



THE ULTIMATE SECURITY CHECKLIST

15 Essential Controls Every Small Business Should Have in Place

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INTRO & QUICK GUIDANCE

Why This Checklist Matters



Cyber threats evolve fast, but your defenses don't have to fall behind. This checklist helps your business take a fast, honest baseline of the critical security areas that protect operations, data, and customer trust.

Before You Start

- Set aside 15 minutes with your team for a first-pass self-assessment.
- Revisit quarterly to track progress — or book a guided review to go deeper.

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THE 15 ESSENTIAL CONTROLS



Category

Each category represents a key area of cybersecurity, such as Access Control, Network Defense, or Data Protection.



Control

The specific safeguard or action that should be implemented. Each control is a measurable security step.



Status

Track implementation progress for each control.

Mark each control as:

- Implemented (I)= 1 point
- In Progress (IP) = 1/2 point
- Not Started (NS) = 0 points

THE 15 ESSENTIAL CONTROLS: CONT.

Category	Control	Status
Access & Identity	Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for all critical systems	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒
	Password manager in use company-wide	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒
	Role-based access control (RBAC)	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒
Endpoint Security	Antivirus + EDR deployed and centrally managed	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒
	Monthly OS and software patching	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒
Network Defense	Firewalls configured with least-privilege rules	I IP NS ☒ ☒ ☒

THE 15 ESSENTIAL CONTROLS: CONT.

Category	Control	Status
Network Defense	Network segmentation for guest/WiFi and internal systems	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
Backup & Recovery	Daily automated backups (onsite + offsite/cloud)	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
	Quarterly restoration testing	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
Email & Phishing	Email filtering and link protection	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
	Phishing awareness training every 6 months	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐

THE 15 ESSENTIAL CONTROLS: CONT.

Category	Control	Status
Data Protection	Encryption of data at rest and in transit	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
	Secure disposal of retired devices	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
Monitoring & Response	Continuous monitoring or outsourced SOC	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐
	Incident response plan reviewed annually	I IP NS ☐ ☐ ☐

Score Yourself

1 point per Implemented control, ½ per In Progress (max 15).

12–15: Mature program

8–11: Improving posture

<8: Immediate attention required

SWOT Analysis

S Strengths

Internal advantages that give your business or project a competitive edge. These can include expertise, strong customer relationships, proprietary technology, or an excellent brand reputation. MFA enforced, managed EDR, documented backups.

W Weaknesses

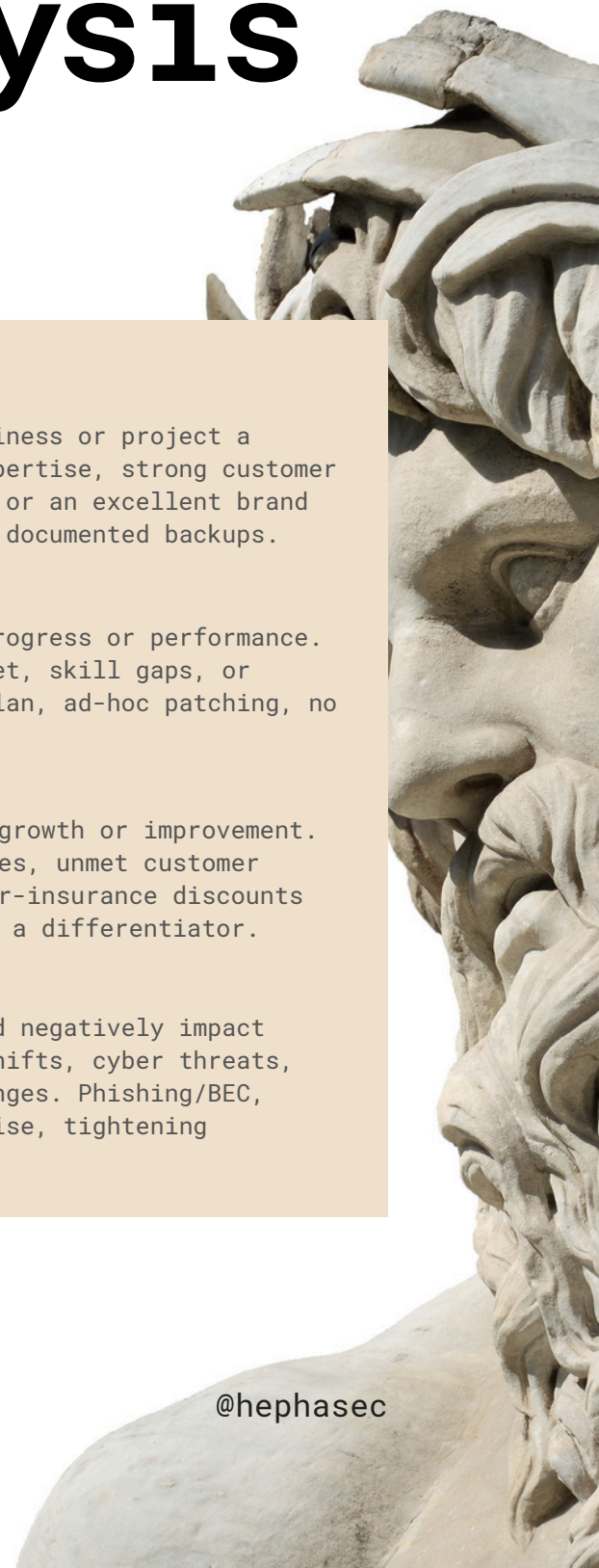
Internal limitations that may hinder progress or performance. Examples: outdated tools, limited budget, skill gaps, or inconsistent processes. No formal IR plan, ad-hoc patching, no security awareness program.

