# Bits & Bytes

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

Technical Action Group Inc

**TAG**
we're I.T.

*"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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## The Top 5 Worst Technology Habits to Break in 2011

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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 2011.

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 on earth would you still stick to your Stone Age 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!

## Shiny New Gadget of the Month:
### *PC On A Stick Technology*

Road warriors know that packing light on business trips is a must; but one of the things you just can't leave behind is your laptop – until now…

Thanks to new "PC On A Stick" technologies, you can carry your desktop around on a simple USB device. Simply plug this specially equipped USB device into any PC and you're instantly working on what appears to be your own desktop. Unplug it, and all traces of your data vanish! Here are the top 3 options:

**MojoPac**: This is a free software option that enables you to "clone" or copy your desktop applications and files to a virtualized machine that will work with any USB device, be it a pen drive, iPod or external hard drive.

However, it will only work with Windows XP computers and lacks encryption capabilities.

**Ceedo Personal:** This inexpensive software product will give you a near-perfect facsimile of your desktop on any USB device. At $39, you'll get Windows 7 compatibility and integration with secure TrueCrypt devices.

**CheckPoint Abra**: Out of the three mentioned here, this is the most secure. You'll pay a bit more ($140 to $210) but it will give you security encrypted access to your cloned desktop.

## Growing Good Corn

There once was an old farmer who grew award-winning corn. Every year he entered his corn into the state fair and won the blue ribbon.

One year, after winning yet another competition, a young newspaper reporter requested an interview with the famer to try and uncover the famer's secrets to his prize-winning corn. Although he expected to be turned down, the farmer welcomed the interview. He asked the old famer several questions about his techniques and then discovered something interesting about how he grew it: the reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors!

"How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering their corn into the same competition with yours every year?" the reporter asked. "Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? I can't afford not to! The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it around from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn as well. It's one of my secrets to success."

The moral of the story is simple: If we are to grow "good corn" in our businesses, we must be willing to help our fellow business owners grow "good corn" too. When times are tough, it affects us all. That's why we've decided to offer a FREE "Network Tune Up" to any business that is not a current client of TAG's with at least 1 Windows server and 10 or more workstations in Toronto until the end of February.

At no charge, we'll send a senior technician onsite to conduct a complete 27-point audit of your computer network to make sure your data is secure, protected from hackers and viruses and being backed up properly. We'll also look for ways to cut costs and save you money on hardware, software and services.

While this may not make a huge difference in any one company's success, it's our way of helping our neighbours "grow good corn." To request this service, simply call Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 or e-mail him at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com and ask for the "good corn" offer. There is zero cost or obligation and there will be no sales pressure to buy anything further—we promise.  And if you know of someone who could use this offer, please forward this on to them!

## SEO Poisoning On The Rise
### If Your Website's Ranking on Google Is Important To Your Business, You Must Read This!
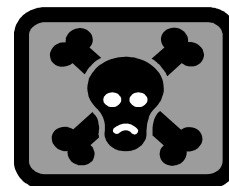
One of the latest tricks hackers are now using is search engine optimization to promote malware infected websites for popular search terms. This new threat is called "SEO Poisoning." In fact, at any given moment, three of the top ten search results contain at least one malicious URL within the top 70 results! Here's how it works…

Hackers use well-known search engine optimization tactics to create web sites that will rank in the top results for popular keywords. For example, the BP oil spill and World Cup keywords were riddled with these infected sites. When you click on them, you are presented with pop ups, free software downloads, fake virus warnings and other ads. If you click on anything, you're instantly infected with malware.

What makes this so dangerous is that most of us have come to trust search engine results and click on the links of web sites without question of security. Plus, hackers have learned that the more "normal" their web sites look, the easier it is to get users to trust them. To protect yourself, make sure you have up-to-date anti virus software installed. Some security companies offer a free browser plug-in that will warn you if it detects a site is a poisoned site that will harm your computer.

## How To Stop Employees From Indulging in Excessive Personal Cell Phone Use At Work

Thanks to smart phone technology, it seems like everyone is "plugged in" to 24/7 web access, texting, and e-mail; not to mention phone conversations. In some cases, people have become so addicted to their phones that they're texting constantly, even while driving, having dinner with their families or using the bathroom!

Clearly these devices can become a major distraction at work, causing major problems with productivity, especially if you want your staff to be focused on getting critical projects completed accurately and on time. But mandating a "no cell phone" policy may be too harsh. So where's the balance? Here are a few tips:

1. Implement a personal cell phone usage policy in writing. Taking a personal call from the daycare about a sick child may be acceptable, but spending 3 hours plus organizing a wedding is not. This should include certain etiquette rules, such as turning the ringer off during meetings or speaking softly to avoid disrupting others. If possible, get your employees involved in creating the policy; explain why you are doing it and that you want to make it fair and reasonable. Usually there are only a small percentage of employees who truly abuse the system, so you'll find most employees will be on board with the policy and happy to provide input.

2. Post this policy throughout the office as a reminder.

3. Review this policy with each employee and have them sign it.

4. Provide some flexibility for those in unusual circumstances, such as an employee with a sick relative or with a recent death in the family.

