

Bits & Bytes

Insider Tips On How To Use Technology To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably



“As a business owner , I know you don’t have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That’s where we shine! Call us and put an end to your IT problems forever.”

Joe Stoll, President
Technical Action Group (TAG)
JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com

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The Shocking State of Data Security in Small Business—Are YOU Making These Terrible Mistakes?



According to a survey of 2,100 businesses conducted by Applied Research and commissioned by Symantec, the vast majority of businesses are frequent victims of cyber attacks, data loss and non-existent backup and recovery systems. Here are just a few of the shocking facts discovered:

- 74% of the businesses surveyed were affected by cyber attacks – including hackers, viruses, worms, etc. – in the past 12 months.
- 62% had lost at least one mobile device in the last 12 months, and 100% admitted they had no password protection on these devices.
- Less than 1/3 of the devices lost had a way to wipe these lost devices clean to prevent unauthorized access to confidential data.
- 42% of businesses have lost confidential data in the last 12 months and 40% reported a direct financial loss because of this.
- 47% of those surveyed said they STILL do NOT backup their data!

To be perfectly blunt, this is just plain stupid and irresponsible behavior on the part of businesses who allow these attacks to happen. Even worse, it’s a black eye on their PR if the confidential information is CLIENT data, such as credit card numbers, bank account information, medical records or other important identity information like social insurance numbers, birth dates, banking information, passwords, etc.

ALL businesses know of the threats to their computer network, be it viruses, hackers or internal employees; not taking some simple measures to protect against theft and loss of confidential data is completely foolish – not to mention expensive!

If you have any doubt whatsoever about whether you’re backing up your data properly, protecting mobile devices and maintaining up-to-date firewall, patches and security updates, NOW is the time to get this fixed! Call us for a free, no-obligation consultation, and we’ll be happy to review your current network security and backups to see if you truly ARE protected, or if you’re more likely to end up another statistic.

Shiny New Gadget of the Month:



Digital Pet Cam

Attention all pet lovers! Have you ever wondered what your pet sees and does when you're away? Does he nap or get into all sorts of mischief? Clip on Uncle Milton's Pet's Eye View camera and find out!

You can choose between 1, 5, or 15-minute intervals for your pictures. The photos are taken automatically and can be uploaded to your PC or Mac via the included USB cable for easy viewing. It's lightweight, compact and simply clips right onto your pet's collar!

- Auto-interval photo settings
- Internal memory stores up to 40 photos
- 640 x 480 resolution for 4" x 6" prints
- PC and Mac compatible
- Includes USB cable for uploading photos
- Includes rechargeable Lithium-ion 100 mAh battery.

Collar and the subsequent dog training you might discover you need are not included.

How To Raise Your Profits By Raising Your Profile

I recently listened to an interview with David Avrin, author of the book, "It's Not Who You Know, It's Who Knows You." His message is pretty simple but powerful: the more your marketplace KNOWS your brand, the more sales and profits you'll generate. I highly recommend his book since it contains a lot of good, common sense strategies for small business owners. Here are a few of the tips from David that I wanted to pass on to my readers:

You Can't Control Your Brand:

You can only INFLUENCE it. I actually thought this insight was very powerful. If you think about it, your 'brand' is formulated in the mind of your customer. It's the feeling they get when they think of your company, product or service; but since the CUSTOMER generates the feeling, only they get to decide what that association is. To that end, your brand is the sum total of everything you do. For example, you eat at a restaurant where the food is outstanding but the bathrooms are dirty, the waiter is rude and they get your drink order wrong...twice. Unfortunately, the food may not be enough to get you to come back again.

An Important Question You Should Know The Answer To:

As business owners we spend YEARS perfecting our services, working on our operations and building our business – yet most of us only spend minutes thinking about what message we want to portray to the marketplace. During this interview, David posed the following idea: "What question do you want to be the answer to?" For us, it is..."How can we finally get our technology to do what we want it to do and boost our business"?

