

16 PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENSURE COMPANYWIDE TEAMS KEEP THEIR SOFTWARE UP TO DATE

January 18, 2023 • Forbes

While tech leaders and teams know regular software updates are essential for maintaining and improving the performance and security of devices and applications, much of the rest of a company's staff may see them as periodic nuisances that can safely be put off "until I have time." However, neglecting regular updates—especially security-focused patches—can not only lead to slower-performing software (and missing out on new "bells and whistles") but can also leave users and the company vulnerable to cyberattack.

Fortunately, from focused education efforts to automation to gamification and more, there are many options to increase awareness of the importance of software updates and ease the burden of keeping up with them—for both tech leaders and employees. Below, 16 members of Forbes Technology Council share some practical ways a tech leader can get their companywide team

to update their software (and stay up to date).

1. Lean Into The Power Of Team Incentives

Use the power of collective team incentives to drive positive outcomes. Organize a friendly contest with rewards for the teams that carry out predefined tasks on time. And leverage the power of reward interdependence: Simply put, tie each individual employee's performance to their team's. Members are motivated to complete their tasks for fear of bringing down their team's performance. It works!

- Judit Sharon, OnPage Corporation

2. Classify Updates By Urgency And/Or Necessity

Modern tech generally updates itself in the background and informs users of new features, bells and whistles. For older software, two of the more practical ways to influence users to update are 1. classifying updates into "must update," "good to update"

and "optional update" and 2. proactively and transparently informing team members about the benefits of the updates.

- Ajay Jotwani, i2Chain

3. Ensure Each Person Understands Their Vital Role In Cyber Resilience

Create a culture of cyber resiliency. That starts with investing in the talent you have, making them feel that they are part of a team where each person plays a vital role in securing company assets. There are important ideas to share: "Be fit for purpose and be ready to go. Time is not on our side. Speed is the most important currency in cyber resilience: the speed to implement, the speed to react and the speed to recover." -

Kevin Lynch, Optiv

4. Make The Upgrade As Understandable And Easy As Possible

Repeated communication is crucial with updates, as is sharing clearly and succinctly why they are important and what they do



to make everyone's environment better—for example, enhancing security and/or speed. Sharing screenshots of the change and making the upgrade as understandable and easy as possible should be your goal. No one likes surprises, least of all when it interrupts the technical systems on which they depend.

- Ainsley MacLean, Mid-Atlantic
Permanente Medical Group | Kaiser
Permanente Mid-Atlantic States

5. Consider A SaaS Solution To Take Updates Off Users' Plates

Updates change what business users have gotten used to, and they take time. But it's a tech leader's job to educate the staff on why they're critical for business operations. Then, do your best to ease them. If you switch to software as a service, updates won't require any effort from the business. Otherwise, consider your staff's preferences when deciding on timing—overnight updates are better. And check to see if you can automate the whole process.

- Nadya Knysh, a1qa

6. Gamify The Outcomes

One of the easiest ways for us has been to gamify the outcomes. For simple patch cycles, we have often entered every user who applies the patches and reboots into a lottery for small gift cards (such as Starbucks, Dunkin' and so on).

This creates a small incentive for them to get the update done. We also have been known to publish organizational scores with small security prizes for organizations that achieve 100% compliance before a deadline.

- Michael Adler, N-able

7. Implement Automated Updates

Implement automated updates that are scheduled to occur during off-peak hours, such as at night or on weekends. This can help to minimize any disruption to employees and ensure that updates are installed in a timely manner. An automation can also be configured to install only critical updates, rather than all available updates; this can reduce the amount of time and effort required to install and test.

- Milan Dordevic, Proctorio Incorporated

8. Identify Champions To Encourage Teammates

While updates might not seem like changes, they are disruptions, and a key factor to help teams adopt change is to identify champions. Aside from making updates mandatory, having champions among your teams who have bought into the importance of updates can help. Nobody wants mom or dad to tell them what to do, but when a friend is asking, it's better received.

- Jonathan Cardella, Ventive, LLC

9. Schedule A Companywide 'Quiet Hour'

Schedule a companywide "quiet hour" with no online calls or meetings. Then, request that everyone in the company use this hour to update their laptops and PCs.

- Maria Scott, TAINA Technology

10. Keep The Responsibility For Updates With IT

It goes without saying—or should—that entrusting users with software updates is a fool's errand. It's not the user's job, and going that route absolves IT professionals of the responsibility for basic patch management, much of which is easy to automate. Tools such as Windows Server Update Services make it practical to schedule, track and even force critical updates.

- Adam Stern, Infinitely Virtual

11. Have An Internal System For Monitoring And Enforcing Company Updating Policies

Security should be a cornerstone of the organization. Having up-to-date, patched versions of software turns attackers' focus away from you to those who have not implemented these safeguards. While it's a good idea to start by educating employees, it's also essential to put an internal system in place for monitoring and



enforcing company policies and procedures related to software updates.

- Robert Strzelecki, TenderHut

12. Schedule Periodic Production Downtime For Updates

Build in production downtime for mandatory updates, especially if they occur on a regular basis.

Set up a routine for monthly (or quarterly) rollouts, where company servers may be inaccessible during the update. Give people notice ahead of time, a notice when the downtime starts and a notice when the server is back up again. Don't leave critical updates in the hands of the individual.

- Nik Froehlich, Saritasa

13. Have The Tech Team Regularly Consult With Each Team Member

Companies need to ensure that tech teams schedule at least annual consultations with each member of the team. These

consultations can be used to ensure that all tech is up to date and that team members can provide feedback on how IT can better support them. Tech teams need to work across the business and interact with every member of the team versus being sequestered in their own silos.

- Blair Currie, Snibble Corp.

14. Leverage Mobile Device Management Software

The most effective—and by far the most practical—way to update software is to use mobile device management software to automate this process for you. Getting humans to do anything manually is hard (and thankless), but it's even more cumbersome when it relates to tasks around staying compliant. Automating these updates will save you a ton of time and a ton of grief from your users.

- Sterling Lanier, TurnKey

15. Emphasize The Security Issues

In today's security environment, where there is daily news of cyberattacks happening around the globe, it's imperative that non-technical employees are trained to do updates on a timely basis. Many of these updates are strictly for the purposes of security and not necessarily for feature or function improvements. Continuing education is key to ensuring ongoing updates are applied in a timely manner.

- Kevin Beasley, VAI

16. Make Updates Part of Employees' Routines

Make updates a part of everyone's routine—like setting a clock to send them. Reinforcing the routine could involve setting aside specific times for updates, providing clear instructions and offering support. If you make updates part of the routine, employees see it as a natural part of their work, and the company's systems can perform better and more securely.

- Andres Zunino, ZirconTech

The Forbes logo is displayed in white serif font on a black rectangular background.