



## 6 Ways to Safeguard Company Data

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### ***How safe is your company data?***

According to a recent survey, information you believe is confidential may also be in your competitor's offices. A report from the Ponemon Institute details that companies are doing a poor job preventing former employees from stealing data. Some details from the report should give every employer cause for concern, particularly in this time of sharp staff reductions.

Here are six steps for instituting a credible information protection strategy:

1. Have employees sign confidentiality agreements, non-solicitation agreements, covenants not to compete and assignment-of-invention agreements that are lawful in your particular jurisdiction.
2. Implement appropriate security policies that address use of computers, e-mail, voicemail and the Internet; define physical and electronic access to trade secrets; cover telecommuting and employee privacy concerns; and control vendors and third-party access to confidential information.
3. Train company employees in the policy and proper handling of company confidential information, and their security responsibilities.
4. Secure the physical environment by restricting access to servers, routers and other network technology to those whose job responsibilities require access.
5. Secure the company's computer systems and network by limiting access to sensitive information to only those who have a need to know or use the information, and keep audit logs of all access requests to critical systems and sensitive information.
6. Protect company information upon an employee's termination by disabling all accounts and access privileges of the terminated employee and changing all access codes and possibly VPN (virtual private network) and dial-in numbers; examine the employee's computer or laptop to determine if the employee has accessed or copied sensitive information in recent months.

These steps won't guarantee that you will never lose important confidential information to departing employees, but consideration of the problem and implementation of controls will certainly make it much harder for a departing employee to do what so many other departing employees are doing in this struggling economy.

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**Christopher C. Hoffman**  
Regional Managing Partner  
858.597.9610  
[Email](#)