

Bits & Bytes

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



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“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.”

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3 Technology-Specific New Year’s Resolutions You Need To Make

Ahhhh! A brand new year, full of promise, hope and a fresh start. If you’re like most people, you’re making the usual resolutions to exercise more, lose weight, pay off debt, etc., etc., etc. Essentially, it’s a time of year when we momentarily take stock in our lives and think about all the things we “should” be doing more of (things that are good for us), or less of (that which is bad for us) but don’t. So while you’re in the goal-setting mode, we thought we would tack on 5 things that probably aren’t on your company’s “to do” list, but should be. Especially since these all fall into the “important, but not urgent” category.



Off-site backups. Can we beat this horse to death anymore? I know MOST of the clients reading this newsletter are smart enough to have this already done, but many still don’t and are relying on undependable (and outdated, I might add) tape drives, Carbonite or other volatile backup solutions. If that’s you, don’t let this be another year where you gamble with everything you’ve worked so hard to achieve. Get a better backup!!!!

Write A Disaster Recovery Plan. Pop quiz: If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that you couldn’t access your office building due to a fire or flood, or you discovered a bunch of your computers including your servers were stolen or destroyed by fire or flood, what would you do? Or what would happen if a key executive—one who holds the “keys” to critical processes or applications—fell sick or (God forbid) died? Or what would happen if a disgruntled employee or hacker gained access to your web server, line of business application or file server and deleted everything—particularly if the data was hosted on the 3rd party cloud provider’s web site? These are all very real scenarios, and without a plan in place, you could be facing serious downtime and financial losses.

Develop A Stronger Cyber Security System That Goes Beyond A Firewall And Anti-Virus. With more and more information about us being stored electronically, and with privacy and security laws becoming more strict, you MUST take cyber security seriously. Simply having a good firewall and anti-virus isn’t enough these days to keep the highly motivated and technically sophisticated criminals out of your network. The HUMAN element is the biggest threat—employees who accidentally click on links in e-mails or download files that introduce viruses to your network. Employees are also using social media sites more frequently, and they can intentionally or accidentally post something that could harm your company’s reputation or leak confidential information. Therefore, your security plan must also include employee training and policies so they know what is and isn’t acceptable when handling data and using company resources (Internet, computers, etc.).

If you don’t know where to start in creating any of the above, we’re here to help! Call Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 or e-mail at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com to discuss how we can do all of this for you and take the work and worry out of these New Year’s resolutions!

It's National Clean Up Your Computer Month

An authority no less reputable than "The Vinegar Institute" declared January as a national holiday to clean up your computer.

In light of this holiday, now's the time to answer a small but nagging question, "How do I get those smudges, dust, and fingerprints safely off of my flat screen monitor?" Although each monitor manufacturer has its own special instructions for cleaning, there are some common guidelines you can use to get your screen looking like new in no time.

Turn off the monitor. It's not required, but it makes smudges and smears easier to see.

Use a cotton cloth or compressed air to get rid of light dust buildup. **Never use a rag or paper towel** to clean since they can scratch the screen.

Don't use products with ethyl alcohol or ammonia-based products.

Products like Windex can yellow flat-screen or laptop monitors.

Use water or a home-made mix to clean

grungy surfaces. If water isn't enough, make a cleaning solution of 1 part water, 1 part isopropyl alcohol, and 1/2 part vinegar.

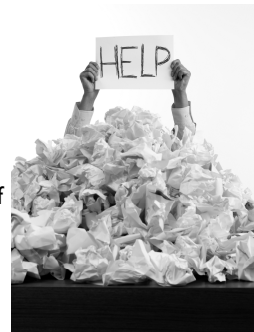
Lightly moisten your cloth with the cleaning solution. Never apply the liquid directly to the screen.

Wipe the cloth in one direction - from top to bottom. This method will ensure grime and dust move to the bottom of the screen surface where it can be wiped away.

3 Simple Tricks To Get More Done Every Day

In today's crazy-busy world, who doesn't want to cram more "done" into their day? We've got 3 really simple things you can do to get more work done for the hours you're putting in.

Use dual monitors. According to a University of Utah study, you can increase your efficiency by 25% just by adding a second monitor. Performance measures included task time, editing time, number of edits completed, number of errors made, as well as usability measures evaluating effectiveness, comfort, learning ease, time to productivity, quickness of recovery from mistakes, ease of task tracking, ability to maintain task focus, and ease of movement among sources. All of these factors combined show truly increased productivity. All of us at TAG have been using dual monitors for well over a year. Ask any of us, and we'll just as soon give up one of our kidneys, than our second monitor. Yes, we love them THAT much....I'm even planning on a getting a third for myself.



