, the Grammar Goddess,
so we can look and sound as smart as we are.*



Susan Rooks

The Grammar Goddess

508 272-5120

SusanR@GrammarGoddess.com



**REGULAR
CYBER SECURITY
TRAINING
GIVES YOUR BUSINESS
THE HIGHEST LEVEL
OF PROTECTION**

Visit ACTSmartIT.com/training