Marketing Is Not A Department:

Most people think marketing is just about web sites, brochures and postcards. Not so. Marketing should infiltrate every aspect of your business. To that end, make a list of every touch point you have with your customers and prospects and ask yourself, "Am I being INTENTIONAL about how we interact with our clients to make sure we are fulfilling our brand promise?" That would include often overlooked areas like how you answer the phone, or what you print on the invoices you send out.

Being "Good" Is Not Good Enough...Anymore:

With SO many choices, being "good" at what you do is no longer an advantage in the marketplace – it's the entry point to doing business. Think of how many "good" restaurants you go to, or how many "good" stores you frequent. Chances are they deliver a satisfactory product or service, but not one that blows you away. In order to truly win the hearts (and wallets!) of our clients, we have to work on being outstanding.

Would You Pay \$1 To Get \$3.25 In Change?

Who wouldn't want to shop at a store that can deliver that! Is this some Nigerian business opportunity? Not at all...

A review of the services we deliver as part of our Professional Care plan, showed that our clients receive an average of \$3.25 in services for every \$1.00 they spend with us (and \$2.50 for our Essential Care clients). This is based on a cost comparison between hiring a full-time, beginner technician or outsourcing to us. And that's not taking into consideration the combined experience our team brings to your organization that you WOULDN'T get by hiring a single person.

Of course you don't see a lot of the work that goes into our services because they are done behind the scenes or after hours so that we don't disturb you while you're working. But in a time where saving money is more important than ever, it IS worth noting that you made a smart decision to outsource your services to us!

3 Reasons To Have a Blog—Even If Nobody Reads It

Building a massive following online is no easy task. But before you give up on your company blog due to the disappointing number of people who read and comment on it, here are 3 reasons to reconsider:

1. **Search Engine Optimization.** If for no other reason, blogging weekly about a particular topic will work wonders for your search engine optimization. Make sure your blog entries frequently include the keywords that people are likely to use when searching for your services online, but avoid spamming the blog (overusing the words). There's no scientific percentage here; just don't repeat them so often that your writing seems unnatural to your readers.
2. **Free PR.** The media is constantly surfing the web for content and for experts who can provide content and commentary. All it takes is one reporter to find you online and you could get tons of free publicity. You can bolster your chances of getting mentioned by writing about current events in the world or local news. For example, if you sell insurance and a natural disaster hits your town, you should blog about useful tips for people submitting claims to their insurance agents or how to determine how much insurance you should have, etc.
3. **Indirect Selling.** Writing stories about projects you are working on, clients you're serving or case studies is a great way to showcase your expertise and "indirectly" sell services. Of course, you can also use your blog for new product or service launches and get direct input from clients and prospects on new products and services they want to see.

Social Media Policies in The Workplace

Back in November, the National Labor Relations Board in the US issued a Complaint alleging that an employer illegally terminated an employee who posted disparaging remarks about her supervisor on her personal Facebook page. The posting referred to her supervisor as a "psychiatric patient" and used several vulgarities, which resulted in other employees chiming in (Associated Press, November 2010).

While the Complaint is only an accusation and not a formal ruling from the NLRB, the repercussions of this action are critically important for employers of both unionized and non-unionized employees alike. Many employers are now reviewing their social media policies with a view to determining what they can lawfully prohibit employees from posting online.

Although we cannot provide any legal advice, one of the things we can help our clients with is establishing an acceptable use policy that outlines how employees can use company resources, such as their e-mail, Internet and electronic equipment. We can also help by setting up monitoring software that can either allow management to govern employee access to certain web sites, such as gambling, porn, career sites, etc., or block employees from those sites all together. If you want to keep employees focused on being productive at work, then give us a call for a free consultation and trial of this software.

Can Criminals Use Your GPS To Burglarize Your Home?

Recently I heard of someone who had their car broken into while they were at a football game in the US. Things stolen included a GPS from the dashboard. When the victims got home, they found their house ransacked and everything worth anything stolen. The thieves used the GPS to guide them to the house. They then used the garage remote control to open the door to gain entry to the house. The thieves knew the owners were at the football game, and they knew when the game was to finish, so they knew how much time they had to clean house. **True Or False?** While there are cases in which GPS devices have been used in crimes against their owners, this story is a "friend of a friend" e-mail legend according to www.Snopes.com. That said, there is a valuable lesson: Don't leave valuables in the car! GPS devices, like cell phones and laptops, are expensive electronic devices that are attractive to thieves. Plus, you should always make it a habit to lock your electronic devices using a strong password (one that contains upper and lowercase letters and numbers).

