

# Bits & Bytes

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



Volume VI, Issue II

February, 2015

## Managed Services Prevents These 6 Common IT Problems



**“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

### Inside this issue:

- Avoid These 6 Common Problems with Managed Services 1
- Meet Prizm 2
- How To Find A Better Way To Do Things 2
- How To Grow Star Performers 3
- Social Media Marketing Tools You Probably Don’t Know Of 3
- Great Gmail and Outlook Shortcuts 4
- How To Stay Secure In a Public Wifi Spot 4

Modern businesses are built upon their data. Therefore, you need someone you trust to oversee it. Having the wrong person handle your IT systems could turn into a number of time-consuming, costly, and irritating problems for you. Here’s a list of the six most common IT problems that can be prevented by going with a trusted IT service provider.

### Endless Technical Glitches

A computer network that runs smoothly produces maximum productivity for your staff. If your team is constantly encountering one computer glitch after another, even if they’re just minor ones, then your business won’t reach its full potential because your racecar-of-a company will be facing a slew of stop signs. For any business looking to get ahead, taking care of technical glitches needs to be a priority.

### Extended Downtime

One of the worst problems that can happen to your business is an extended session of downtime due to a technology failure like a server crash or hard drive failure. A problem like this means that your operations are down for an extended period of time, which can cripple productivity and prevent your business from making profits. Additionally, extended downtime is worse than you may realize due to the fact that you’re paying for employees to sit around and not do anything.

### Errors

Computer errors can come out of nowhere and hinder projects. When an error hits, the project is disrupted and it either has to be fixed or a workaround must be found. Both of these solutions take time. Plus, unless a computer error is properly taken care of, it will just get worse, and more errors will happen more frequently.

### Slowness

Lack of proper PC maintenance means that the performance of computer systems suffer. If PC maintenance problems aren’t addressed, then the computer will get slower and slower until it seriously cuts into productivity and drives workers crazy. When it comes to getting work done efficiently, a fast computer is always more productive.

### Critical Data Loss

After a server goes down, everyone crosses their fingers when it powers back on, hoping that no data was lost. Sometimes, you’re not so lucky and critical data is deleted. If you have a Data Backup and Recovery solution, then a server crash like this isn’t worth worrying about because your backed up data will quickly be available. Of course, the best way to prevent critical data loss in the first place is to have your server units properly maintained.

## Shiny Gadget Of The Month:



### Prizm

This month's gadget is so new, it isn't even off the assembly line. Meet Prizm — a small, pyramid-shaped device designed to make your home-audio experience as hands-off as humanly possible. The device was recently backed on Kickstarter this past November. The French company behind the audio device wanted to create an intuitive music experience that brings users new music, while learning what they really love to listen to.

The device streams music from cloud services such as Deezer, Spotify and SoundCloud, with more services planned in the future. It works by accessing your WiFi network. It doesn't contain any speakers, so you'll have to supply your own (it connects via Bluetooth, 3.5 mm stereo jack and optical audio). And despite being called hands-off, the device sports buttons to let you like or skip songs to customize your listening experience.

It can currently be pre-ordered from [www.meetprizm.com](http://www.meetprizm.com) for \$139.

### Security Breaches

Even if your technology is running properly, if it's not properly protected, then your business can be easily harmed by a security breach. A security breach will do much more than harm productivity; it will put your company's sensitive data at risk. When it comes to something as important as your company's data, it's better to be safe than sorry. Technical Action Group offers your business the best network protection possible with our Unified Threat Management solution.

Having the right company manage your IT means that all of these issues are taken care of and minimized so that you don't have to worry about them causing repeated problems for your business. At Technical Action Group, we take a different approach to IT by taking care of these problems through preventive measures to minimize problems we need to react to. It's impossible to prevent anything from ever going wrong but our preventive measures drastically minimize them from happening. To find out if Technical Action Group is the best fit to handle your company's IT needs, contact Joseph Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 or e-mail him at [JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com](mailto:JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com).

## If You Sense There's a Better Way To Do Something, You're Probably Right

Have you ever found yourself neck deep in a major business project and nothing seemed to be working? Or you have staff who enter the same data or perform some other function in multiple locations? In times like these you may have thrown up your hands and said, "There must be a better way to do this!" Often times there is, and it's in the form of new technology. Is your current IT provider familiar with the latest technologies that can make operations easier for your business?



