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***Password, Password, Who Has the Password?***

Planning ahead for disability, dementia or the potential of one's death is never fun. But if you want to prevent a potential disaster for your family or estate administrators, it is essential. And one of the most important pieces of information you need to have available are online passwords. Without a system in place to pass on your passwords, life can get very complicated.



An extreme example of the complications a missing password can have was the unexpected death of the founder and CEO of a Canadian cryptocurrency exchange, QuadrigaCX. His death and failure to leave passwords behind left \$190 million in cryptocurrency belonging to the clients of QuadrigaCX totally inaccessible. There may never be a way for the investors to recover their funds.

**COMPUTER, PAD AND SMARTPHONE PASSWORDS** – Given the tendency to store important information digitally, including personal contacts, access to your computers and smartphone will be essential for someone trying to pick up the pieces when you are unable to do so.

**EMAIL PASSWORDS** – It used to be if you wanted to know what bills were due or what accounts an individual had, you checked their mail for statements. With the push to go paperless, many companies send statements via email. Without access to your email, bills, account statements, expiration notices and business emails are unobtainable.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS – Administering online banking and investment accounts has become easy and convenient as long as you have the right password. Without a password, it can be very difficult for a family member or executor to manage financial issues. Financial accounts include far more than just investment and bank accounts. There's also PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, Android Pay, Samsung Pay, Google Wallet, credit cards, online retailers and more.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE BUSINESS ACCOUNTS – If you operate a business using online sites, such as a company website, electronic storefronts, Ebay or other online exchanges, without a password it will be difficult if not impossible for the sites to be modified or discontinued short of letting them expire or go into default.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTS – Without password access to close accounts, Facebook, Linked In, Twitter and other social media accounts can linger on long after an individual stops using the accounts or dies.

Complicating the issue even more is the encouragement that complex, unrelated passwords be used for different accounts and that those passwords be changed regularly.

Some options for passing on passwords include:

- Provide your passwords to a trusted family member. The catch here is the word “trusted.” Unfortunately, most financial fraud does not result from an unknown hacker, but a family member.
- Write down and place all passwords in a safe deposit box. Your executor or guardian/attorney-in-fact (in the case of incapacitation) can gain access to the safe deposit box through a power of attorney. The catch is the need to keep the list updated as passwords change.
- A digital wallet can be used to securely store passwords. With the wallet, you just need to provide a family member or executor with the password to access the digital wallet. This again could be through a secure safe deposit box. Not all digital wallets are created equal so research your options carefully before using.

Regardless of whether you use one of these options or find a better solution, make certain that in an emergency, the lack of a password doesn't cause even more emergencies.



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