

Bits & Bytes

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



Volume IV, Issue I

January, 2012



“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:

Top 5 Tech Habits to Break In 2012 1

Beware of Office Supply Product Scams! 2

Hit Your New Year’s Resolutions With Help From Technology! 2

Difference Between Backup, Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity 3

Uses For Your iPad At Work 4

The Top 5 Worst Technology Habits to Break in 2012



Admit it; some of you have some bad habits when it comes to maintaining the security and “health” of the high-tech tools you dearly depend on. Since it’s a fresh, new year, we thought it would be appropriate to point out the top 5 bad habits you should work on fixing in 2012.

- 1. Not backing up your data.** Funny how most people start their confession of not backing up their data with the words, “I know it’s bad, but...” If you know, then why are you still doing it? There’s absolutely no good reason to let this one continue. Call us and we’ll hook you up with a solid backup plan that will make sure you can be back up and running again FAST.
- 2. Relying on tape drives to backup your data.** This is almost as bad as bad habit #1. Why? Because tape drives have an average failure rate of 100% – and that’s not a typo. It’s not a matter of “if” but “when” is your tape drive going to fail. Trash ‘em and get a better system in place!
- 3. Using weak passwords.** If you’ve ever used the word “password” as your password, we’re talking to you! A good password should contain a combination of numbers and upper and lower case letters.
- 4. Not installing the latest security patches and software updates.** Once a new patch is released by a software vendor, it acts like a green light for hackers who instantly implement viruses and scams to take advantage of those individuals who don’t regularly update (patch) their system.
- 5. Printing and storing paper documents for everything.** The cost of installing a document imaging (also called document management) solution has come down dramatically, and it is now easier than ever to implement. Plus you get the added benefits of saved storage space, saved time in searching for documents, instant access to any paper file via the Internet, fewer lost files, less chance of losing critical documents to fire, water, or wear and tear, AND a cost saving on paper and ink. With all these benefits, why would you still stick a paper filing system?

Want help in breaking any of these bad habits? Contact Joe Stoll at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com or 416-489-6312 x 204 for a no-obligation, no-pressure consultation on how we can help you break these bad high-tech habits for good!

Important Info About Office Supply Scams

We received a bill from "Office Products Centre" for \$460.02 (incl. tax & shipping) for "Dry Ink For Sharp". Having not ordered the product, our A/P person immediately called the vendor to dispute the invoice. To make a long story short, the conversation became very heated, with the Office Products Centre threatening legal action to collect. Here's what we have learned, through research, about office supply scams. The typical scam involves goods or services that you routinely order: copier paper, toner and maintenance supplies, equipment maintenance contracts, or advertising. When fraudulent telemarketers call, they often lie to get you to pay for items you didn't order, or to get you to pay more than you agreed to. In our case, the company told one of our employees that they "had an order on file" and needed to confirm the model of our copier. They then sent Toner for a Sharp copier that our unsuspecting employee simply put into stock without telling anyone. Months later, an invoice for 5 times the value of the toner shows up. How else do these guys operate? The caller may falsely claim to be your "regular supplier" or to tell you that the offer is "special" or "good for a limited time only." Con artists take advantage of holes in your organization's purchasing procedures or of unsuspecting employees who may not be aware of office practices. What's worse, the office supplies peddled by these bogus firms often are overpriced and of poor quality; the services are worthless. Then they use bullying tactics, threats of recorded phone calls (that don't actually exist) and legal action to collect.

How To (Finally) Hit Your Top 5 New Year's Resolutions Thanks To High-Tech



Thinking about setting the "usual" New Year's resolutions of losing weight, being more organized and getting out of debt, but have a feeling deep down you aren't going to follow through? We're here to help! Below are 5 common New Year's resolutions and simple techie ways to keep you on track.

#1: Be More Productive

If improving your time-management skills is one of your New Year's resolutions, this will be a BIG help: Turn off the automatic send and receive for your e-mail (I can almost hear the gasps of horror). Admit it, you're addicted to e-mail and if you're like most people, you're checking it *constantly*. In fact, there's a good chance it's the first thing you do in the morning and the last thing you do at night. If you want to stop the constant temptation to lose focus on your work, simply turn off the automatic send and receive function, forcing you to click on the "Send And Receive" button at set times. If that's too "cold turkey," you could at least turn off the sound and icon popup so you're not distracted by it while working.

#2: Save Time

After e-mail, checking social media sites can be another huge time suck. If you (or your staff) are wasting a lot of time on Facebook, good content filtering software can keep you in check by preventing you from accessing these sites from your work PC. You can also allow certain people in your company access while blocking others; so if you have a web manager or marketing manager who needs to access these sites for work but you want to keep other employees from accessing it, we can configure the system for this.

