

Separate Your Brown and Personal Data Lives

patricia falcon - 2023-06-08 - Comments (0) - General Security

While this article is aimed at all Brown employees, especially those with hybrid or fully remote work schedules who live and work in the same space, it can also be useful for anyone who wants to better manage their data lives. It will cover why this is important and provide simple tips on how to separate your personal and work digital footprints.

Risks and Rewards

If you've ever dealt with a balled-up string of lights at the bottom of your holiday box, you know how frustrating it can be to untangle something. Or you may have experienced the tedious and time-consuming task of sorting through stacks of random family photos discovered when cleaning out old file cabinets, as you try to decide which to keep, recycle, or pass along to cousin Janine.

Our digital lives can get as tangled and cluttered if we're not careful. A departmental report with confidential data could be accidentally downloaded onto a personal computer. An exchange with your accountant might end up in your Brown email or the attachment in your Brown Google Drive when you meant to direct it to your personal Gmail account.

Risks resulting from mixing personal information in with your Brown files or on Brown devices -- or the opposite, and storing Brown data on a personal device -- might include one of these scenarios:

- You unexpectedly become ill and unable to fulfill your work duties. While on medical leave, your supervisor needs emergency access to your Gmail and Google Drives to preserve business continuity.
- You become subject to a litigation hold and all of your Google email, chat and Drive files are placed in Google Vault and would be possibly discoverable should the case move to trial.
- You transferred confidential information to your personal unencrypted laptop to work on during a business trip. The device is stolen and the data on it is compromised.

The best way to avoid these risks is to separate your personal and work data lives.

Rewards from making some simple changes include:

- Saving extra work when preparing to depart Brown or move to another position.
- Fewer complications for managers, who might need to scramble when staff depart Brown or are unavailable.

- Knowing that you are complying with Brown policy, such as the University Code of Conduct, which states that the use of University resources “is primarily reserved for business purposes.”
- Preventing risks that can arise from mixing the two.
- And perhaps most importantly, promoting a healthy distance between your work and home lives.

Simple Steps to Avoid the Risks and Ensure the Rewards

Like so many good security and privacy practices, it starts with common sense. To separate your data, establish good boundaries, such as:

Limit your Brown Email Address to Brown-related communications and activities:

- Be a purist about your Brown email address. Only provide it to others for matters directly related to Brown. This will prevent others from sending personal email to your Brown account and intermixing it with your Brown work email.
- Likewise, do not use your @brown.edu address when establishing non-Brown accounts, such as an online retailer, and keep its password unique as well. Should either be exposed in a data breach of that retailer, this prevents your Brown account and password from being exposed as well.
- Review incoming emails for your Brown and personal accounts for anything “misdirected”. For example, if your @brown.edu address is subscribed to a service that is not Brown-related, update it to your personal address (and vice versa).

Divvy up devices:

- Like your Brown email account, only use your Brown computer for Brown-related work. When you’re done for the day, switch it off and turn on your personal device to respond to personal email or work on a home project.
- If you are using your personal phone during the workday, for two-factor authentication or to monitor personal email, refrain from downloading anything onto it.

Create custom browser profiles:

- Having different profiles lets you keep your browser information -- such as its template, look, bookmarks, history and other settings -- bundled together. You can, for example, set up your Brown profile with a certain color for easy recognition, bookmarking all your frequent sites, and then create another profile for personal use.
- This also is a good option if sharing a computer at work or home. Here are links to instructions for the most common browsers: [Chrome](#) | [Firefox](#) | [Edge](#) | [Vivaldi](#)
Note: Safari does not offer the option to create individual browser profiles.

Watch where you put that:

- Brown offers [various storage options](#) for your files. Take care not to save personal files in Brown storage areas. This is especially true for downloads to Google Drive, such as saving a photo taken with your phone. If you have a Brown and personal account on it, make sure to direct the file to the appropriate account.
- Couple these good practices with another: periodically clean out your device's Downloads folder. You and your device will benefit from not having files around that are no longer needed.
- Windows users can configure [Storage Sense](#) to automatically delete files in their Recycle Bin as well as Downloads folder based on desired criteria.
- Apple can easily review their [stored files across locations](#) and update their setting to [optimize their storage options](#).

Social Media:

- If you have a personal social media presence, keep it separate. Don't use your Brown account or give the impression you are speaking on Brown's behalf.
- Follow the suggestion in Brown's [Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices](#) for Brown-related social media accounts and create an account with your departmental brown.edu email address. If you are setting up social media accounts on behalf of your department then be sure to add your shared departmental brown.edu address as an administrator. This will ensure a successful transfer of administrative power if and when you no longer are responsible for updating the account.

Relevant Resources

- [Decide How to Store and Share Files](#)
- [Leaving Brown - FAQ](#)
- [Protect Your Social Media Accounts](#)
- Managing Files on Your Device
Apple: [Find and delete files on your Mac, Optimize storage space on your Mac](#)
Windows: [Manage drive space with Storage Sense](#)
- [Secure a Compromised Gmail Account](#)
- [Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices](#)
- [Transfer Ownership of Google Documents](#)
- [Use Shared Drives at Brown](#)
- [Using Chrome Profiles with Your Brown Google Workspace Account](#)