



## HOW TO USE AI FOR BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY WHILE STAYING CYBER-SECURE



Most organizations have realized that AI is not a sentient system looking to take over the world, but rather an invaluable tool. They have come to utilize it to improve their productivity and efficiency. AI solutions have been installed at an astounding rate. Some are used to automate repetitive tasks and to provide enriched data analysis on a previously unrealized level. While this can certainly boost productivity, it is also troubling from a data security, privacy, and cyber threat perspective.

The crux of this conundrum is how the power of AI can be harnessed to remain competitive while eliminating cybersecurity risks.

### The Rise of AI

AI is no longer just a tool for massive enterprises. It is a tool every organization can use. Cloudbased systems and machine learning APIs have become more affordable and necessary in the modern-day business climate for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs).

AI has become common in the following ways:

- Email and meeting scheduling
- Customer service automation
- Sales forecasting
- Document generation and summarization
- Invoice processing
- Data analytics
- Cybersecurity threat detection

### AI Adoption Risks

Organizations must understand that implementing any new technology needs to be done with thoughtful consideration of how it might expose these various threats.

### • Data Leakage

In order to operate, AI models need data. This can be sensitive customer data, financial information, o

• proprietary work products. If this information needs to be sent to third-party AI models, there must be a clear understanding of how and when this information will be used.

### • Shadow AI

Many employees use AI tools for their daily work. This might include generative platforms or online chatbots. Without proper vetting, these can cause compliance risks.

### • Overreliance and Automation Bias

Many users consider AI-generated content to always be accurate when, in fact, it is not. Relying on this information without checking it for accuracy can lead to poor decision-making.

### Secure AI and Productivity

The steps necessary to secure potential security risks when utilizing AI tools are relatively straightforward.

### • Establish an AI Usage Policy

It is critical to set limits and guidelines for AI use prior to installing any AI tools. Be sure to define approved AI tools and vendors, acceptable use cases prohibited data types and data retention practices.

### • Choose Enterprise-Grade AI Platforms

One way to secure AI platforms is by ensuring that they offer the following: GDPR, HIPAA, or SOC 2 compliant, data residency controls, do not use customer data for training and provide encryption for data at rest and in transit.

• Segment Sensitive Data Access Adopting role-based access controls (RBAC) provides better restrictions on data access. It allows AI tools access to only specific types of information.

### • Monitor AI Usage

It is essential to monitor AI usage across the organization to understand what and how information is being accessed and including which users are accessing which tools, what data is being sent or processed, and alerts for unusual or risky behavior.

### • AI for Cybersecurity

One of the primary uses of AI tools is the detection of cyber threats. Organizations use AI to detect threats, deter email phishing, protect endpoints, and automate responses.

### • Train Employees About Responsible Use

An unfortunate truth about humans is that they are the weakest link in the chain of cyber defense. Even the strongest defensive stance on cyber threats can be undone with a single click by a single user.

AI boosts productivity, but productivity without proper protection is a risk you can't afford. Contact us today for expert guidance, practical toolkits, and resources to help you harness AI safely and effectively.



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# ATTITUDE CHRONICLE

## Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably

### BEYOND CHATBOTS: PREPARING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS FOR "AGENTIC AI" IN 2026



AI chatbots can answer questions. But now picture an AI that goes further, updating your CRM, booking appointments, and sending emails automatically. This isn't some far-off future. It's where things are headed in 2026 and beyond, as AI shifts from reactive to proactive, autonomous agents.

This next wave of AI is called "Agentic AI." It describes AI that can set a goal, figure out the steps, use the right tools, and get the job done on its own. For a small business, that could mean an AI that takes an invoice from inbox to paid, or one that runs your whole social media presence. The upside is massive efficiency, but it also means you need to be prepared. When AI gets more powerful, having the right controls matter.

### What Makes an AI "Agentic"?

A research article on the evolution and architecture of AI agents explains the big shift like this: AI is moving from tools that wait for instructions to systems that work toward goals on their own. Instead of just helping with tasks, AI starts doing the work, making it possible to hand off whole processes and collaborate with it like a teammate.

### The 2026 Opportunity for Your Business

For small businesses, this is about real leverage. Agentic AI can work

around the clock, clear out repetitive bottlenecks, and cut down errors in routine processes. That means things like personalizing customer experiences at scale or even adjusting supply chains in real time become possible.