#3: Get Out Of Debt And Start Saving More

If you feel like you can't get a handle on where your money goes, check out www.Mint.com/Canada. This site automatically compiles all your bank statements, retirement and credit card accounts to give you one snapshot of where you're spending money – and it's FREE! Best of all, you only need to set it up once and it will automatically update your finances and put them into easy-to-read graphical reports – and since Mint.com connects to every major Canadian bank with internet banking capability, you won't have to manually enter your information over and over again. The site offers ways to save money, allows you to set financial goals and keeps track of those goals automatically.

#4: Lose Weight

Pearson's Law states that anything measured improves, and anything measured and reported upon improves exponentially; so if you want to lose weight, you might sign up for www.MyFoodDiary.com and start tracking everything you eat. This site allows you to set and track your weight loss goals by allowing you to post what you ate and then counting calories for you. If nothing else, it will help you think BEFORE you eat because you need to track the calories!

#5: Get Organized!

If you're like me, you've got a million things going on – from business, family and everything in between, it's easy to get overwhelmed and forget tiny (but important!) details. Using Evernote can help. Evernote allows you to capture and organize any files, notes, web sites, audio or hand written notes in one easy-to-learn interface. And with the mobile app, you can capture a to-do item or reminder at any time without

The Top 10 Technology Trends For 2012

During the Symposium ITxpo 2011, Gartner unveiled its prediction for the top technology trends in 2012. Mobility and social media are taking a front seat for the ride into the future. Many of these technologies will drive the future of your business if they aren't already:

- 1) Media tablets and beyond
- 2) Mobile-centric applications and interfaces
- 3) Contextual and social user experience
- 4) Internet of Things
- 5) App stores and marketplaces
- 6) Next-generation analytics
- 7) Big Data
- 8) In-memory computing
- 9) Extreme low-energy servers
- 10) Cloud computing

The Difference Between Backup, Disaster Recovery, and Business Continuity

If you think “data backup” is synonymous with “disaster recovery” and aren’t sure what “business continuity” means, you’re not alone. Most of the business owners we talk to make the mistake of not knowing the difference and end up paying the price when data is lost, a network goes down or a disaster prevents them from accessing their physical office and the server inside.

First, data backup simply means a copy of your data is replicated to another device or location. Tape drives, offsite backup and even USB devices provide data backup. Data backup is obviously important. However, the more important consideration is whether or not your backup solution provides easy *disaster recovery*, or the ability for you to recover all your files, software and functionality quickly, easily and without corruption. For example, if your server died, you wouldn’t be able to quickly get back to work if you only had file-level backup. In order for you to start working again, your server would need to be replaced, all software re-installed, data re-installed and then the whole system would need to be configured with your settings and preferences. This process could take hours or even days – and that’s if you have all your software licenses and a clean copy of your data.

Then there’s business continuity. This is the ability for your business to continue to operate even after a major disaster. For example, if you ran a law firm and your building burned to the ground, you’d be out of business if all your files were on the server only. However, if you had your network in the cloud, your employees could continue to work from home or some other location, giving your business continuity.

Of course, you need all three at some level. At a minimum you need to make sure you have in place the right backup and disaster recovery plan for your tolerance for downtime, and a plan for how your business could continue to operate if you could no longer access your building, server or data. You should review your plan annually. If you want a simple and easy way to get all of this handled, give us a call! We specialize in planning, implementing and managing these projects so you don’t have to.



How To Avoid On-Line Viruses When Surfing The Internet

You can’t operate a business these days without online access – but hackers and cyber criminals work around the clock to find new ways to infect your computer and access confidential information. What makes this even worse is the fact that many viruses are introduced unknowingly by the user! To avoid downloading a virus to your PC and possibly your entire network, here are a few simple tips:

- **Keep Your Anti-Virus Up To Date:** Every anti-virus software has an automatic update feature – make sure yours is turned “on.”
- **Never Download Files From File-Sharing Web Sites:** Web sites like KaZaa are breeding grounds for viruses. Never download anything from these sites, period! Especially free software!
- **Never Open Attachments In E-mail From Unknown Sources:** When in doubt, delete the file.
- **Never Download Emoticon Programs, Screen Savers, Or Other “Cute” Program Files.** Hackers love to use “eye candy” programs like cool screen savers to get users to download their viruses. Don’t fall victim to their scams!



