

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.”

Joe Stoll, President
Technical Action Group (TAG)
JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com

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Do You Know For CERTAIN That Loss Of A Laptop Won’t Be A Security Disaster For Your Business?

A client who is a key person in the organization called and told us his laptop was stolen. Rightly so, he was extremely distressed given that there was extremely confidential data on the laptop, and it was his primary device he used because being mobile was key.

We got him set up on a spare laptop they had in the office, and we rushed an order for a new one.

Thankfully his password was very strong and we were able to validate that in the days since the theft, the laptop did not connect to the internet which meant that the laptop was likely wiped and resold.

Theft and loss of equipment, while the chances can be minimized with proper care, is not 100% preventable. What we can do is minimize the risks and productivity disruptions if it does happen. Most times thefts are just grab and run – the system gets wiped and sold in a back alley. But sometimes it ne’er gooders who have the time and the desire to use the device to try and capture licensing codes, credit card information and any data they can use for monetary gain.



How to prevent the data on your lost laptop from getting into the wrong hands

Data Security: Only have the data that you ABSOLUTEY need, on the laptop when you are outside of the office (i.e. NO credit card numbers). This way if the device ends up in the wrong hands, you limit exposure to the data that can be seen.

- ⇒ **Have good strong password** – the general rule is at least 8 characters (longer the better) with a combination of letters (lower and uppercase), numbers and symbols.
- ⇒ **Report the loss to management and your IT provider** the MOMENT it’s lost so that they can either leverage ayn monitoring devices to see if the device is on line, or disable remote logins to the company network from the device. This would prevent access to the internal network by whomever has the laptop.

Productivity: Depending on how large your organization is, always have a good quality spare laptop that can be deployed and useful to staff right away in the event their primary device is lost or damaged beyond repair. We see a lot of companies who keep their four year old slow-as-a-snail laptop around for such purposes. What happens is this turns a bad situation worse when the employee works on a dinosaur. As a rule of thumb, for every 5 laptop users in your company, you should have 1 good quality spare laptop.

Shiny Gadget Of The Month: PowerMat Charger



Do you and your family have a number of devices that all need charging at once? Then look into getting a PowerMat for your home or office. Instead of plugging your devices in, simply lay them on the PowerMat and they'll all charge simultaneously, eliminating the need to play power cord roulette and fight over outlets to charge your devices. Neat, huh?

Lose The Wires!

Connect your devices to PowerMat Receivers, and simply drop them on the PowerMat to charge wirelessly, as fast or faster than the stock power adaptor. A unique sound lets you know a solid connection has been made (an additional sound is heard when you remove your device—both are adjustable and can be turned off), and an indicator light—also adjustable—is displayed while a device is charging.

Use Only What You Need

Communication between the PowerMat and Receivers Z allows the mat to give exactly enough power for exactly the right time. When a device is fully charged, power is shut off to that device, so no energy is wasted. If a device is used while on the mat, the system knows it—charging starts up again until you've got a full charge.

Wired USB Connection

For legacy USB devices, or a quick charge while all your Receivers are in use, PowerMats also feature a wired USB connection. It may not be wireless, but it's better than finding another free power outlet.

5 Smart Tips For Mobile Devices

If you're planning on heading out of town – or simply to the coffee shop to work – here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- 1. Protect your devices from thieves.** All mobile devices should be passcode-protected and loaded with apps that will help you track and find them in case they get lost or stolen. For iPads and iPhones, there's the free "Find My iPhone." Android users can try "Lookout Mobile Security." These apps allow you to remotely wipe the device if it falls into the wrong hands; you definitely don't want to expose yourself to identity theft or allow someone access to your company's network and client data. Also, never leave your device anywhere you wouldn't leave your wallet.
- 2. Backup.** Mobile devices get lost and destroyed more often than desktop computers because you're dragging them around from place to place and exposing them to non-gadget-friendly environments; therefore, make sure you are backing up all the data to the cloud. All it takes is a spilled cup of coffee to erase those precious family photos and videos and confidential business data saved on the hard drive; and most people don't think about backing up their phone.
- 3. Take caution when connecting to free public Wi-Fi.** Hackers with routers and readily available software set up rogue hot spots for spying and serving you fake websites. They often name these hot spots something generic such as "Coffee Shop" or "Linksys" to fool you into thinking they are safe. You think you're connecting to the coffee shop's Wi-Fi, but you're actually accessing the web through their portal. If you are going to use public Wi-Fi, simply use it for general web surfing, not shopping, banking or accessing critical data.
- 4. Turn off sharing.** If you use a laptop, you might have it set to share files and folders with other computers at work or home. However, you don't want those settings "on" when connecting to a public network. When connecting to a public hotspot for the first time, Windows will ask you for a location type; choose "public" and it will automatically reset your settings to turn off sharing.
- 5. Carry your own connection.** If you're going to access your bank account, go shopping online or retrieve critical data when traveling, invest in your own personal Mi-Fi connection. We recommend Bell or Rogers Mobile Internet Hot Spot. If you don't have one and you need to make an emergency balance transfer or an immediate purchase to save a significant amount of money, it's safer to use your cell phone. When banking, use your bank's official app and sign up for any extra security they offer.