Block social media sites and/or other non-work related content online.

THIS one won't be popular for a lot of people, but if you want to get more done, then take the distractions out of your day. Of course if your job is "social media director" for your company, this doesn't apply; for all the other workers in your office who don't NEED to go on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to do their job, this will remove the temptation to "snack" on social media sites throughout the day, which add up to hours wasted on entertainment surfing. Content filtering software can easily manage which sites you can and cannot go online to view, also keeping employees from gambling, searching for jobs, reading the news or visiting sex sites. See page 4 of this newsletter for more info on content filtering and how you can save thousands on employee productivity.

Set up remote access. It's incredibly easy to access files, e-mail and programs from home (or while on the road) these days using cloud technologies or other remote access applications. Not only does this allow people to keep working when forced to stay home with sick kids or to wait for the plumber to show up, but employees would also put in several more hours of work on their own initiative if they could easily jump on their home PC and connect to the office.

Each of these is an EASY fix for us to implement. If you want more details on how to get these implemented into your business, just give Joseph Stoll a call at 416-489-6312 x 204 or shoot him an e-mail at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com

Let The Government of Canada Make 2013 Your Healthiest Year Yet

You may have seen the TV commercial for this website and if you haven't checked it out yet, you should. It contains dozens of health and safety tips for you and your kids. Just a small sampling of what it offers:

- ◇ Recalls and safety alerts: Learn about safety alerts and product recalls and what to do when a product is recalled for consumer products, vehicles, food and health products.
- ◇ How to have a healthy pregnancy.
- ◇ Timely tips for winter safety.
- ◇ Health and safety tips for children (infant care, injury prevention, medication, illness, etc.)
- ◇ Food and nutrition safety (how to read labels, food poisoning education, food safety, healthy eating)

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca>

5 Tips To Prepare Your Business For A Disaster

Business continuity – ensuring your business can stay operational during adverse times – should be an important part of your business. Many owners recognize this and take steps to backup their data. This is a good start, but it isn't enough. Thankfully we aren't at high risk for the natural disasters our neighbours to the south are suffering on an increasing basis, but it doesn't mean we aren't immune to other technology catastrophes such as fire, theft, flood, employee error / sabotage or major hardware failure.



Here are five things you should be doing, aside from backing up your data, to ensure your business is ready for anything:

- ⇒ **Where to work.** One of the first things you should consider is where you're going to work if your office is inaccessible. Hotels, convention centers or other office buildings are viable locations. Whichever location you pick, you should pick at least two different places, as far apart as possible. You should also be sure to inform your staff and include maps of the routes to the locations you've chosen.
- ⇒ **Replacement equipment.** It's incredibly important that you know exactly what equipment you use and how integral it is to operations. For mission critical equipment (equipment your company absolutely can't work without) you need to have a plan in place as to how you can quickly replace lost equipment, the cost of it and replacement time. For less important equipment, you should have a couple of vendors in mind.
- ⇒ **Communication systems.** During adverse business conditions it's vitally important that you and your employees are able to communicate both with one another and with your clients. You should look into a communication system that's flexible, can be established wherever you are and allows you to keep your numbers. VoIP is a great system, telecommuting is another option as well.
- ⇒ **Coordinate staff.** Your staff drive your business. Without them, your business likely won't be able to run. With the continuity plan you develop, it's important that you have hard and soft copies of the plan that are accessible to all staff, and staff know their role in the plan. When your plan is enacted you need to contact your staff and ensure that there aren't any problems.
- ⇒ **Access to critical documents.** If you have a good backup location, can set up equipment quickly and staff know their roles you may think your plan is perfect; however you're missing one key element: access to documents—employees won't be able to work without them. It's important to ensure that you can access your data backups, which means you should probably keep copies offsite and in the cloud if possible.

While a continuity plan is important, hopefully you'll never have to enact it. Nevertheless, you should plan for the worst. If you're unsure of where to start, or feel your current plan is inadequate, please contact Joseph Stoll who can help you navigate the waters. 416-489-6312 x 204 or JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com.



"Yes, tech support? My laptop kept freezing up, so I stabbed it with a knife. What do I do now?"

