



“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
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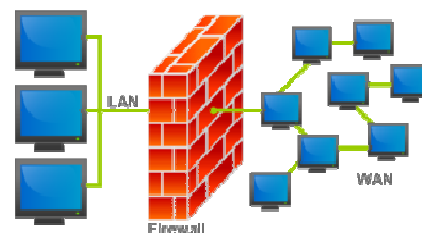
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If Your Firewall is 3+ Years Old, I Have 3 VERY Important Reasons You Need To Upgrade It

In all likelihood your business has at least one firewall (and if you don't, you're asking for all sorts of trouble if you haven't experienced it already). You know a firewall is one of those “must have's” for a secure network, but do really know why it's so important to your business?



A firewall is the device that bridges the connection from your internal network to the outside world. Anything you do that connects to the outside world (e-mail, accessing internet directly or indirectly) goes through this firewall before your data reaches its ultimate destination. Conversely, anything received from the outside into your network (e-mail, remote access, handheld communications) goes through this firewall before the data reaches your network.

How Your Firewall Keeps the Gremlins Out

Your firewall has a set of rules which, depending on how they are configured, allow communications in or out, or block them altogether. Essentially, it's the security guard that's checking everyone's credentials before authorizing access in or out of your network. It's intended to prevent unauthorized access to your network by ne'er do well hackers and scammers.

Old Firewall = Lowered Productivity in Your Business

An older firewall can cause slowdowns in all of your day to day business functions that rely on the internet (e-mail, accessing websites, handheld device usage, cloud / hosted applications) . This is because the demands put on firewalls to perform their “security guard” jobs are ever increasing due to faster internet access, faster computers and companies' increased reliance on the internet. Think of one club doorman checking ID for 100 patrons a night 3 years ago, but now he has to check for 500 patrons – it's going to take him a lot longer now to determine who is eligible to get through the door. As your firewall ages, these slowdowns will become increasingly noticeable, affecting the productivity of those of your staff who rely on anything where the internet is involved.

An Old Firewall Is Opening Your Door To Hackers, Inch By Inch

The software of the older models can't provide the same level of security as the newer models. Further, hackers are constantly finding new techniques to attack a network and these older firewalls have a harder time keeping up or may not be able to detect the latest attack on your network that could result in stolen data and disabling viruses.

Shiny New Gadget of the Month:

Quirky Ray Solar Powered Charger



Have Sun Will Travel!

It happens all the time... you are out at a meeting, traveling or running errands, you look down and realize your smartphone is on its last bar of battery.

No need to fret when this happens again! Charging on the go has never been easier. With the Quirky ray solar powered charger, you simply connect your phone and suction the device to a nearby window (in your office, your car or even on an airplane) and it will begin to charge using the solar power surrounding you.

The charger measures 2.5 X 2.5 X 3 inches. Its suctioning stand absorbs solar energy while its battery stores the power. It provides enough energy to fully charge a mobile phone. The solar powered device has an LED indicator and also comes with a USB port to facilitate connections to electronic devices.

The flexible suction cup can be attached to any window to absorb solar energy. This is perfect for car and airline travel. Pre-order yours for around \$40:

<http://www.quirky.com/>

How To Know If It's Time To Upgrade

- ⇒ Is the latest security against hackers and infections important to you?
- ⇒ Is it important that your staff have the very fastest possible access to the internet (this would include e-mail flow, downloading of attachments, access to hosted applications).
- ⇒ Are you paying good money to your internet provider for fast service? If you want to get the most from your current internet service, you may be unable to due to the age of your firewall. So if you are paying for 15mbps download (which is reasonably fast) this speed could be considerably compromised while your network is at its busiest because the older firewall hardware can't keep up with demands.

Essentially firewall hardware gets faster concurrently with the processing power of computers. So a computer built 3 years ago, is much slower than one built today. Similarly, firewalls built 3 years are much slower than those manufactured today.

If your company relies on video via training or video conferencing, the load of these types of applications is quite intense and puts a lot of load on a network. Video usage is where you'll see a major improvement with an upgrade to a more recent firewall.

