**Date:** November 19th, 2022

**To:** Mr. Chris Taylor

**From:** Mark Kardash

**Subject:** Proposal for Separation of Duties within the Company

**Memo to Supervisor:**

Since its foundation, Lawn & Order has been allowing only one individual in each department to access certain online features. While this has so far proven quite effective, our operations can be optimized even more. Allow me to recommend a way of improving the separation of duties and increasing overall work efficiency. In the following report, I will examine the topics of:

1. Separating the responsibilities of our employees in the most effective way possible.
2. Creating agreements about IT confidentiality.
3. Introducing new job rotation policies for the company.

I have included a more detailed explanation of the issues I am referring to in the report below. As someone who shares Lawn & Order’s values, my goal is to eliminate the serious threat I believe looms over the company.

**Executive Summary:**

I am Manager for Customer Service at the landscaping company Lawn & Order Services. Founded in 2010, it has gained a respectable number of customers from Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia. To provide them with the best experience possible, I often interact with employees from various departments, and have noticed that some less-than-secure IT practices are currently being used. The problem stems from an initial lack of knowledge about proper software security techniques during the formation of the company. Today, we can significantly improve Lawn & Order’s security, and increase customer trust, by addressing the following limitations:

* Access to our client database was only given to Jack Wilkinson, who uses a password and ID provided by the IT firm CloudSecure.
* Sandra Adams is the only employee with access credentials to Lawn & Order’s WordPress-based website.
* Marsha Davis’s absence or exit could leave the company without its WordPress-based blog, her being the only one with access to it.
* Jared Quinn is the only one with access to payroll data, guarding all the employee salary information.

The above arrangement can cause many problems, ranging from customer dissatisfaction and disruption of workflow to serious security compromise. Below, I shall dive deeper into these risks, individually break down each one, examine potential solutions, and apply them to this situation.

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**Definition of the Problem**

Over the last 12 years, our company has experienced significant growth. To maintain this progress, there are some scenarios we must prevent. For instance, Mr. Wilkinson’s absence or departure could restrict our access to client information, leaving us unable to take orders and disrupting the working routine. Should Ms. Davis have a medical emergency, we would be left without a way to advertise our services, and should something similar happen to Ms. Adams, our customers would not be able to order online or see major updates. Mr. Quinn’s absence would perhaps be most disastrous, leaving employees unable to properly receive their salaries. Furthermore, any of those employees can use their access to company software against Lawn & Order, should they, for any reason, desire it. To resolve this issue, we must first look at whether current practices are simply being incorrectly implemented, or if they need to be changed altogether.

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**Potential Solutions**

In preventing the above issues from sabotaging our workflow, we will first review the concept known as separation of duties. According to the California Department of General Services, the practice is an important advantage for businesses and services because, if done correctly, it “reduces the risk of fraud and errors, and is essential for safeguarding state assets” (Para.1). Therefore, if a single task, or access to information, is given to more than one individual, it prevents the data from not only being lost, but also from being used by its sole keeper for malicious purposes. For smaller-scale businesses with limited staff, such as our own, the Department’s website also suggests duties are rotated between various team members (Para.3).

Based on the facts above, Lawn & Order could benefit from a reorganization and re-distribution of tasks. Specifically, since both our blog and website are run on WordPress, we could allow Sandra Adams to have access to the blog as well, and Marsha Davis to access the website. This way, should one of them be absent at some point, the other would prevent total disaster by also having access to their workspace. The same applies to Jared Quinn and Jack Wilkinson, who could exchange credentials for the client database and payroll, respectively, to access each other’s area in case of emergency. CloudSecure could be notified of their mutual permission for software use.

Despite the need to redistribute duties, there is still a huge risk that, in the hands of multiple individuals, data will be more easily spread, and can even end up in the hands of competitors. This possibility can be eliminated by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA’s). According to techvice.com, an NDA is beneficial precisely due to its purpose of protecting confidential company information, including that which could give the competition an advantage (Techvice.com). To properly create an NDA, it is necessary to first define what it is meant to protect, clearly state its conditions, include the names of those involved, and explain, in detail, the consequences of not following it (Para.5). A proper agreement must be a clearly written, detailed document that is easily understood by the signee, but, at the same time, avoids exposing trade secrets (Para.8). A Non-Disclosure Agreement can therefore provide Lawn & Order with legal protection of both its own, and its customers’ information.

Specifically in our case, we would need to create NDA’s that make sure our four employees don’t reveal the access credentials they’re responsible for to anyone outside the company. Under “anyone”, we include parties such as:

* Family members and relatives.
* Non-professional friends.
* Other closely related individuals (Ex. Neighbors).
* Obviously, competitors of Lawn & Order.

The information protected will be:

* Company Blog Username and Password
* Company Website Username and Password
* Client Database ID and Password
* Payroll Database ID and Password

In the case that any of the employees violates the agreement, the consequence could be a monetary fine, the amount of which can be determined later.

Finally, it would be a good idea to investigate the concept of job rotation, touched upon in a previous paragraph. The widely known job board Indeed.com explains that in a job rotation “staff cycle through different roles in their company according to a fixed schedule” (Para.1). This reduces the stress put on employees when dealing with a particular task. Per the same board, for a job rotation to be effective, it must be thoroughly planned, consider the needs of those involved, be open to adjustment, and have real, visible results (Indeed.com). When these criteria are met, the practice can make employees more satisfied with, and interested in, their tasks, while allowing them to learn new skills and climb the professional ladder more rapidly. It can also reduce the employer’s need to hire new recruits, since multiple tasks will now be done by particular people (Indeed.com).

Our company can also benefit from job rotation. It was already mentioned earlier that to avoid being stuck due to the absence of one employee, credentials to each other’s workspaces could be mutually shared. But an even better way to ensure a smooth workflow is to start rotating their positions. This way, an employee will be properly introduced and acclimatized to the environment of the person they can one day replace. For example, Ms. Davis could start learning to run the website, and Ms. Adams the blog. Some familiarity will exist on both sides, since the two elements run on WordPress. Similarly, Jack Wilkinson can undergo training to oversee payroll, while Jared Quinn could be made familiar with our customer database. This would make them able to step in for one another if one of them leaves.

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**Conclusion:**

While there may still be much more to discuss about the solutions presented above, when combined with each other, they have a high probability of boosting Lawn & Order’s progress. The only additional thing that can be suggested here is to review Lawn & Order’s finances and develop a plan for how much of the company’s budget will be used for which solution. Professionally speaking, we seem to be on a good path towards success, our customer numbers growing, and geographical range remaining stable. However, to optimize our functionality as a company, as well as avoid future crises, we must perform some significant reforms, and expand the range of duties each of our employees is assigned.

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