5. Enforce the policy so everyone knows you are serious about it. One of the best ways for management to do this is by walking around. Since personal cell phones are not connected to the company's network, you really won't know if anyone is violating the policy unless you physically walk around to check on them from time to time.

6. Lead by example! Don't expect your employees to stay off their cell phones if you are constantly texting and talking on yours.

**Attention:** Your cell phone policy can be included in your AUP (acceptable usage policy) that directs how employees may or may not use company resources (Internet, e-mail, etc.). For more help in creating these policies, contact our office!

## Should You Leave Your Computer On At Night Or Turn It Off?

I've been asked by clients whether they should leave their computer on all the time or turn it off when they are not using it. Years ago I would have told my clients to turn their machines off to save power. But with the proliferation of viruses and threats over the last few years, I have changed my mind. Today, anti-virus programs and anti-spyware applications need regular updating. These updates are often scheduled to run in the wee hours of the morning when you are not using your computer. Windows also needs to be updated whenever a new security patch is released. This is usually not daily, but it may happen several times a month. It's important to update your operating system as soon as a patch becomes available because hackers move very quickly to reverse engineer Windows updates. As soon as an update is released, they create a virus specific to that vulnerability and start looking for unprotected machines to infect and invade. In addition to the above, you should be backing up your data every day, and the best time to do this is at night when you are not using it. Bottom line, leave it on all night and restart it 2 or 3 times a week to clear the memory.

## Tools To Drive Productivity On Your Smartphone

Entrepreneur Magazine recently published their top 10 list of the best apps for iPhone, BlackBerry, Palm webOS, Windows Mobile and Android that help boost productivity in business. I've listed 2 of them here. Check back next month for more!

**App:** Bump

**Company:** Bump Technologies Inc.

**Why It Rocks:** Bump is a virtual business card that allows you to swap contact info, calendar, pictures, even your social media profiles with others, simply by bumping your phone into theirs. The info is transferred wirelessly and automatically added to your contact list. You'll never worry about running out of business cards again.

**Available On**: Android and iPhone

**Price**: Free

**App:** Intuit GoPayment

**Company:** Intuit Inc.

**Why It Rocks:** This app allows GoPayment account users to accept and process transactions for all major credit cards via a smartphone. No need for hardware. There's no daily or weekly transaction limit. Data are guaranteed only with QuickBooks, although it will sync with other accounting software.

**Available On**: Android, BlackBerry, iPhone, Palm webOS and Symbian

**Price**: $12.95 per month, plus 30 cents per authorization.

## Thanks for the Kind Words...

*"Joe—you and your team were instrumental in the "zero-issue" day today – not one data or server issue to be reported and when you consider the scope of "transplanting" our systems from Traders to Watline – it is very impressive. I would like to specifically mention the efforts of Mike – he does a great job of representing your organization and is always willing to go above and beyond!*

**- Brian Peski Global Royalties Ltd.**

## Please Welcome TAG's New Client!

**The Humphrey Group www.TheHumphreyGroup.com**

The Humphrey Group works closely with executives to ensure they are confident and in-spiring speakers. Established in 1988, The Humphrey Group ('THG') has earned a reputa-tion as one of North America's premiere executive communications firms.

When TAG was contacted by THG, they were experiencing some ongoing network per-formance issues that caused long wait times for staff while trying to perform key job func-tions on their computers. Their existing computer support company was struggling to diagnose the cause of the issue, so THG contacted TAG for a solution. Within a short visit to THG's Toronto office, one of TAG's senior technicians identified the root cause of the slowdowns and put together a plan of action to permanently resolve the issue. Subse-quent to TAG successfully fixing the issue and getting THG's staff productive again, we were hired to manage their entire network across their Toronto and Vancouver offices.

TAG also undertook a detailed network review and made various recommendations that would provide THG with a better backup solution and network performance enhance-ments that would provide them with a more stable, faster, and better performing network.

To date, several of TAG's recommendations have been implemented, resulting in faster network access, and an upgraded BlackBerry Server which allows better collaboration be-tween staff with full calendaring, contact and e-mail synchronization while staff is out of the office.

Through TAG's Essential Care Plan THG's entire network is monitored 24/7 so potential issues can be addressed before they become downtime. As well, TAG's weekly and monthly proactive maintenance activities on THG's network drastically reduces chances of virus infections and their data is kept safe from intruders.

## Would You Like a $25 Cineplex Card?

Congratulations to Dave Cameron of Entertainment One for being the first to correctly an-swer November's Trivia Challenge "*What superhero's alter ego worked for newspaper publisher J. Jonah Jameson? "*? and winning a $25 Cineplex card!

The correct answer was c) Spiderman

**Be the first to submit the correct answer to this month's trivia question and you'll receive a $25 Cineplex gift card!**

### What is the name of the main newspaper for wizards in Harry Potter's world?

**A) Words on the Wind, B) The Owl, C) Daily Prophet, D) Wizards Weekly**

Send Your Answer Today to:
SStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com
Type: 'JanuaryTrivia Question' in the Subject line.
***Only the winner will be contacted.***

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