And this isn't about replacing your team. It's about leveling them up. AI takes the busywork so your people can focus on strategy, creativity, tough problems, and relationships, the things humans do best. Your role shifts too, from doing everything yourself to guiding and supervising your AI.

### What You Need Before You Launch Agentic AI

Before you hand over your processes to an AI agent, you need to make sure those processes are rock solid. The reasoning is simple: AI will amplify whatever it touches, order or chaos, with equal efficiency. That's why preparation is key. Start with this checklist:

#### 1. Clean and Organize Your Data:

AI agents make decisions based on the data you give them. Garbage in means not just garbage out; it can lead to major errors. Audit your critical sources.

#### 2. Document Workflows Clearly:

If a human can't follow a process step by step, an AI won't be able to either. Map out each workflow in detail before you automate.

### Building Your Governance Framework

Just like with human team members, delegating to an AI agent requires oversight. That means setting up clear guardrails by asking a few key questions:

- What decisions can the AI agent make on its own?
- When does it need human approval or guidance?
- What are its spending limits if it handles finances?
- Which data sources is it allowed to access?

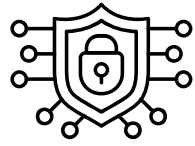
Answering these questions lets you build a framework that becomes your company's rulebook for its "digital employees."

### Security is another critical piece.

Every AI agent needs strict access controls, following the principle of least privilege. Regular audits of agent activity are now a non-negotiable part of good IT hygiene.

### Embracing the Role of Strategic Supervisor

Agentic AI is a true force multiplier, but it depends on clean data and well-defined processes. It rewards careful preparation and punishes the hasty. By focusing on data integrity and process clarity now, you position your business not just to adapt, but to lead. Contact us today for a technology consultation on AI integration. We can help you audit workflows and create a roadmap for reliable, effective adoption.



# NAVIGATING CLOUD COMPLIANCE: ESSENTIAL REGULATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Cloud solutions are the technology darlings of today's digital landscape. They offer a perfect marriage of innovative technology and organizational needs. However, it also raises significant compliance concerns for organizations.

Compliance involves a complex combination of legal and technical requirements. Organizations that fail to meet these standards can face significant fines and increased regulatory scrutiny. With data privacy mandates such as HIPAA and PCI DSS in effect, businesses must carefully navigate an increasingly intricate compliance landscape.

### Compliance Regulations

Compliance varies from country to country. It is important to know where data resides and through which countries it passes to remain compliant.

- **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – EU**  
Globally speaking, GDPR is one of the most comprehensive privacy laws. It applies to any organization processing EU citizens' personal data, regardless of where the company is physically doing business.

- **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) – US**  
HIPAA protects sensitive patient data in the United States. Cloudbased systems storing or transmitting this sensitive information (ePHI) have to abide by HIPAA standards.

- **Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)**  
Organizations that process, store, or transmit credit card information must abide by a set of compliance regulations.

- **Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) – US**  
Providing a standardized set of protocols for federal agencies operating on cloud-based systems, providers are required to complete a rigorous assessment process.

- **ISO/IEC 27001**  
This is an international standard for Information Security Management Systems (ISMS). It is widely recognized as the benchmark for cloud compliance.

### Maintaining Compliance

It is vital that organizations realize that cloud compliance is not merely checking items off a list. It requires thoughtful consideration and a great deal of planning. The following are considered best practices:

- **Audits:**  
Shortcomings are easily recognized and addressed to keep your infrastructure in compliance.

- **Robust Access Controls:**  
Using the principle of least privilege (PoLP) and MFA

- **Data Encryption:**  
Whether at rest or in transit, all data must use TLS and AES-256 protocols.

- **Comprehensive Monitoring:**  
Audit logs and real-time monitoring provide alerts to aid in compliance adherence.

- **Ensure Data Residency:**  
Ensure that your data center complies with any associated laws for the region.

- **Train Employees:**  
Providing proper training can help users adopt use policies help protect your digital assets and remain compliant.

## HOW THE NEWEST BLACK FRIDAY TECH GADGETS CAN BOOST YOUR BUSINESS

Images of Black Friday no longer merely conjure up visions of bargain-hunting shoppers bulldozing storefronts to secure the best deals. It is now viewed by many organizations as a strategic opportunity to minimize the cost of upgrading their technology infrastructure.