When you run into a problem, it's reasonable to assume that there must be a technological solution that will alleviate said problem. Why? Because you read in the trade journals, newspapers, blogs, how your peers and mentors are using technology to do things better, easier, and faster. Plus, you've been in business long enough to experience firsthand the adoption of new technologies that make things easier for you. Take for example cloud computing and how it has revolutionized productivity. There was a time when you didn't know about this technology, so didn't reap its rewards for small / medium business.

When it comes to finding out about helpful solutions like cloud computing, it's the responsibility of your IT provider to be the first one to inform you about it. Are you questioning if your current IT provider even has an interest in your bottom line and cutting your expenses? Do they continually fix the same problem instead of recommending a complete solution? You can find out the answer to these questions by looking at their attitude towards the latest technology, and how hard they try to understand your needs and pain points. If they don't make suggestions on how technology can make your operations more efficient, then you need a different IT company that will.

At Technical Action Group we take seriously our role to equip clients with the latest technologies that will make operations easier. To find out if we've got what it takes to alleviate the struggles of doing business, then e-mail Joseph Stoll at [JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com](mailto:JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com) and request a free IT assessment and roadmap for a highly secure, reliable IT system. This process will identify any inefficiencies and risks that you may presently have and lay out a strategy to resolve and stabilize your IT systems.

We will also present you with options to accomplish this, and budget for your ongoing IT consulting and support so there are no unpleasant surprises down the road.

## How To Grow Star Performers

A study of computer programmers at Bell Laboratories showed that the star performers outperformed moderate performers by a margin of 8 to 1. If that holds true in your organization, the conversion of five of your moderate performers into star performers would be the equivalent of adding 40 moderate performers to your workforce. Where are you going to find the five additional star performers? You don't find them. You develop them.

The Bell Labs study identified nine work strategies that characterize star performers. All of them are qualities that can be inculcated through a good corporate education system. According to researchers Robert Kelly and Janet Caplan, these qualities are:

- 1) **Taking initiative:** accepting responsibility above and beyond your stated job, volunteering for additional activities and promoting new ideas.
- 2) **Networking:** getting direct and immediate access to coworkers with technical expertise and sharing your own knowledge with those who need it.
- 3) **Self-management:** regulating your own work commitments, time, performance level and career growth.
- 4) **Teamwork effectiveness:** assuming joint responsibility for work activities, coordinating efforts and accomplishing shared goals with workers.
- 5) **Leadership:** formulating, stating and building consensus on common goals and working to accomplish them.
- 6) **Followerhip:** helping the leader to accomplish the organization's goals and thinking for yourself rather than relying solely on managerial direction.
- 7) **Perspective:** seeing your job in its larger context and taking on other viewpoints, like those of the customer, manager and work team.
- 8) **Show-and-tell:** presenting your ideas persuasively in written or oral form.
- 9) **Organizational savvy:** navigating the competing interests in an organization, be they individual or group, to promote cooperation, address conflicts and get things done.

Star performers considered initiative, technical competence and other cognitive abilities to be core competencies. Show-and-tell and organizational savvy were on the outer edge of their circle of importance. Middle performers placed show-and-tell and organizational savvy at the center. While star performers were focused on performance, middle performers were focused on impressing management.

Star performers and middle performers also showed marked differences in their attitudes toward networking. The middle performers waited until after they had encountered problems before looking around for someone who could provide help and support. The star performers built a network of helpers and supporters in advance, so they could call on them immediately when needed. The study concluded that "Individual productivity... depends on the ability to channel one's expertise, creativity and insight into working with other professionals."

Star performers emerge from educational systems tailored to the individual company and the individual job. They don't want to become clones. Too many companies today are content with training programs that provide people with knowledge and expertise, but skip on educational processes that teach them to apply what they learn. You can't train them to seek excellence. You change that attitude through consistent input that appeals to an individual's self-interest and organizational spirit.