FREE BUSINESS ADVISORY GUIDE: 12 Little-Known Facts Every Business Owner Must Know About Data Backup, Security & Disaster Recovery

PROTECT YOUR DATA

"12 Little-Known Facts Every Business Owner Must Know About Data Backup, Security And Disaster Recovery"

Discover What Most IT Consultants Don't Know Or Won't Tell You About Backing Up Your Data And Recovering It After A Disaster

If you are a business relying on tape drives, external hard drives or USB devices to back up your data, then it's critical for you to get and read this report. You'll learn what most IT consultants don't know or won't tell you about making sure your company's critical data is safe from loss, corruption, cyber criminals, disasters and employee sabotage / errors, in addition:

- ◆ The only way to know for SURE your data can be recovered if lost, corrupted or deleted – yet fewer than 10% of businesses have this in place.
- ◆ 7 critical characteristics you should absolutely demand from any office backup service; do NOT trust your data to any company that does not meet these criteria.
- ◆ Where tape backups fail and give you a false sense of security.
- ◆ The #1 cause of data loss that most businesses don't even think about until their data is erased.

Get immediate access at:

www.technicalactiongroup.com/12littleknownfactsaboutdatabackups/

The 4 Best Gadgets To Help You Lose Weight And Get Fit This Year

Getting fit is going high-tech these days, with new gadgets that are actually cool to wear. Plus, they're going social with online workouts and apps that track your progress and allow you to compete against friends. Here are four new high-tech gadgets that may help you get in beach-body shape by spring:

Nike+ FuelBand. This wristband tracks activity through the day and converts it to a metric of activity. Using a mobile or online app, you can set a goal for each day and work to beat it. At \$149, it's cheaper than a personal trainer. We think this is Nike's answer to the Fitbit, which comes next on our list. www.nikestore.com

Fitbit Ultra. The Fitbit is an altimeter, which can track how many hills or stairs you've climbed, and a motion sensor to track calories and activity levels through the day. www.fitbit.com

Gymboss. This tiny clip-on interval trainer is a low-tech item, but may be great at getting you to lose those last pounds by doing short, high-intensity intervals. These workouts are not for the faint of heart!

www.gymboss.com

Endomondo Sports

Tracker. Endomondo is an app that you can download for free to your phone to track miles running, cycling or in other sports using your phone's GPS. You can make any workout a race against your friends or against your own personal best.

www.endomondo.com

How To Easily Save \$5,000 Per Employee AND Increase Their Productivity

Do you have any idea how much time your employees spend on Facebook, Twitter, dating sites, G-Mail, Hotmail, March Madness or any other non-work relevant and time-sucking websites? If they are doing it on your time, then you should know. A \$20 an hour employee losing 1 hour a day costs you over \$5K a year. Content filtering helps you control that cost.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Content filters can be software only or a combination of software and hardware. The type of content filter will depend on your network and how much reporting you would like. Most content filters have a way that you can block everything or you can allow specific employees to have access.

WHAT CAN YOU BLOCK?

Content Categories. You can block websites based on a category such as pornography, violence, hackings, sports, news, dating, bank and chat sites.

File Type. You can restrict your employees from downloading files. For example, you can block the download of executables or EXE files. This would prevent anyone from accidentally installing a virus or pirated software.

Instant Messaging (IM). You can block instant messaging services such as MSN Messenger. These can cause security vulnerabilities and are often the target of hackers. Blocking public IM communications outright is one strategy to secure information flow and increase network security.

Application Blocking. You might want to block applications including Internet music applications, software updates, and browser toolbars.

Allowing Access. As some people need higher levels of access and functions, you can set filtering by the individual user or a group.

You might want to block all social media sites. This would include LinkedIn, but some of your employees should be using LinkedIn as part of their business networking. If you restricted their use, you would force them to use it from home or worse, their mobile phone. Using their mobile phone will take 4 times longer and now you are losing time and money. Most filters will allow you to let specific employees have access to specific websites.

Warning Policies. You can show employees a custom 'block page' but allow them to proceed after being warned. Warning policies are useful for reminding users about sites which may violate your corporate internet usage policy without blocking them outright.

Web Traffic Monitoring. You can set up the filter for monitoring specific website categories or domain names without presenting blocked pages to users or preventing access. Monitoring will help to make a business decision on what blocking you might want to use.

Time-based Exceptions. Another common feature is allowing access during specific time periods. You could let all your employees have access to Facebook over their lunch break.

Spyware and Virus Protection. You can block access to known spyware sites, spyware downloads and detect and block spyware activity.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Content filters can cost between \$900 and \$3,000 in software / hardware costs the first year. Most content filters have a renewal fee the following years.