10 Easy Ways To Keep Your Computers Safe

- 1) Be sure you have a good anti-virus program installed that includes anti-spyware.
- 2) Ensure all of your security programs have real-time updates and scans to check for viruses on a continuous basis.
- 3) Check regularly to be sure your virus scan programs are up-to-date and the most recent versions.
- 4) Have a properly configured firewall.
- 5) Make sure your browsers have the latest security patches installed.
- 6) Avoid downloading applications from the Internet. Free games and applications often contain unwanted spyware and malware.
- 7) Be careful when you open e-mail attachments. Even if you know the person sending it to you, scan the e-mail before you open it.
- 8) Install a spam filter or delete spam e-mail as soon as it arrives in your inbox. Do not be tempted to open spam as such messages can often contain links that lead to phishing sites or viruses.
- 9) Beware of virus hoaxes. If you receive an e-mail that says certain files on your computer need to be deleted because they have been infected with a virus then search the web for sites that write about hoaxes to see if the message is genuine.
- 10) Choose secure passwords. Use a combination of letter, numbers and symbols to strengthen passwords. Don’t use personal info in your password.

Thanks for the Kind Words...



“Joe,

I have been using my new computer for a few days now and just wanted to thank you and your team for an excellent job well done. I know we invested a lot of time and energy and money in this project [of installation of x new desktops] and (at least from my point of view) it was worth it! It runs faster. The displays are nicer on the eye. There are lots of new and helpful features in the new Office environment (which I'm still learning about). So thanks!

John [of Creaghan McConnell], special thanks to you for all your efforts in melding our custom stuff into this project. It looks very cool and works well (love the buttons!)

And of course thanks to the whole IT team for getting this in place!”

Peter Creaghan—
Partner, Creaghan
McConnell Group Ltd.

Should You Bring Your iPad To Work?



The iPad continues to impress analysts with its sales performance, with nearly 9.25 million of the devices sold last quarter alone, an upward trend from just 4 to 5 million in previous periods last year. It may be just a matter of time before iPads start becoming just another device, like the cellphone, that people routinely bring to work. Is there a place for the iPad in your business? Read on to find out how the iPad can be put to work in businesses like yours.

The iPad for many is a revolutionary device in that it brings the full power and experience of computing into a form that is easy to hold, easy to transport, and easy to use. Manufactured by Apple, the device uses the same operating system as its earlier iPod Touch and iPhone devices. And just like its smaller brethren it does away with conventional input devices like the mouse or keyboard, instead requiring just the user's fingers to touch, navigate, and interact with the operating system and installed applications.

Key to the success of the device has been the availability of thousands of applications from third-party software vendors – in fact, nearly a hundred thousand of them. These applications range in categories from entertainment, media, education, and even productivity and business. Using these productivity and business applications for the iPad, you can effectively use these devices in the workplace. Here are some specific work scenarios in which you may want to consider the iPad in your business operations:

For presentations. Because of its portability, the iPad makes a great device for showing and sharing presentations. Applications like Apple's Keynote allow you to import and edit PowerPoint presentations. Accessories allow you to connect the device to a monitor or projector. If you're thinking of doing virtual presentations, there are iPad apps that allow you to do that as well—letting you stream your presentation via the Internet.

For Communication and Collaboration. The iPad has built-in applications for emailing, plus more can be added to support audio and even video conferencing. If you want to manage meetings, the iPad's built-in calendar and address book apps make it a great replacement for a planner, while its larger screen makes it easier to read and manage than your cellphone or smartphone. It has built-in support for third-party mail and calendar applications like Microsoft Exchange, Google Mail, and Calendar. You can also download and use additional applications to help you manage your tasks, monitor projects, share files, post and read stuff in your social networks, and much more. For field assignments. The iPad's light weight and portability make it a great companion while out on the road. You can install and configure VPN clients to securely connect to your office network when in the field, or use any of the business applications you use in the office—especially cloud-based ones. Again, using the built-in productivity tools you can use the iPad to manage your itinerary while on assignment.

For travel. As a travel companion the iPad is unmatched, with a wide breadth of apps for managing flight and hotel booking information, expenses, and more. Use the built-in tools to manage your travel itinerary, and use the communication and collaboration tools to check on progress at the office. During lulls, breaks, or after office hours, easily shift modes and use the iPad as a media viewer or news reader for information and entertainment.

Industry-specific apps. There are dozens more business cases in which the iPad can be put to work. For example, as a store or point-of-sale display, or even a point-of-sale device. Companies are using it to replace manuals, and schools are using it to replace stacks of books. There are many more ways the iPad can be used for business. Are you considering using it for your business as well? Do you know of other uses? Let us know!