Shhhh... Can You Keep a Secret?
How to Protect Confidential Business Information

How safe is your company's proprietary data? If you're like most businesses, you utilize systems that guard restricted information from competitors, hackers, and other outside snoops. But the bigger threat may come from where it's least expected— your own employees, contractors, or vendors.

Fortunately, several laws are designed to help companies guard against unauthorized access by authorized people—namely, the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, the Federal Economic Espionage Act, the Michigan Uniform Trade Secrets Act, and the Michigan Identify Theft Protection Act.

But taking a few proactive steps now can thwart would-be spies and save you from becoming a victim of business espionage.

MAKE USE OF NON-COMPETE CONTRACTS
You may require certain employees to sign a non-compete agreement to prevent them from improperly using confidential business data. Michigan law allows employers to utilize non-compete agreements that are deemed "reasonable" in duration, geographical area, and line of business.

IMPLEMENT NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS
A non-disclosure agreement can protect you against the unauthorized use of confidential business data by employees, contractors, vendors, or any other third party with access to sensitive data.

EDUCATE YOUR EMPLOYEES
Make employees aware of policies and procedures that protect sensitive information, as well as the reasons for such policies and the consequences for failure to comply.

CLASSIFY DATA
Develop a system that separates confidential information from non-confidential. When in doubt, treat data as restricted.

LIMIT ACCESS
Decide who really needs to see what, and restrict access to all others.

MONITOR YOUR COMPUTER SYSTEMS
Consistently check e-mail utilization and install software that detects excessive downloading or copying of files by individual employees.

PROTECT PASSWORDS
Say goodbye to those password sticky notes affixed to computer screens!

INSTILL CONFIDENTIALITY AS PART OF YOUR COMPANY'S CULTURE
Your policies are of little use if they're filed away and ignored. Make compliance a priority throughout the organization.

Follow these tips to become a good secret-keeper. If you'd like some help drafting agreements and policies that will protect your data, give us a call.

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