

CU SECURITY: BEYOND THE MOAT - COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY STRATEGIES

Once credit unions have setup a hardened perimeter, they need to validate that what they have done is truly secure. They must probe for soft spots and identify single points of failure and eliminate them. This process involves proper testing – both internal and external – and ongoing training for the credit union's IT staff.

Security needs to be a built-in habit for not only the credit union's IT department, but for all of their employees. Certainly the IT staff and can help create awareness and stay on top of security issues through training and going to security conferences, but really everyone at the credit union should have security orientation training and ongoing refresher courses that reinforces in their minds that security is extremely important.

Remote and internal vulnerability assessments are critical – the credit union needs to take the attitude that they must find their weaknesses before someone else does. From our years of experiences working with financial institutions, we have found that there is a big difference between feeling protected and actually being protected. These periodic tests will validate their assumptions and help keep the credit union out of the news.

Business continuity planning is big piece of every institution's comprehensive security strategy. There are actually two parts to this process: disaster recovery and business continuity. You can think of disaster recovery as the reactive part of business continuity planning. Just like with security in general, there is no start or end point of contingency planning because it is an ongoing process, not a destination.

We have over thirty consultants on staff that help credit unions develop, update and improve this process. It is fact that every organization's contingency plan needs to be updated and continuously improved. We recognize that each client has a unique situation and requirements so we approach them as an unbiased third party looking to help them consolidate, organize, customize, and manage their contingency plan. We are completely vendor neutral and objective – our goal is to act as partner that will assist them in meeting their contingency planning needs within their budget.

In addition to our consulting services, we offer credit unions the industry's top online crisis planning and disaster recovery system: PLANet. This intuitive and easy to use Internet-based package allows credit unions to easily build and maintain their plans. Plus it helps them meet audit and regulatory requirements like the new NCUA/FFIEC Guidelines for Business Continuity. From very small credit unions to multi-billion dollar asset credit unions, PLANet scales well and is an affordable alternative to developing and maintaining labor-intensive manual plans.



Michael R. Jennings is Vice President of the Consulting Service for Strohl Systems. He has worked in the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery industry for more than a decade and has consulted with clients in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. In his position with Strohl Systems, he is charged with managing the Business Continuity practice of more than thirty Senior Consultants. These hand picked consultants assist organizations in all areas of business continuity and disaster recovery planning. Mr. Jennings is a CBCP and a frequent speaker at BCP Symposia such as DRJ, CPE, CPM and Continuity Insights. Additionally, Mr. Jennings is currently serving as an editorial advisor to Continuity Insights.