O Opportunity

External factors you can leverage for growth or improvement. Think of market trends, new technologies, unmet customer needs, or potential partnerships. Cyber-insurance discounts for stronger controls; client trust as a differentiator.

T Threat

External risks or challenges that could negatively impact success. This might include economic shifts, cyber threats, competitor activity, or regulatory changes. Phishing/BEC, ransomware, third-party/vendor compromise, tightening regulatory requirements.



TURN YOUR CHECKLIST INTO AN ACTION PLAN

Know your gaps? Now find out which ones to fix first.



**Asset-Criticality
Heatmap**



**Live 1-Hour Expert
Session**



**Auto-Prioritized Action
List**



**Editable & Trackable
Scoring**



Exportable Reports



Built-In Recommendations

The checklist shows where you stand. The Hephasec Guided Assessment shows you what to fix first – a 1-hour expert session that maps every control against your most critical assets and hands you a prioritized remediation roadmap.

**Book the Guided
Assessment (\$499 USD)**



Basic Principles and Practical Tips for Implementing These Strategies.

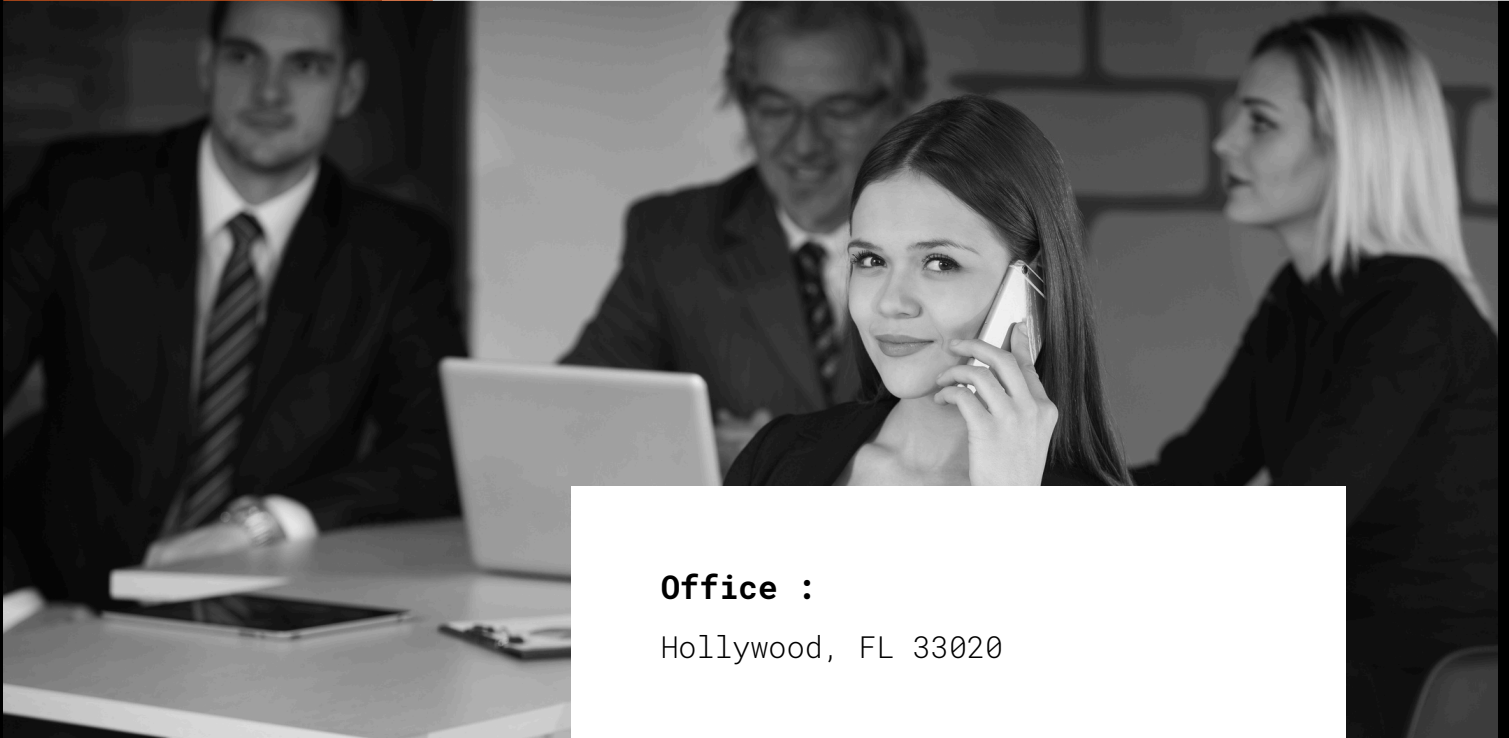
Basic Principles

- **Prioritize Risk Over Convenience:** Focus your efforts on protecting high-value assets first – customer data, financial systems, and administrative accounts. This checklist gives you a flat baseline where every control counts equally; the Guided Assessment weights each one against your most critical assets, so you fix what matters most first.
- **Balance Technology and People:** Security tools are only as effective as the people using them. Combine technical controls with employee awareness and training.

Practical Tips

- **Schedule Regular Security Reviews:** Revisit your checklist quarterly to update progress, close gaps, and adapt to new threats or business changes.
- **Document and Automate:** Keep written procedures for each control and use automated tools (patching, backups, MFA enforcement) to maintain consistency and reduce human error.

Contact Information



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