

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)
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Security Alert: Hackers And Cyber Criminals Are Now Concentrating Their Attacks on Small Business

BUSINESS OWNERS BEWARE: For the last two years hackers and cyber criminals have been increasingly turning their efforts to small businesses instead of large enterprise corporations. Why? Because small business networks offer a much easier “lock” to pick, unlike large enterprises who invest far more man power and money into high security for their network.



"As the security becomes better at large companies, the small business begins to look more and more enticing to computer criminals," said Charles Matthews, President of the International Council for Small Business, "It's the path of least resistance."

Think your network is secure? Take a look at these surprising statistics:

- One-fifth of small businesses don't have up-to-date antivirus software installed.
- Sixty percent don't encrypt their wireless links.
- Two-thirds of small businesses don't have a security plan in place.
- Eighty-five percent of the fraud occurs in small and medium-sized businesses.

Why is security so poor for small business? Primarily for two reasons:

Naiveté: Most small businesses believe that nothing could ever happen to them, and therefore don't take the necessary precautions to secure their network, monitor their systems, and train their staff.

They are also ignorant on **HOW** to get this done (which makes a strong argument for getting all of our clients on one of our managed services plans!) The second reason is that they are being frugal in the wrong places. Some simply refuse to spend money on securing their network. That's akin to having a beautiful home full of expensive furnishings and valuables, but refusing to buy a good lock for the door because it “costs too much.”

So what should you do at a minimum to protect your company? Here are 7 fundamentals:

1. Educate your users on security basics such as using strong passwords, shutting down PCs at night, and not downloading “cute” screen savers and illegal music. Some companies make computer security rules part of their standard HR policies and make each employee sign that they understand the rules.
2. Install a web filtering software to police users and prevent accidental (or intentional) slip-ups on the above- mentioned usage policies.
3. Install a good virus protection system on all computers on your network and maintain it.

Shiny New Gadget of the Month:

Cobra Phone Tag



**Never lose valuable
items again!**

With the Cobra PhoneTag, your belongings are secure from loss or theft. After syncing your device to the free smartphone app, simply attach it to your key chain, purse or laptop bag in order to protect those items.

How does it work?

The PhoneTag software monitors the distance between the phone and tagged items. If the items become separated, you will be alerted immediately.

The PhoneTag application records the GPS location & time that you lost your item. The software then sends the GPS information to a user-defined contact list through email, text message, or a linked Facebook or Twitter account.

PhoneTag can also act as a two-way "finder." Simply tap the button on the PhoneTag device to ring your smartphone. If you are looking for your PhoneTag protected item, the PhoneTag application will help you to find it quickly and easily.

Check it out at:

www.cobra.com

Info@TechnicalActionGroup.com

www.TechnicalActionGroup.com

4. Install a firewall and check the logs periodically (again, we manage that for our Essential fully managed clients).
5. Remove all unessential services and applications installed on your servers. After e-mail, this is probably the biggest security vulnerability. If a hacker gets in, this will reduce their ability to use a forgotten service or application to exploit your network.
6. Keep all your servers updated with all the latest security patches.
7. Review and adjust the default settings on any of the appliances or software you install. Hackers know what these settings are and will use them to gain easy access to your network. This item nails more systems administrators than we care to admit.

For those of you on our Essential Care, Professional Care or Total Care Plans, you can rest assured we are taking good care of issues 3 through 7; however, if you would like us to conduct a training class and develop an AUP (acceptable use policy) for your staff and then install a content filtering software (issues 1 & 2) to help enforce the policies, give us a call.

This training and software is a small price to pay for the peace of mind you'll have over your network's security. And since better than 80% of all security breaches happen because of an end-user mistake, you'll also be taking a big step towards protecting your assets.