Are You (or any of your staff) STILL Keeping Critical Passwords On a Post-IT?

Here's An Easy Way To Remember Passwords That Maintain High Security

Next to never remembering to reboot their PC's regularly, one of the hardest habits we struggle with getting our clients to break is writing down their passwords on sticky notes by their PC. We also harp on them about the importance of creating complex passwords. Obviously too simple a password, and keeping your password on a Post-It are both bad habits that pose a HUGE security risk to your company.

Admittedly, it CAN be hard remembering all of those darn passwords that are always changing. To solve this little dilemma, we suggest to stop using passwords and use "pass-phrases."

What is a "pass-phrase" you ask? They are letters, characters and numbers put together in an easy-to-remember phrase such as "TA6RUL3\$!" (TAGRULES). These are MUCH easier to remember than a random cluster of letters and numbers, which means you won't have to write them down on a post-it note anymore!

Pass-phrases can be built from anything, such as favorite quotes, lines from movies, sports team names, a favorite athlete's name and jersey number, kids' names and birthdates, pets, and so on. All you need to do is be a little creative to get numbers, letters, and symbols into the phrase. It can actually be fun to create!

6 Tips to *Finally* Organize Your Out of Control Inbox

Much like laundry and bills, no matter how much you try to keep up, e-mails just keep piling up in your inbox. E-mail is a critical part of your day-to-day work, so how do you keep it from becoming a distraction while balancing the things you really need to address? Here are 6 tips...



1. **Zero your inbox.** Do you remember the last time your inbox was empty? Probably never; that's because it costs nothing to keep an e-mail and therefore you don't delete items "just in case" you need them at some point. This really causes messages to pile up FAST. Truth be told, you really DON'T need all those e-mails. Make it a goal to "zero" your inbox every week, particularly on a Friday before you leave for home. If you can't "zero" it, at least get the number down to fewer than a dozen critical messages you absolutely need to work on within the next 2-3 days.
2. **Use folders sparingly.** Only set up key, strategic folders or you'll end up with dozens of folders filled with messages in addition to a massive number of messages in your inbox. You might keep one labeled as "storage" for any non-urgent messages that may need to be referenced at a later date. This keeps your inbox free of clutter and helps you more easily find something in an old message when it is needed.
3. **Delete first, read the surviving messages later.** Many of the e-mails you get probably aren't even worth reading. Start your day by immediately deleting these emails before you even start to open and read the important ones.
4. **Take action immediately.** Probably the most helpful way to keep your inbox uncluttered is to take action right away on all messages instead of reading them and then going back to them later when you have time to process the message properly. By taking action right away you avoid wasting time re-reading messages. If it does require a follow up that you don't have time for, file the message and mark a reminder to follow up. Otherwise forward it, delete it or file it into a folder.
5. **Slow your roll.** Your e-mail can be a constant distraction through your workday, IF you let it! Take control and set aside "e-mail free" time periods throughout the day so you can truly concentrate on projects without interruption. The world won't stop if you don't check your email every few minutes, I promise.
6. **Install a GOOD spam filter.** The vast majority of messages are unwanted spam, some of which contain viruses. But not all spam filters are created equal! We recommend McAfee E-mail Defense Service. This service offers enterprise-grade filtering server and performance, without enterprise-level complexity and cost. It is a highly effective defence against a wide range of e-mail threats that works on the network perimeter to identify, 14 day quarantine, block and strip suspect e-mail messages before they can enter the messaging infrastructure, based on your preferences established in the intuitive, easy-to-use Control Console. The service includes Advanced Spam Blocking, Virus and Worm Scanning, Content and Attachment Filtering, Fraud Protection, E-mail Attack Protection, Outbound Message Filtering, Sophisticated Quarantine Management, Around-the-clock Monitoring and Protection, Mail spooling if the in-house mail server becomes unavailable. And it's dirt cheap.

Meet Your New Best Friend In the Kitchen...



bring your recipes, grocery list and menus with you anywhere!

Sandra discovered an app she knows any of our avid cooking readers and recipe scavengers will love as much as she does.

