

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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How Can You Tell If A Technology Vendor Is Right For Your Business?

It can make a big difference for your business to partner with the right technology vendor. How can you know if you’re working with a vendor that’s looking out for your company’s best interests, or one that wants to rip you off? You can largely increase the likelihood you’re working with the right vendor if you have your trusted IT provider choose them for you.



This is the benefit to Technical Action Group’s IT’s vendor management service. Unfortunately for some businesses, they tend to need a product or service offered by a particular technology vendor and jump at the chance to get it without reading the fine print, or taking the time to get to know how reliable the vendor may or may not be. Before jumping into bed with a vendor, first be sure to investigate their credentials by asking questions like these:

How Knowledgeable are They?

Does the vendor know what they’re talking about? Some vendors spout off about their services without knowing the finer details about them. In order to separate the good from the bad, you need to understand which vendors know what they’re talking about and which ones are pseudo-scaming you. It may be difficult to catch on to this if you’re not knowledgeable yourself about the service you need. If you’ve got the time, you can always take a crash YouTube course about technology, but few business owners are able to do this, which is why it’s good to consult with a trusted IT expert like ourselves.

What is the Quality of Their Product or Service?

This is a no-brainer. A vendor must provide quality solutions if they want to receive any business. Of course, not all vendors think that way. Some provide low-quality solutions for a high price due to the demand being high. You need to make sure that you get what you’re paying for. To find this out, you can talk to customers that they’ve worked with, or have us check on the quality of their work for you.

Are They Taking Advantage of the Latest Solutions?

Is the vendor going to find ways to equip your business with cutting-edge technology? The best way to stay ahead of your competition is by utilizing new solutions which help you target an untapped market and improve operations. A technology vendor that’s not thinking about your future isn’t worth partnering with.

Will They Work with Your Staff?

Are they willing to work with your current IT support in order to find the best solution for your needs? In order to thrust your business into a new era of productivity and success, your vendors have to be willing to work with your staff and work around your company’s schedule. Without this spirit of collaboration, it can be difficult to establish a mutually fruitful relationship.

Shiny Gadget Of The Month:



iPhone Binoculars

If you've ever wanted to add more utility to your Apple iPhone, SkyMall's iPhone Binoculars might be what you're looking for. These binoculars, featuring 36mm lenses, attach onto the back of your phone via a sturdy and specially designed case. The case lines up the iPhone's camera with one of the binocular's lenses, giving your camera 8x magnification.

While it's not going to blow any optic aficionados away, it increases the usefulness of your iPhone's camera. Just open up the camera app to see the magnified image. Turn your phone into a viewfinder to take pictures or record video. Or just watch what your binoculars capture. You can even use the binoculars separately from the iPhone for doubled utility!

The binoculars also come with a travel case and cleaning cloth, and are currently compatible with the iPhone 5/5s and iPhone 4/4s. Pick one up at www.SkyMall.com!

Can You Easily Communicate Your Needs to Them?

How easy are they to contact? You want to make sure that your vendors are reliable and easy to get ahold of. If you have trouble communicating with vendors, nothing gets done, and your schedule gets thrown off. If you hire a vendor for a service, then you deserve to have quick replies to your questions and clear explanations about what they're planning on doing.

To all of these vendor questions, you've already found satisfactory answers in Technical Action Group. With our vendor management service, we're able to use our knowledge of your business and find trusted technology vendors that are the right fit. Additionally, we go one step further and even manage these vendors for you so that you can have a single point of contact for all of your technology needs.

3 WiFi Tips To Improve Performance and Troubleshoot Issues



In the modern business landscape, WiFi is more important than ever before. In recent years, the capabilities of WiFi technology have improved dramatically, prompting more businesses to utilize wireless technology. An increased dependency on WiFi means that a working wireless connection is critical to operations. This requires knowing how to both properly setup and maintain your wireless network. Setting up your company's WiFi to maximize its signal and having a troubleshooting plan of action for when the signal drops, needs to be a top priority for any business that leans heavily on wireless technology. Here are three tips to get the most out of your company's WiFi.