4 Hidden Dangers Electricity Poses to Your Network...and One Simple, Inexpensive Solution That Will Prevent Them

Is your computer plugged in? Do you use a power strip with a surge protector? If so, you are a heartbeat away from disaster and don't even realize it. The same electricity you depend on to run your computers and network is also trying to destroy your data.

Believe it or not, electricity is one of the biggest threats to your computer network and the data it contains. Here are four computer power problems you must know about and how to prevent them.

- 1) **Transients** – Commonly known as surges and spikes, these are caused by lightning storms, wind, squirrels shorting out power lines, auto accidents, etc. Several times each week these spikes can travel up the power cord into your computer damaging everything from power supplies to motherboards. Conventional wisdom says use a power strip with a surge protector and you are safe. As is often the case, conventional wisdom is dead wrong. After several months, these surge protectors become useless having been zapped by the surges they were designed to protect against.
- 2) **Blackouts** – Whether momentary or prolonged, the sudden loss of power can corrupt your PC to the point of not being able to start up again when the lights come back on.
- 3) **Sags** – This is when the power drops below normal. Have you ever seen the fluorescent lights flicker for a moment? Then you have witnessed a sag. Sags are more common than surges and are caused when equipment like air conditioners, microwaves, water heaters, laser printers, copy machines and other electrical equipment are turned on or come out of sleep mode. A typical small office will experience 30 or more sags each day. Sags cause many of the weird and unexplained problems computer users complain about every day.
- 4) **Noise** – Ever been watching TV and seen fuzzy pictures and/or white lines or dots when you turn on a blender or vacuum cleaner? This is the result of electrical noise. While a fuzzy TV picture is an annoyance, this electrical noise causes many computer problems including loss of data..

So how do you protect yourself from electrical problems? The most simple and inexpensive solution to all four of these hazards is a battery backup. The battery backup (also known as a UPS or Uninterruptible Power Supply) senses when there are problems with the power and automatically switches to the battery protecting you from computer damage and data loss.

Choosing the correct battery backup for your computer or server can be tricky. Having one with a battery too small is the same as having none at all. For most desktop computers, a battery backup with a 500VA or larger rating should be sufficient to keep you going through momentary power problems. Protecting your server requires detailed knowledge of the server functions and power consumption in order to pick the right battery backup solution.

The 15 Most Important Rules of E-Mail Etiquette

More than 80 years have passed since Emily Post wrote her first book on etiquette. Back then, the rules had more to do with how to properly introduce someone and which fork to use at a dinner party. But with the introduction of new communication tools comes new rules of engagement. Here are 15 quick tips and rules for what is—and isn't—acceptable behaviour when using e-mail.

- 1) Be concise and to the point. Read your e-mail to make sure it makes sense before sending to avoid e-mail "ping-pong."
- 2) Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation. This is still a communication and a representation of YOU. Sloppy spelling and punctuation looks unprofessional.
- 3) Don't use e-mail to deliver bad or personal news. If you need to discuss a serious matter with someone, only use e-mail to request a face to face meeting or phone call, not to deliver the news.
- 4) Do not attach unnecessary files, especially large ones. Sending big files can cause someone's e-mail system to clog, shut down or crash. Instead, use www.yousendit.com for large documents.
- 5) Do not overuse the high priority option. Use it only when something is truly critical and time sensitive.
- 6) Do not write in CAPITALS—it's the equivalent of shouting.
- 7) Don't leave out the message thread.
- 8) Give your recipients an easy way to opt-out or remove themselves from your list.
- 9) Do not overuse "Reply to All." If you have a message for the sender that is not relevant to everyone else, make sure you only send it to that person.
- 10) Do not "CC" everyone when sending a broadcast to multiple people. Instead, use the bcc (blind carbon copy) to keep everyone's e-mail private.
- 11) Don't overuse abbreviations and emoticons.
- 12) Don't use neon colors, hard to read fancy fonts and background images. They make it difficult—if not impossible—to read your message.
- 13) Only use rich text and HTML messages when you are certain the recipient can receive that type of message. Many people can only open text messages, and most rich text and HTML messages don't convert well.
- 14) Do not forward a message that was sent to you without permission from the original sender.
- 15) Do not use e-mail to discuss confidential information. If you don't want the entire world to see it, then don't put it in an e-mail.