Attention Smartphone Users— Learn About These Cool Apps For Your Business

App: Tripit Travelling
Company: Tripit Inc.

Why It Rocks:

Traveling to meet with clients, collaborate with partners or attend a trade show? Forward your booking confirmation details to plans@tripit.com and the Tript app organizes and shares your itinerary with family, colleagues and even social networking contacts, making it easier to coordinate schedules. Itineraries can be customized to include weather, maps and directions.

Available On: Android, Blackberry and iPhone

Price: The basic version is free. Pro, at \$49 a year includes one-year memberships to Hertz#1 Club Gold and Regus Gold. Tript for Business starts at \$29 a month for up to 10 users.

App: Sales CRM EZi
Company: EZi Phone Apps Pty Ltd.

Why It Rocks: You can manage and track sales opportunities and generate revenue forecasts with Sales CRM EZi. View promising prospects and set communication or action plans for each lead. Overdue actions are highlighted in red. Also included are user-defined sales status updates and commission calculation tools.

Available On: iPhone

Price: \$9.99

Thanks for the Kind Words...

“As a Vice-President of a fast growing business, I have quite a few things to worry about, but one of the things that I don’t worry about anymore is losing all the irreplaceable data we have and our systems.

We are a fast-growing company and our network holds a lot of critical data that we could never afford to lose; but if there was a hardware failure with our server or had a disaster like a fire, flood or theft, I know that we wouldn’t be out of business because Technical Action Group’s ‘TAGuard Backup and Disaster Recovery Service for Small Business’ can get our data back to us, with a new server, within a few short days. TAG is constantly monitoring our backups and our network to make sure nothing is going wrong that would jeopardize the security of our data and our records. You can’t put a price on that!

Neal Dance
President
The Solar Group

Spring Clean Your Computers For Maximum Performance

With Spring in the air, now is a good time to do an annual clean up of the computers, servers and electronic equipment in your office, both inside and out. Failure to thoroughly clean your computers and servers at least once or twice a year will result in decreased performance and possibly even system failures. Here’s why:

- ◆ Dust clogs the computer’s cooling system causing it to heat up, damaging sensitive electronic equipment. Dust can also cause fan noise and (believe it or not) slow performance!
- ◆ Crumbs and dirt in your keyboard can cause keys to stick and crunchy sounds when typing. Plus, it’s just gross and unhealthy; do you know there are more germs on your computer keyboard than the average public toilet?
- ◆ Dust, fingerprints and dirt build-up will make your computer monitor dim and fuzzy.

But the physical “dirt” is only the beginning...

- ◆ Delete temporary files and unused programs taking up space and slowing things down.
- ◆ Defrag your hard drive (Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter).
- ◆ Get rid of clutter on your desktop by removing shortcuts and files you don’t need.
- ◆ Make sure you have the latest security patches and updates installed and configured properly.
- ◆ Check your backups and conduct an emergency “restore” of the data. Remember, the best time to check your backups is when you DON’T desperately need to recover your data!

Would You Like a \$25 Second Cup Card?

Congratulations to Walter Griebeling of Morris Marketing for being the first to correctly answer February’s Trivia Challenge “*In the novel Moby Dick, in which America port is the whaling ship Pequod based?*” and winning a \$25 iTunes card!

The correct answer was a) Nantucket

Be the first to submit the correct answer to this month’s trivia question and you’ll receive a \$25 metro gift card!

In 1657 the first chocolate shop opened up in what city?
a-London, b-Vienna, c-Amsterdam, d-All three

Send Your Answer Today to:
SStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com
Type: ‘AprilTrivia Question’ in the Subject line.
Only the winner will be contacted.

GOOD LUCK!