Design Your Wireless Network to Handle Growth

The best way to prevent network problems like losing WiFi signal is to set up your company's wireless network to handle your current workload and future growth. For example, if a wireless network was set up five or more years ago (when less people were bringing their personal devices into work), and the signal frequently drops, it may be due to the network's inability to meet the increased demands.

When designing your wireless network, be sure to plan for the future. Info-Tech Research Group explains how to design your network for maximum coverage: "Building for capacity typically lessens the chance of coverage gaps and issues related to building materials, channel allocations, power levels, and more. Specifically, assume every user will connect three devices to the wireless network, though this will increase in coming years."

Also, keep tech trends in mind. In the near future, a growing amount of wearable devices will need to connect directly to 802.11 networks. Is your office network ready to accommodate trends like wearable tech?

If the proper adjustments are not made to handle the increased workload, then downtime caused by dropped WiFi signals will happen more frequently. Therefore, one of the first WiFi troubleshooting tips you can do is to make sure that your wireless network is designed to handle the demands you're putting on it. If you need to make an upgrade to accommodate your organization's wireless needs, then call Technical Action Group at 416-489-6312.

Beware of Interference

WiFi signals are prone to environmental interference. A less-than-ideal location for your wireless router can put too many physical walls between your device and the router. Wall thickness and the building materials used can factor into dampening the signal strength. If you're finding that your wireless signal is stronger in some parts of the building than others, and it's not strong enough in specific locations that are critical to getting work done, then consider moving your wireless router to a more ideal location with less interferences.

Combine Your Wireless and Wired Networks

Many organizations are guilty of treating their wireless and their wired networks differently, giving each their own management and security solutions. This can make troubleshooting problems difficult and leave your company vulnerable to a data breach.

Initially, it may be cheaper to set up two different networks, but maintaining both networks will be expensive and become time consuming when IT has to address two separate sets of user databases to troubleshoot networking issues. Processor magazine says that, "Although it involves upfront costs, upgrading wired and wireless aspects at the same time and running them on the same management system addresses the issues. Such solutions include managed cloud offerings."

By maximizing the setup of your company's wireless network and having IT professionals maintain it, you can ensure maximum performance for years to come. Technical Action Group can set up, monitor, and maintain your company's wireless network so that issues can be pinpointed and then quickly taken care of. This eliminates the cost of downtime associated with WiFi troubleshooting. Call Joe Stoll at 416-4489-6312 x 204 or JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com. to learn more about our managed IT services!

Exercise Internet Vigilance

Despite constant development in security and stability, the Internet still remains very much a Wild West landscape. You can navigate through it, but you never know when you might encounter a hidden danger. Threats exist on a global scale.

Cybercriminals want information. They don't care whose information they access and steal, or what damage they do. They want to take what they can get and they want to sell it. There are people who do this for a living. This morning, in the period of one minute, there were hundreds of cyber-attacks originating in China, targeting the United States alone, and Canada is not immune.

What can you do? Stay vigilant.

Visit web sites you know and trust: This is the simplest and most effective way to keep safe.

Keep your web browser and computers up-to-date with the latest patches and security updates: While your office computers are kept up-to-date automatically as long as you're covered by any of our maintenance plans, you still need to keep an eye on updates for your home computer (s). Don't ignore these updates!

Know web sites you input personal information or credit card information into are secure: Look at the address bar. If you see "https" you are on a secure web page. If you see "http" you are not on a secure web page.

Make web sites you visit more secure: Browser extensions, such as **HTTPS Everywhere**, help make web browsing more secure. HTTPS Everywhere takes standard "http" web pages and secures them with "https" by automatically directing you to the secure version of the site. It's not compatible with every web page, but it goes a long way in protecting you.

Social Media Marketing Tools

Social media marketing tools seem to pop up every week, so here's some help sorting the best from the rest:

1. Mention: Google Alerts for the social web. [Mention](#) helps you monitor your brand's presence on social networks, forums, blogs and more. It also includes social features that allow you to respond to mentions of your brand and to share industry news that you find.

