Bits & Bytes

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

Your Company's Hidden Security Weakness: Your Home Wireless Network

As a business owner / executive who also spends time working from home (and has staff working from home), do you make assumptions about yours and your staff's home's wireless network security? Between home and business, chances are yours and your staff's home wireless security is lacking. This can prove to be a serious liability.

Show	All		
	family	Unsecured network	
	tweakui	Security-enabled network	
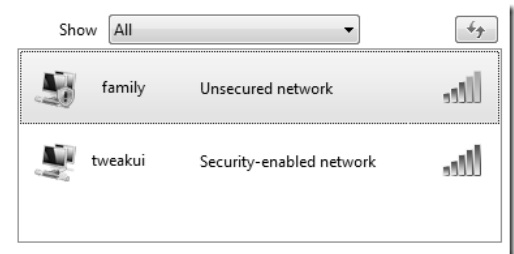
WiFi security at home tends to be more lax and it isn't something business owners worry about since they have dozens of other things on their mind. You feel safe at home and you might assume since your business's network is locked down tight, your data is secure. When an intruder wants to access your business's proprietary information, they're going to search for the easiest point of entry.

That is often the home. Intruders are looking for information they can profit from, including financial and identity-related documents. The fact is, there are people who roam around searching for unprotected or poorly protected wireless access.

Never assume your data—personal or business—isn't accessible. You may inadvertently share critical data without realizing it. You may share files among colleagues and employees and simply forget to turn off sharing permissions. You may place documents and files in a publicly accessible folder. Data-sharing is convenient when you need it, but a liability when it's readily accessible.

What can you do to protect yourself and your company assets?

⇒ Be aware of when you're sharing data. If you have any files in a public folder, move them to a more secure location.
⇒ Use a strong password for all your wireless networks. A string of letters, numbers and symbols about 14 characters long is ideal.
⇒ Use WPA2 security. Make sure your router is set up correctly. If you are using WEP or WPA security, change it as soon as possible.
⇒ Change your network's name (SSID). Routers include a default name, and keeping the default tells potential intruders lax security measures may be in place.

From All Of Us At TAG, We Wish You And Yours Happy Holidays and a Prosperous 2015!!!

"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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Are Workplace Distractions Getting Worse?

Technology is a double-edged sword. It provides businesses with powerful tools that can bring unparalleled organization and efficiency to their operations; yet, technology provides workers with a tidal wave of distractions. What's your company doing to manage this unique technological paradox?

People are Somehow Coping with More Distractions

There's no question that technology provides workers with more distractions than ever before. Screenwriter Bill Oakley explains it like this: "Describing today to someone from 1953: Every six seconds all your friends send you a telegram and a brand-new Life magazine is thrown at you." Bill is of course referring to the notifications of smartphones, and the barrage of interesting news articles shared by friends on social media.

One would think that this vast amount of information constantly being heaped upon us would cripple workplace productivity. However, this isn't always the case. New studies are showing that humans are adapting to how we consume information. Somehow, we're able to do the same amount of work, despite having a bottomless pit of distractions at our fingertips.

A Click isn't All That it's Cracked Up to Be

There are two recent statistics that show us how we've adapted to consuming this endless amount of new information. After looking at 10,000 articles shared via social media, Cheatbeat concluded that, there's "no relationship whatsoever between the amount a piece of content is shared and the amount of attention an average reader will give that content."

If your business runs a website and you share content from it via social media, then you've noticed this to be true. The social media site may report that your website's blog article was seen by 1,000 people. You think, "1,000 people, that's awesome!" You then log on to the backend of your company's website to investigate the analytics of your seemingly-popular blog, only to discover that a miniscule 100 of those 1,000 people actually clicked on the article.

Of those 100 clicks, how many of those people actually read through the article? Research from TIME Magazine suggests that it's less than half: "55 percent of web users spend less than 15 seconds actively on a page." These statistics are enough to bum out a web marketer, but they give hope to the employer that feels like technology in the workplace is distracting their employees.