It's called "BIG OVEN"

Cooking and eating is the ultimate downtime experience (it is in our house). To help you along, BigOven is an app that lets you browse more than 250,000 recipes based on a number of criteria (ingredients, cuisine, vegetarian, vegan, etc)

Allergic to or dislike a certain food? Big Oven can show you recipes that don't contain them.

One of the app's coolest features is its ideas for leftovers. All you have to do is enter the foods / ingredients you have in your fridge and you get ideas for new meals. Feature overview:

Add your own recipes easily
Get paper recipes typed for you.

Search, edit and scale all recipes easily (ingredients adjust in a flash depending on number you want to serve)

Shop smarter with sorted grocery lists

Plan and reuse menus on a calendar

See your friends' recipes and share yours

Everything syncs across devices and web

See a demo at
www.bigoven.com

Trouble Keeping Schedules & Lists Organized With Your Better Half? There's an App For That!

Avocado For Android—Allows you and your other half to keep track of things easily and to share stuff with each other. It's basically like a social network for 2 people. First, you'll need to sign up for an account which you can do on the web as well as in the mobile app. Just go to

<https://avocado.io/signup>

You just need first names and e-mails for both of you and you'll both share a password. You can also choose pictures of each other.

Once you confirm your e-mail address, you and your "boo" (as the service annoyingly calls your other half) can start using it.

Avocado will work if you're a mixed mobile OS couple—if one uses Android and the other iPhone—they're both free apps.

Then you can sign in with your account and start using the service. You get a simple interface that allows you to interact with each other easily. There's a chat room to leave each other messages (fear no more your private messages getting read by your kids or co-workers!) and you'll get a notification when a message is left.

You can both also create lists. Say you've made a list of what needs to be bought for a party. You make the list together and once one of you crosses something off, it's crossed on the other one's phone too. It makes remembering things for the house much simpler and prevents both of you getting the same thing.

You can also create a common calendar and enter events, destroying any chance of saying you forgot something.

Spyware—You Know You Don't Want It, But Do You Know Exactly What It Is And How To Keep It Out?

If you spend a lot of time online, share files or photos with other users, or if you download shareware or other Internet "freebies", chances are your computer is infected with spyware.

Spyware is Internet jargon for hidden, undetected programs advertisers install on your PC to gather and report information about you and your online activities to a remote person. This program is usually installed without the user's knowledge by piggybacking on another program or file being downloaded.

While some spyware is harmless, there can be serious consequences of unidentified spyware which include spam, identity theft, corruption and slowing of your PC, and annoying pop-up ads. These programs can also profile your shopping preferences, hijack your browser start page, and alter important system files without your knowledge or permission.

Unfortunately, Spyware is not illegal. However, if you are like me, you might not like the idea of a complete stranger monitoring and storing information about you and your online activities; especially since there is almost no way for you to control what data is being sent.

Free Spyware Audit Will Detect If Your Network or Computer Is Infected

During March and April, we are offering all new customers a FREE spyware detection and removal on any 2 computers. All you have to do is 1) Call Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204; or 2) E-Mail Info@TechnicalActionGroup.com Subject: Spyware Audit. For no charge, we will do a deep scan of your hard drive and all files to uncover hidden malicious spyware that is tracking and reporting information on you. Don't become a victim to online crime! Call us today for your FREE spyware screening with ZERO obligation to buy any products or services from us!

Should You Let Employees Bring Their Own Devices To Work?

You might find that some of your employees would prefer to work on their Mac rather than the PC you've provided, or use their own computer as a supplemental device. Should you tell them yes and save yourself some money on new PCs? Yes, provided you follow a few simple guidelines. First and foremost, you need a policy outlined in an agreement the employee signs detailing what the responsibilities and rights are for them and for you. For starters, you should make it clear that the company retains ownership of the DATA on the device, even though the employee owns the actual device. All employers should have a confidentiality agreement in place with their employees anyway, but if your confidential data is on their device, you want to make sure you can retrieve it and/or delete it from their device.

Second, you need to make sure the employee takes care NOT to disable anti-virus software or download viruses. Since the employee owns the device, they will (most likely) take it home and use it for personal web browsing. If their after-hours activities invite viruses into their device, your data can be stolen or the hacker can use their device as an access point to your entire network. Can this happen with work-issued PCs? Yes, but people tend to be more liberal with their own devices than with a work laptop or workstation. You should also clarify that you have the right to "govern" the data on the device, which means you might also be able to access personal information of theirs. And finally, your agreement must clearly define what happens if the employee leaves or is terminated. They may have downloaded software that you (the company) have paid for. In that case, you'll need to figure out a way to retrieve the license from their device. We highly recommend you get with a qualified HR professional or attorney regarding these matters to make sure you are complying with all laws in this manner. Otherwise, you could end up with an ugly lawsuit over the matter.