What Every Business Owner MUST Know To Protect Against On-Line Identity Theft

All it takes is one innocent security slip by you or one of your employees to instantly give online criminals the information they need to access your network and steal your identity. In no time at all, they can gain enough information to max out your credit cards, wipe out your bank accounts, and completely obliterate your business and personal credit. They can even use your identity to commit further crimes such as forgery, stealing from other businesses, or online scams. This nightmare can take months - sometimes years - to clean up and can destroy your credit and good name.



That's why I'm giving away FREE copies of my report "What Every Business Owner MUST Know To Protect Themselves Against Online Identity Theft" to the first 5 readers who contact me, Joseph Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 or JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com This critical report will reveal:

- ⇒ The 3 most effective tricks online identity thieves use to gain access to your business and personal information - and how to avoid them.
- ⇒ Sneaky e-mails you should delete IMMEDIATELY upon receiving them (you'll want to share this list with your friends, family and staff).
- ⇒ One super-easy, sure-fire way to make your computer network impervious to online identity thieves.
- ⇒ How to protect yourself against NEW scams being spread through social media sites like Facebook or Twitter.
- ⇒ How to keep your employees from accidentally giving away passwords and other "keys to the kingdom" to Internet criminals.

If you have questions about how we can assess your network to verify you have all of the best identity theft protection in place, give Joseph Stoll a call at 416-489-6312 x 204.

Up To 17 HOURS Of Your Time Is Wasted On This



As a busy business owner or manager, nothing is more frustrating than being made to wait; especially when that waiting seems unnecessary. And when it comes to waiting for your computer to start up, most business owners, managers and employees are all too familiar with the frustration of impatiently watching as their computer goes through the slow and agonizing process of getting ready for you to actually use it. Most Microsoft Windows computers take between 3-4 minutes to completely rev up, not including opening any programs outside of the start-up menu. Multiply that time over a year, by your number of staff, and you've got each of you staring at the screen for 17 hours, drumming your fingers on the desk and trying to figure out how to be productive while your computer boots up.

Want To Cut Down On Time-Wasting?

Here are some tips on how you can speed up your computer's start-up process so you can get right to business:

- 1) **Remove auto-loading software.** If you have programs that start up automatically, you are significantly adding to the time it takes for your computer to be ready for use. Take these programs off the start menu or, if you don't use them, simply delete them off the machine.
- 2) **Restart Daily.** At the end of your business day save your work, close all files and do a restart. This will give you a fresh computer when you start your next day. Not restarting on a regular basis will cause your system to get slower as time progresses due to system resources not being released by software that is used throughout the day.
- 3) **Consider switching to a thin client.** Thin clients are "dumb" computers that connect to a server which houses all the software, programs, and even processing power. Because nothing is loaded up onto these thin client machines, they can be ready to go in as little as 5 seconds after pressing the power button. Thin clients do require your network to be set up a certain way though, so be sure to check that before you install one.
- 4) **Take off any "trial-ware".** Some computers come with software already loaded on them, like photo software or other utility programs. These programs, most of which don't even show up in the list of available software you can remove, are called "trial-ware" because they came with the machine. Typically, they run processes in the background while you boot up your computer, delaying the start-up process of your computer.
- 5) **Make sure your anti-virus and firewall protection are up to date.** Malware and other malicious software can also slow down start times. These programs can embed themselves into the start-up menu and keep you waiting longer than necessary as your computer boots up. They also wreak havoc on your general use of the computer. So, it is important to protect your system from these kinds of attacks.
- 6) **Upgrade your computer.** Older versions of Windows will look for a CD or floppy to boot from before the computer actually begins the process of starting up. Lower amounts of memory installed on a computer can also impact its ability to start quickly. And, of course, simply having a fresh, clean and fast computer eliminates any miscellaneous software programs you may have installed that can bog down a machine.

Optimize Your Computers Now And Save \$400! Be one of the first 7 people to call Joseph Stoll at 416-489-6312 x 204 and we'll give you a Computer Optimization Tune-Up (a \$597 Value) - For Only \$197! We will: Test your firewall, anti-virus and spyware protection, check your backups, review your acceptable use policy, check your online security settings, and even look for ways to improve overall network efficiency and health.