Fact: Humans Can Be Naturally Distracted By Anything

Just because the information is available, doesn't mean that it's distracting people from their task at hand, or even changing the human race into screen-addicted zombies that don't know how to socialize. There's a popular meme that illustrates this point perfectly. It's a black and white image of workers on a bus commuting to work before the digital revolution. Every single worker is reading a newspaper and the caption ironically says, "All of this technology is making us antisocial."

The point here is that, whether a person has a copy of the Saturday Evening Post sitting at their desk, or a smartphone that's pinging them about news stories shared by their friends, the worker is still faced with a distraction.

The medium from which the distraction comes from is irrelevant to the fact that we're distraction-prone creatures. In fact, some people are so wired for distractions that you can remove every single type of media from their presence and they will still find an object in the room to distract themselves with.

Use Technology to Curb Distractions from Technology

The technological paradox about workplace distractions caused by technology is that you can use technology to combat these distractions. Technical Action Group can provide your business with an enterprise-level content filtering solution that will allow you to block workers from viewing the most distracting websites on the Internet, like Facebook, BuzzFeed, and YouTube. TAG's IT content filtering solution will also allow you to filter content on a per-user basis, meaning that employees that show more willpower to resist distractions, and the ones that need to access these distracting websites as part of their job, can still do so.

Content filtering for your company's network can go a long way in minimizing workplace distractions, but it's not an end-all-be-all solution. The human mind is naturally prone to distractions, and some people will be just as distracted by a newspaper as they would be with Twitter. However, at the end of the day, people will adapt to this information overload, society will continue to function, and despite the fact that people will develop shorter attention spans and a poorer vocabulary, your workers will meet your company's goals and deadlines and your business will grow.

To learn about more workplace productivity solutions that can help free your staff from the distractions of technology, contact Joseph Stoll today at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com or 416-489-6312 x 204.

Why It's Imperative You Use the Proper KVM Switch (and what it is, and why you should care)

Your company's IT infrastructure is much like a puzzle. There are many different pieces that make it up, and each piece is needed for the entire network to work properly. One piece of equipment that often gets overlooked is the KVM switch. Here are three tips on finding the right KVM for your business.

First off, let's go over what a KVM switch is. KVM is the abbreviation for "keyboard, video, and mouse." It's a switch that allows a single user to control multiple nearby computers or servers from one or more keyboards, monitors, and mice. For a network administrator, the KVM is an extremely valuable tool that allows them to oversee and control every server while working in your server room.

This is a great convenience factor, but it's also going to save you money and reduce the amount of hardware you need in your server room. Instead of having an extra monitor, mouse, and keyboard for each server, you can connect multiple servers up to a single set.

As you know, there are IT networks of all shapes and sizes for businesses with various computing needs, and there are different-sized KVM switches that can accommodate networks ranging from only a few computers to IT infrastructures used by enterprises that are spread out over multiple locations.

Having the Right Video Quality

When selecting a KVM switch, you will want to keep video quality in mind. We are still in a transitional period between VGA-based analogue and digital video equipment that uses standards such as DVI, HDMI, and DisplayPort. Even though most everything has gone digital, there's still analogue equipment to be found. Without being aware of the differences between the two, it would be easy to fall for what appears to be a really good deal on the switch that you're looking at, only to discover upon installation that you paid for analogue KVM instead of one that's digital.

An Essential Mobile App for Business

Evernote

On the productivity spectrum, using multiple devices can slow you down. What you scribble down on a sticky note usually doesn't make it onto your computer. Likewise, the quick notes you type on your tablet are hard to find again. What if you could record something on your smartphone and have it automatically sync to your personal and business computers and tablets?

Evernote has become a favorite productivity app for business professionals over the last few years. It's a "free app that helps you remember everything across all of the devices that you use." Evernote allows you to:

⇒ Create documents

⇒ Record audio notes

⇒ Take and share pictures

⇒ Create and maintain checklists

⇒ Use a tag system to search your files

⇒ Share files via email and social media

Evernote allows you to do all of this, and more, while being able to instantly sync with your tablets and workstations.

Obviously, you'll have to download the app for all of your devices, but it's free! However, there is a paid option that gives you access to more features.

Evernote allows your everyday business tasks to sit in the palm of your hand.