Dr. Nido Qubein is president of High Point University, an undergraduate and graduate institution with 4,300 students from 40 countries. He has authored two dozen books and audio programs distributed worldwide. As a business leader, he is chairman of the Great Harvest Bread Company, with 220 stores in 43 states. He serves on the boards of several national organizations, including BB&T (a Fortune 500 company with \$185 billion in assets), the La-Z-Boy Corporation (one of the largest and most recognized furniture brands worldwide) and Dots Stores (a chain of fashion boutiques with more than 400 locations across the country). As a professional speaker, Dr. Qubein has received many distinctions, including the Golden Gavel Medal, induction into the International Speaker Hall of Fame and as the founder of the NSA Foundation in Arizona.

To learn more about Dr. Qubein, go to: <http://www.nidoqubein.com/>

## Social Media Marketing Tools

**1. Zapier: Link favorite social services.** [Zapier](#) connects the services you use independently. For example, if your team uses HipChat to keep in touch, you can use Zapier to set up [automatic notifications inside HipChat rooms](#) for Tweets, MailChimp campaigns or new RSS items.

**2. Bottlenose: Intelligence for social networks.** [Bottlenose](#) features a real-time search engine that queries all public information from social networks & groups & displays it in algorithmic order of importance. The result is a stream of content ranked by most to least important.

**3. Followerwonk: Follower analysis for Twitter.** Although you can use a tool like Twitter Counter to watch the growth of the number of your Twitter followers, you may need to analyze followers more carefully. [Followerwonk](#) breaks down your followers into demographics so you can understand them better.

**4. Quintly: Social analytics for brands.** [Quintly](#) is a powerful tool for in-depth social media analytics, helping you track your business's social media performance on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn and Instagram. Quintly also has benchmarking features that help you understand how your performance compares to that of competitors and to industry averages.

## Save Time With These Shortcuts in Outlook and Gmail

Microsoft Word isn't the only place you can use keyboard shortcuts to streamline your work speed. You can use the following shortcuts in Gmail and Outlook to give yourself a much-needed speed boost:

### GMAIL SHORTCUTS

- **CTRL+Enter** : sends a message.
- **CTRL+. :** moves to the next window.
- **CTRL+Shift+C :** adds carbon copy (Cc) recipients.
- **CTRL+Shift+B :** adds blind carbon copy (Bcc) recipients.

### OUTLOOK SHORTCUTS

- **CTRL+S:** Sends a message.
- **Down Arrow:** Move to next message.
- **CTRL + N:** Create a new message

## How To Keep Your Laptop Secure When Using Public WiFi Hotspots

They are everywhere these days. WiFi hotspots for checking e-mail and hopping on the Internet can be found in airports, coffee shops and even most fast-food joints. But have you ever wondered, just how safe is it to connect? With the proliferation of hackers, viruses and identity theft at an all-time high, you are smart to be concerned. Unfortunately, it is easy for a hacker to set up a WiFi spot to access your laptop, called an "evil twin." An evil twin is a wireless hotspot that is used to lure people from a nearby, legitimate hotspot. For example, when logging in at your favorite coffee shop, you may have inadvertently logged in to an evil twin Internet connection set up by the person working on a laptop at the next table.



Just like legitimate sites, evil twins allow you access to the Internet, but in the background they record everything you are typing. Log on to your e-mail, investment web site or bank account, or buy something online, and they are recording your keystrokes.

**Tip:** Do you want an easy way to securely access your network and the Internet from anywhere? Contact Joseph Stoll today at 416-489-6312 x 204 or JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com about setting up a VPN for your office!

You may be asking, "How do I protect myself at WiFi hotspots?" First you need to make sure the hotspot is legitimate. You can do this by asking someone who works at the WiFi location; in fact, some businesses will give you printed instructions that include the hotspot name. Even here you need to be careful. Many times, in an attempt to make you feel comfortable, the hacker will use an evil twin name that mimics the legitimate hotspot and, on some occasions, the fake site may even show up at the top of your network list by having a stronger signal than the legitimate site.

### The best protection you can have is connecting via your company's VPN (Virtual Private Network)

A VPN protects your online information by encrypting your data and activity even if you're connected through an evil twin. If you don't have a VPN, the best protection is to surf the net, but never type in password, credit card, social security, bank account or other sensitive information when connected to a public WiFi hotspot.



"Sure, it's all fun and games until someone loses an iPhone."