

<https://www.rismedia.com>[\(/acesocial\)](#)[Login \(/ace2-login/\)](#) | [Learn More \(/acesocial\)](#)

POWER BROKER REPORT NOW LIVE
See Where Your Firm Ranks!

RISMedia 2020
POWER BROKER
REPORT

<http://rismedia.com/power-broker-survey-results-2020/>

Shining a Spotlight on Cyber Security

By Maria Patterson



Share This Post Now!

<https://rismedia.com/public-post?snn=TW&id=191927><https://rismedia.com/public-post?snn=LI&id=191927><https://rismedia.com/public-post?snn=FB&id=191927>

Why real estate professionals need to become aware and informed...fast

Everyone has heard at least one story about cyber fraud—a wire transfer intercepted by a hacker; an agent who clicked on a malicious link; or a brokerage held hostage by ransomware.

While such harrowing tales are alarming and increasing, the majority of real estate professionals still fail to prioritize cyber security. For many, in fact, it's not even on their radar.

This is something Craig Grant is determined to change. According to Grant, a national speaker who is the president and founder of the Real Estate Technology Institute (RETI) and RETI University, as well as a certified GRI and e-PRO® instructor, "My No. 1 concern is that cyber security is not on 95 percent of real estate professionals' radars. They don't pay attention to it, give it a lot of effort or put money toward it."

Yet, says Grant, a real estate professional's world is fraught with opportunity for cyber fraudsters. "The second you become a real estate professional, you are set up for failure in the cyber security world," he explains. "You are legally required to store documents and communications safely, but the typical real estate professional has zero training on the topic."



That's why, as an instructor dedicated to teaching cyber security strategies, Grant is committed to making real estate professionals aware and prepared.

"Real estate professionals don't realize that cyber fraud is a year-round issue," says Grant. "They may have heard a few horror stories, but they think it can't happen to them. I try to show them that it doesn't matter what size your company or market is; you're all targets because of the amount of data you're collecting and the size of the transactions."

As part of his educational effort, Grant is heavily involved in updates to the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) e-PRO® program. "I've been an instructor since 2009, and I'm now working with NAR to revamp the content, especially in terms of cyber security issues." At press time, the updated course was preparing to launch this October. Additionally, Grant has co-authored cyber security courses for CRS and built out GRI modules for 12 different states.

One of the most critical, yet overlooked, components of cyber security, says Grant, is investing in cyber insurance. "The typical real estate agent, broker and even association staff member thinks they're covered by their E&O insurance, but it doesn't cover one penny related to reputation damage or ransomware," he explains. "According to NAR research, 88 percent of real estate businesses would be out of business in six months without cyber insurance."

[CyberPolicy \(https://www.nar.realtor/realtor-benefits-program/risk-management/cyberpolicy\)](https://www.nar.realtor/realtor-benefits-program/risk-management/cyberpolicy)—an NAR REALTOR Benefits® Program partner—offers a comprehensive and customized cyber liability insurance program for REALTOR®-owned brokerages. Created specifically for real estate professionals, the plan provides access to preparedness tools, premium discounts and specialized coverage, which also extends to clients. Additionally, members receive support to help quickly restore business in the event of a cyber attack or fraud.

According to Grant, cyber insurance policies are affordable and offer peace of mind. "I explain to real estate professionals that they're a target, and I point out their weaknesses, such as needing better antivirus software and stronger passwords. What drives it home is the idea of wire transfer fraud. That's when they start to understand the need for cyber insurance."

Grant emphasizes that it's incumbent upon real estate professionals to educate their clients as well. "The second they start working with a new customer, real estate professionals need to educate them about wire fraud and have them sign agreements regarding wire transfer instructions, and add a legal disclaimer to their email signatures. This will protect them in front of a judge."

Grant shares his other top tips regarding cyber security for real estate professionals:

- **Start taking it seriously and attend classes.** "Learn about cyber security and start practicing it. Most small business owners are asleep at the wheel."
- **Have a top-level antivirus on every device.** "The average person doesn't realize they are at risk on a phone or tablet, so hackers go after those devices like crazy."
- **Get cyber liability insurance.**
- **Learn methods for creating and remembering unhackable passwords.**
- **Understand the dangers of WiFi.** "WiFi is the easiest thing on the planet to hack. Whatever environment you're in, make sure it's secure."
- **Build your business in the Cloud.** "If you can't download everything in the Cloud, and you're attacked with ransomware, then you're paying that ransom."

REALTORS® can gain further insight into cyber security and technology through [NAR's Tech Edge events \(http://nartechedge.com/\)](http://nartechedge.com/). According to Grant, "Tech Edge is one day of packed learning. There are several short, 20-minute presentations, so you're not sitting through four-hour classes. They're presented by people who really understand technology—REALTORS® and vendors with boots on the ground."

This year's NAR Tech Edge events have pivoted from several one-day, in-person events across the U.S. to a three-part virtual series. The last video of the series, available on Aug. 27, will focus on data security.

While there is a lot to learn in the arena of cyber security, Grant emphasizes that the most important lesson is to realize it can happen to you. "Realize that everyone is a target," he says. "You have to be more vigilant and aware of what's going on."