Use Word To Fill In Scanned Documents

Have you had to fill out a paper document, only to butcher it with your handwriting? Paper forms filled out with sloppy handwriting are unprofessional and may miscommunicate important details To get your paper forms looking pro, Microsoft Word allows you to scan the doc and then enter text!

The first step is to scan your paper form. Save your scan as a graphics file, preferably one that Word commonly uses like .jpg, .png, or .bmp. Save the scanned doc in an accessible file. Now open Word and insert the scanned file it into a blank Word document. Here's how:

At the top of Word you will see the *Insert* tab, click on this tab to display the Insert menu. In the *Illustrations* group, you will see an icon labeled *Picture,* it looks like a Polaroid pic of mountains, click on it and navigate to the file folder that contains your scanned form, and now double-click your graphic.

Word will have your picture file selected, as distinguished by white circles displayed on the corners of your scanned document. You will see at the top of Word a *Picture Tools* tab that is automatically opened up to *Format*. To the right of *Picture Styles* you will see the *Arrange* section. Click on *Wrap Text*. A drop down menu will appear. find and click on *Behind Text.* Your graphic should now fade because it's in the background. You will now be able to type, just use your graphic as template and don't move it.. You may have to adjust the font, font size, and tab stops to get your cursor where you want it. With your form typed up print off your document!

Making Sure Everything Is Secure

You will also want to use a KVM over IP switch that uses an encryption protocol to secure the data sent over your network. Your KVM switch will handle a lot of data, which can spell bad news for your business if the switch becomes compromised. Don't ignore this KVM security protocol. Processor magazine explains: "Today's remote KVM solutions are extremely powerful and can do an incredible amount of damage if compromised. Be aware of vulnerabilities with the remote management solutions embedded in today's servers."

Future-proofing Your Network

As is the case with any piece of equipment for your network, you will want to make sure that your new KVM switch is future-proof. Each KVM switch comes with a limited amount of ports for computers and server units. Instead of buying a switch that has the exact right amount of ports to populate your current operations, think a few years ahead and go with a switch that has enough open ports to accommodate the next few years of growth.

You don't want to pick out a piece of equipment like a KVM switch without knowing the ins and outs of what it does. When it comes to purchasing networking equipment, make sure to run your plans by IT professionals. It's very easy for an inexperienced user to run into compatibility issues when installing networking equipment like KVM switches. Due to the prevalence of installation issues like this, it would be in your best interest to have the IT professionals at Technical Action Group pick out and install KVM switches for you.

To get the perfect KVM switch for your business, call contact Joe Stoll at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com or 416-489-6312 x 204!

How To Use Microsoft Office Without The Mouse

The mouse may look like a helpful piece of technology, but be warned; it can actually be a tool of destruction. If your mouse has been your sidekick for years of heavy computer usage, then your wrist might be in danger of carpal tunnel syndrome (especially if you have programmers or graphic designers on staff—ask any registered massage therapist). Sometimes, it's nice (and essential) to take a break from the mouse and use your keyboard to navigate Microsoft Office. Even handier if you are travelling with a laptop and don't have room to deal with a mouse.

This mouseless feature is available on all Microsoft Office applications. Accessing the keyboard control interface is as easy as tapping the Alt key. After giving Alt a little tap-tap-taperoo, you will now see Scrabble-like letters at the top of the application on the "Ribbon Row" (the Ribbon Row contains File, Home, Insert, etc.). Below each tab will be a corresponding letter, "F" for File, "H" for Home, "N" for Insert, etc.

By tapping the desired letter on your keyboard, the corresponding tab will open. You will now see a unique letter or number given to every featured icon in the tab. Go ahead and tap the letter on the keyboard that corresponds with the feature you want to use. Using this letter/number keyboard approach, you can easily navigate Microsoft Office without having to memorize all the different Ctrl and Alt combinations.

Although, knowing the different Ctrl and Alt combinations are still a handy way to navigate a PC with your keyboard. For a complete list of all the shortcuts available for various Office products, go to **https://support.office.com** and in the search field, type "*keyboard shortcuts for Office [insert year of your Office suite]*". By taking advantage of even a few keyboard shortcuts that you would use regularly, your wrists will appreciate the break.