Tools to Drive Productivity Using Your iPhone

iExpenseIt

Why You Need It:

iExpense helps you stay on top of your daily spending. Its elegant, user-friendly interface simplifies expense tracking on the go, offers customizable tools for monthly budgeting and related record-keeping demands.

Features:

Number pad with calculation, digital photo receipts, graphical reports, password protection

Available For:

iPhone

Price: \$4.99

My Eyes Only

Why You Need It:

My Eyes Only secures the critical business data on your device--financial information, credit cards, computer and website passwords, the whole ball of wax. App Store tagline: "Encryption so strong, it needed U.S. government approval for export."

Features:

"Aeroarchive" data backup, predefined information entry screens

Available For:

iPhone

Price: \$4.99

Thanks for the Kind Words...



“Mike: I just wanted to drop you a note to say thanks for all the hard work this week. With TAG at our side there is nothing that cannot be accomplished.

You were more than professional and your ability to adapt to our demanding schedules and customer commitments was definitely a step beyond the call of duty. I have never met a vendor that is more accommodating than yourself and TAG.

When I called, you immediately recognized the seriousness of the issue and dealt with it accordingly. Our business depends upon Vendors and support that you and TAG offer.

I would not hesitate to recommend TAG to anyone that is looking for an I.T. solution.

Again- Hat's off to you Mike- A full server swap with no noticeable downtime. Keep up the good work!”

Jay Tetley
Stateside Consulting

Skype—It’s Much More Than Video Chatting

When most people think of Skype, they think of video chatting. The truth is, Skype is much more. Skype works on your computer, regular phone, or cell phone and runs off your Internet connection so you can talk, IM, send pictures, videos and conduct live video conferences for free with anyone else in the world that also has Skype. It even works on various game consoles.



You can also use Skype to make calls, texts, and video conferences to phone numbers that do not have Skype. Because of its versatility, ease of use, and low-cost, many businesses are adopting the technology to help them communicate with their mobile workers and with vendors from around the world.

To set up Skype on your computer, simply go to www.skype.com and click on the “Download” tab. To install on your mobile phone, open up your phone’s web browser and go to skype.com/m.

Are You Being Too Cheap About Protecting This Aspect Of Your Business?

Think back to the last time your server went down or you weren’t able to get e-mail; remember how frustrating that was? Or perhaps you experienced a virus or other data-erasing disaster. Remember how painful that was to resolve?

There are very few business activities that don’t heavily rely on your computer network, e-mail and data – and if any of these components stop working, business grinds to a screeching, frustrating halt. And with viruses and hackers becoming more sophisticated (and smart) about accessing your network, you simply cannot afford to NOT monitor the health and security of your network daily.

A network monitoring system is simply a way for a trained professional to watch over your computer network for slow or failing components, security breaches, and alarms that signify trouble is brewing. It can also detect signs that your backup is not working, that you’re running out of space on the server, or that a firewall is not functioning properly. Think of it like a security camera watching over your entire network 24/7/365.

So if network monitoring is SO important, why aren’t more small businesses INSISTING that their IT person put a system in place? One of the biggest reasons we see is **lack of knowledge**. The reality is that many businesses DO have their systems monitored for problems; and the bigger and more sophisticated the company, the more critical this becomes. But smaller businesses are often outsourcing their IT support and, unless their computer guy offers this service, they may not even know it exists.

The second reason is complacency; the belief is that, “If it isn’t broke, why fix it?” This is akin to saying, “We don’t need locks on our doors because we’ve never had our house burglarized.” The reason you HAVE the locks is to prevent your home or office from being robbed – and the reason you have network monitoring is to make sure you DON’T have problems.

Plus, simple monitoring is cheap. For as little as \$10 per employee per month, you can have a basic monitoring system in place.