2. Buffer: Social media publishing plus powerful analytics. [Buffer](#) is a powerful social media tool that lets you schedule your updates to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and App.net.

3. Feedly: Content discovery. Finding great content to share with your audience is easy with [Feedly](#). Not only can you subscribe to RSS feeds to keep on top of industry blogs and news sites, you can also use Feedly to discover new content related to your topics of interest.

4. Twitter Counter: Track Twitter progress. It can be easy to lose track of how your Twitter account is growing; that's where [Twitter Counter](#) comes in. It's a free service that tracks changes in your follower count and predicts future growth over time.

Save Time By Using Canned Email Responses From Outlook

Often times, we'll find ourselves sending the same email over and over again. Someone will want your address, or your phone number, or a way to contact the CEO of your company. A great way to streamline responding to these emails is to craft some premade "packaged" responses. These are kind of like mass produced responses, but they will save you time when you need to respond to multiple emails as quickly as possible.

In order to use canned responses in Microsoft Outlook, follow these steps:

- ◆ Open Microsoft Outlook and create a new **Mail Message**.
- ◆ Type your canned response into the **body section**.
- ◆ Highlight the response, then click the **Insert** tab.
- ◆ Click on **Quick Parts**.
- ◆ Choose **Save Selection**, which will save the selection to the **Quick Part Gallery**.
- ◆ Enter a name for the canned response. Save it, then delete the email.
- ◆ In order to access your canned messages, click **Quick Parts** and choose the desired message.

Take Inventory On Your Old Technology

Do you have a plan to deal with your old technology, or do you have a closet full of used equipment? Are you aware of your equipment's refresh dates, or do you just replace components after they break? Knowing the condition of your technology, and having a plan to deal with old equipment, will save your business money.



An example of how a good equipment disposal plan can save you money comes from Google. Since 2007 Google has been recycling and refurbishing old servers in their datacenters. By being intentional about disposing of and reusing their old equipment, Google has been able to avoid having to purchase 90,000 server units! While you probably don't have thousands of servers to cycle through like Google, you might have several older pieces of equipment that can be disposed of in a way that saves you money.

Before you commit to be like Google and start recycling all of your old technology, you will first want to take the time to assess your IT situation. This means taking inventory on all of your equipment and reviewing what needs to be replaced. With a deep understanding of what you have, you can then squeeze more productivity out of your equipment. This is a service that Technical Action Group is uniquely qualified for with our years of working with different IT networks.

A thorough investigation of your equipment's performance, along with an investigation of that hardware, will tell us a lot about what kind of shape your network is in. When we couple this inspection process, along with referencing the refresh rates provided by the manufactures (which is like a technology expiration date), then we will be able to come up with an accurate technology replacement plan that will maximize the life and performance of your equipment.

Another way that a technology review plan can save you money is by determining if you have any equipment that's underutilized, or finding redundant pieces of equipment that can be refurbished or recycled. Once we map out your network and have a clear picture of the condition of the equipment, we can then provide you with money saving solutions.

One popular solution is called server virtualization. This is a process by which we are able to consolidate your older servers, that may have one or two applications on them, into newer and more powerful server that are able run multiple applications without any problem, thus freeing you up to downsize your server units, sometimes by as much as 4-to-1.

Taking advantage of a print server solution is another good way to consolidate your old technology. When it comes time to install a print server solution, we will evaluate your printing layout and map a more efficient way to use the printers you have so you can reduce the total number of printers used. There are several other great solutions available, like refurbishing your old technology with new parts, and finding buyers for your old technology to make a small profit.

By evaluating your network and enacting great solutions, you will end up with a network that's optimally designed to better meet your needs. This will end up saving you money in maintaining equipment, and even be good for the environment because you end up refurbishing and reusing, instead of filling a landfill.

After your newly redesigned network is setup, you will then want to keep it going strong to get the most life out of it. Technical Action Group's managed IT services will remotely keep your network running smoothly to help extend its life; call Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 or JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com to learn more!