Traditionally, Black Friday tech deals surrounded gaming platforms and entertainment technology, but that has changed. Now, businesses recognize that there are numerous deals on the latest technology that offer real-world value to improve collaboration and productivity.

### Best Practices When Buying Consumer Tech for Business Use

A quick look at online tech outlets shows just how steep the discounts can be on Black Friday. While these sales offer great savings, businesses need to approach purchases mindfully. Buying equipment solely because it's discounted defeats the purpose if it cannot integrate into your existing tech environment.

- **Business-Grade Warranty:** Unfortunately, consumer products don't offer the same commercial warranties or support. It is always a good idea to check this for any purchases organizations are considering.
- **Compatibility Assurance:** The new purchases have to be compatible with existing software, hardware, and networks, or it is a wasted effort.
- **Lifecycle Management:** The discounted items need to be tracked and included in the IT management plan to determine when and how the devices will be replaced in the coming years.
- **Secure Everything:** Much like these sales offer great savings, businesses need to approach purchases mindfully. Buying equipment solely because it's discounted defeats the purpose if it cannot integrate into your existing tech environment.

Whether you're an MSP or a small business owner, we can help you turn Black Friday deals into year-round results. Contact us today for expert advice.

## ADVANCED PROTECTION FOR YOUR LOGINS

Here are several advanced methods for securing business logins:

1. **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA):** MFA requires users to provide two verification points.
2. **Passwordless Authentication:** Some emerging frameworks have abandoned the username and password authentication method entirely.
3. **Privileged Access Management (PAM):** PAM solutions offer secure monitoring and the enforcement of 'just-in-time' access and credential vaulting.
4. **Behavioral Analytics and Anomaly Detection:** Modern authentication systems employ AI-driven methods to detect unusual behavior in login attempts.
5. **Zero Trust Architecture:** This architecture adopts the simple principle of "never trust, always verify."

## MICROSOFT FORMS TIPS

With its robust feature set and seamless integration into the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, Microsoft Forms provides a secure and compliant platform for collecting and analyzing data.

The best way to get the most out of Forms is to follow a few simple tips:

- **Develop Objectives:** Every question should serve a purpose and not just take up space.
- **Use Branching:** This allows unnecessary questions to be removed based on the responses gathered.
- **Privacy:** Give users the option to not allow their personal identifiers to be stored.
- **Limit Open-Ended Responses:** When user responses are free-form and not standardized, it makes it difficult to quantify and analyze.

With the right guidance, resources, and training, businesses can fully harness Forms to transform raw data into actionable strategies, driving smarter decisions and long-term growth.

## TECHNOLOGY TRIVIA TIME



The question this month is:

What does the acronym "RAM" stand for?

The first person to email me at emma@attitudeit.ca with the correct answer gets a \$50 Amazon Gift Card!

## CREATING AN IT ROADMAP FOR SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

The IT roadmap is an outline for how technology will drive business objectives. It must always have the following:

- **Assessment:** Create an assessment of all IT assets to have a good starting point.
- **Business Objectives:** Identify the company's top goals over the next 1-3 years.
- **Technology Timelines:** Provide detailed schedules to ensure seamless integration.
- **Budget Forecast:** Calculate to eliminate hidden costs and surprise overages.

A well-maintained roadmap ensures organizational goals remain in focus as IT expansion continues. Here are tips to maintaining it:

- **Collaborate:** The document should reflect company-wide needs.
- **Able to Adapt:** As new technology becomes available, organizations need to update their roadmaps.
- **Partner With Experts:** Consider leveraging external experts for guidance and training opportunities. A phased approach remains the most effective way to achieve lasting impact and steady progress toward your organizational goals.

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## Mark your Calendars: Day of Caring: 26 Years of Community in Action

For 26 years, Day of Caring has brought together volunteers, community-minded businesses, and nonprofit partners to make a meaningful difference — one project at a time. Each June, across Northumberland County, teams of volunteers take on hands-on projects that help individuals, families, and agencies in need of a little extra support. From yard work and home repairs to community clean-ups and beyond, this day is a living example of what it means to care, together. Join Lakeport Power and volunteer with United Way Northumberland on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Be Part of the Next Chapter  
If you're a business, a volunteer team, a service club, or someone who just wants to roll up your sleeves and do some good — let's talk about Day of Caring 2026.

Darlene Robertson, Fund & Community Development Coordinator

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