Tools to Drive Productivity Using Your Smart Phone

Beat The Traffic

Why You Need It:

With location-specific live traffic maps monitoring average driver speeds and gridlock-inducing snafus spanning more than 100 U.S. and Canadian cities, Beat the Traffic means the traffic doesn't beat you instead.

Features:

Weather information, crowdsourced traffic updates, live cameras in 40 metro areas.

Available For:

iPhone, Android, Blackberry

Price: Free

Poynt

Why You Need It:

A kind of next-gen, location-aware Yellow Pages, Poynt identifies your whereabouts and everything in your immediate radius: retailers, restaurants, gas stations -- whatever you need on the road.

Features:

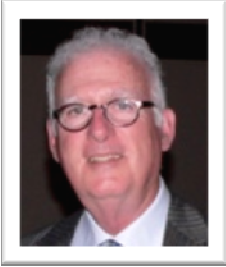
Turn-by-turn Google Maps directions, address book integration, search results sharing.

Available For:

iPhone, Android, Blackberry

Price: Free

Thanks for the Kind Words...



"We were growing very quickly and the computer support that our previous person was giving us, we didn't feel was sufficient for our needs, so we were recommended to TAG. Since TAG has been supporting our network, our employees feel more comfortable because things run smoothly. We completely trust TAG.

In the one-on-one dealings I have had with Joe and his people, I find they are very knowledgeable and they have found effective solutions for us.

When we do experience any issues they respond efficiently and quickly and they communicate with us in terms we understand."

*Herb Goldstein,
Chairman—Morris
Marketing Group*

5 (Cheap) Ways To Make Old Computers Faster and More Reliable

#1. Add Memory. One of the most inexpensive and effective ways to improve a computer's performance is to install more RAM (random access memory). This will speed up the applications installed on your computer and allow you to open and run more programs simultaneously.

#2. Upgrade The Processor Or Add A Graphics Accelerator. If you are just looking for a little more "zoom," upgrading the processor or installing a graphics accelerator will give your computer the ability to process information faster and improve its overall speed.

#3. Perform Regular Maintenance On Your Servers and Desktops. Computers, like cars, need regular maintenance to perform at top speed and reliability. At a minimum, you should run ScanDisk and the Disk Defrag Utility on your machines once a month. This will make your applications and files load and run faster.

#4. Run A Spyware Scan Once A Week. One telltale sign that your computer is infected with spyware is slow, unstable performance. Spyware sucks up your system's resources to carry out its evil intent, slowing down your computer and even causing it to freeze and crash.

#5. Disable Or Remove Unnecessary Programs Running In The Background. Many computers have pre-installed software programs that use up system resources and slow down your computer.

While these recommendations will certainly speed up your system, they aren't a miracle cure for a seriously out-of-date computer network. If your computer or network constantly crashes, freezes up, or runs painfully slow, then it's time to give us a call for an upgrade.

How To Turn Your Phone Into Your Own Wi-Fi Hotspot When There's No Wi-Fi Available

My wife and I were at a cottage this autumn that not only didn't have internet (gasp!) it didn't even have a phone line (double gasp!!). Since we needed to access the internet and didn't much feel like trying to find the nearest library or chain coffee shop, creativity was key.

Fortunately, there was cellular coverage. Thanks to my iPhone, I enabled the "Personal Hotspot" feature which turned my phone into a wireless internet access point. When I configured my wireless on my laptop, this feature allowed me to connect to the internet and be off and running on my laptop. Well, speed walking, electronically speaking.

While connecting to the internet in this manner is faster than dialup, it's not as fast as high speed in the office or at home. But beggars can't be choosers and better than driving to town searching high and low for public wi-fi.

How To Create Your Own Personal Hot Spot

iPhone On your iPhone (must be one of the more recent version 4 of IOS or higher), go to "settings" and select "personal hotspot" and follow the simple onscreen instructions.

Android Use the Barnacle Wi-Fi Tether feature.

Windows This feature is expected to be available on version 7.5, later this year