

How can online-based harms impact SME businesses?

With Tim Horsfall and Nicola Bryne

TIM HORSFALL: Hi, my name's Tim Horsfall. I'm from Aviva and I'm here today with Nicola Byrne from RiskEye. And we're going to talk today about online harm arising from social media. Recent Aviva research of over 500 SME businesses looked at the impact of social harm in the online space and how that impacted small businesses.

We found that 39% of businesses are concerned about the impact of negative reviews, but 25% of businesses have actually suffered from that. What's your understanding in this space?

NICOLA BYRNE: Well, for the past 20 years, many of us have been encouraged to put ourselves online and put ourselves front and centre, and we've been given all the tools to put ourselves there from every platform in a very complex way. So there can be conversations, there can be advertising, there can be marketing, there can be many different uses of your social media. What most people forget is that it's a 'two-way medium'. So people have to be prepared for that 24 hour nature of that medium. And what we are seeing is that while everybody was so keen to jump into the space to win customers, that the harm when it happens can actually start costing you a lot of business and causing a lot of harm and a lot of pain. And so you've gone from taking your own good money, putting it out there and then 25% of your respondents discovered this is hurting me. It's not a good thing, it's actually a negative. So our job now with Aviva is to make sure those clients are safe, to make sure that it is safe, that those 25% who experience the harm have somewhere to go and help is available at the other end of a telephone. And to date, cyber has covered off all the hardware and the software and the data attacks, but nobody thought about the conversation and the reputational side of it. And it's very hard because reputation means so many things to so many people and social means so many things to so many people. So what started as a simple, 'I put out a marketing post' can suddenly see you closing the doors on your business because the harm has become tangible. And that's why RiskEye are now in the Aviva family because Aviva have recognised, and the research now just validates that, that this gap has always been there.

TIM HORSFALL: Our research also found that SME business owners will tend to respond in the heat of the moment and not think of the implications in attempt to back their own corner. They don't often seek advice and necessarily do the right thing.

NICOLA BYRNE: The problem with social media is that it's a personal medium and people put on their personal hats when they pick up their telephone or their computer because it's their personal equipment.

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But the old rules of customer service still apply. This is a public medium, this is seen by everybody. So you're now doing your dirty laundry in public. So you can't be personal. It can't be about you anymore and it's an emotional medium. So if you're in a good mood, bad mood, that tone will come across in the conversation whether you believe it or not and everybody else can judge you on it. So the secret is to remember that every time you pick up your phone and you're in business, it's not personal. It is a consumer channel that you have to talk to as if you would as if they phoned on the telephone. So if you're not prepared to say it to their face and if you're not prepared to say it over the telephone and be recorded, then you absolutely should not put it on social media and it's easily a trap fallen into because we're only seeing... so we speak in the whole spectrum. If I speak to you in person, you see tone, language and words. The words only account for 7%. So when we get to digital, it's 38% is missing for my tone, 55% my body language and you're left with 7% words. So it's easy to interpret that 7% by adding back your own emotion and your own tone to what you perceive it to be.

TIM HORSFALL: So cyber policies typically include cover for reputation management expenses or PR (Public Relations) consultants. But it's really hard to understand what that means on the claim to claim basis. And I think RiskEye goes so much further.

NICOLA BYRNE: RiskEye address the harm. So we are between the cyber product that is looking after data theft and trying to break into systems, into your network, reputation management, which is then trying to talk to the public about managing the event that may have happened. RiskEye sits right in between the two and deals with the harm and it's harm that comes in words, pictures or videos. We stand back to back with the traditional cyber defences that are there and we're very comprehensive in understanding whether it's a platform issue, a legal issue, what the risk is, is it a person with a different intent causing the risk? We get straight in and deal with the harm and the harm is complex and we have very complex systems for dealing with that.

TIM HORSFALL: So that's really good to hear Nicola. And the reason I say that is cyber is not like traditional insurances. What I often say to customers is cyber is actually the response service first because people don't know how to deal with what's going on and they need the expert incident response service to be there to back them in their corner. And it's great to see that RiskEye can do that with Aviva to deal with the harm as it's happening and that should be the solution.

NICOLA BYRNE: Or if RiskEye got the true picture and if it was breaking a rule or it is defamation or if it is harm, there is somebody out there who's most likely a regulator over this site, that could go. So in that instance, you'd most likely go and you'd remove it through a regulator of some description. But you'd have to know how to do that and that's what RiskEye is special in if it's not the truth.

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So Tim, underwriting is particularly challenging because RiskEye is so new, the world has moved on so quickly and digital is also new, how has Aviva managed to place, in underwriting terms, our service into your products?

TIM HORSFALL: That's the great thing. We've been able to wrap the RiskEye service in because what it actually does for the customers is it gives them a better experience. It reduces the life cycle of a claim. It reduces the impact of business interruption loss. So overall it improves the service and the claims experience of the customer.

So Nicola, thanks so much for coming and joining me today so we could chat through how RiskEye fits into the Aviva cyber response proposition.

NICOLA BYRNE: Thanks, Tim. We look forward to working into the future with you.

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