



**“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 To Keep Functioning During An Internet Outage

With the increasing reliability of the internet for businesses to be productive day to day (e-mail access, business partner sites, on-line hosted applications, FTP sites, remote access), even an hour of downtime can be very disruptive.

Internet access is vulnerable to disruption from causes completely out of our control due to a cable accidentally cut by construction, vehicle accident, communication providers, or even instability on the part of the internet service provider.

If your business has been a frequent victim of downed internet because of something out of your control (it happened to us thanks to a backhoe operator digging a trench and cutting our building’s access to all Bell services), then you’ll want to seriously consider a contingency plan to avoid being crippled because of an outage.



### Your First Step

Define what business services are critical to your business. What can’t your business live without for hours or days that require internet access? E-mail? Remote access for your road warriors / home office users? Third party business applications requiring internet? All of it? By prioritizing the systems required during an outage, you can go with lower cost options for the backup service than your main service.

### Determine The Cost / Benefit

If the internet went down for 4 hours, multiply 4 by your number of staff, x your average hourly rate for your staff to arrive at your total loss of productivity,

Example: 20 staff x 4 hours x \$20 / hour = potential loss of \$1,600. Plus any lost opportunity costs (i.e. proposals don’t go out in time, can’t respond to sales inquiries)

**Find an alternate supplier** to your current one that can provide internet access that can meet your above requirements. For example if you use Bell, call Rogers. This will protect you against an issue impacting one specific vendor.

With the alternate supplier, **look into a service that uses a different technology** to deliver access to your office than what you currently using. For instance if you use ADSL from Allstream, look into wireless from Bell or cable service from Rogers. This protects you against an issue affecting the delivery method of your main internet access such as a cut cable.

## Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:

### Roku Streaming Stick



[www.roku.ca](http://www.roku.ca)

About the size of a large thumb drive, the Roku Streaming Stick allows you to watch TV shows, games and movies on demand via the Internet on your TV.

The Streaming Stick costs as little as \$90; for that price, you can create smart TV on the cheap. Plug the Streaming Stick into a special port in the back of your TV. The device uses its Wi-Fi connection to set up service and stream shows on demand via the Internet. With thousands of leading films and TV programs available from great places like Netflix and Crackle, Roku instantly delivers the perfect title to match your mood.

It's predicted that in the next 4-5 years, the bulk of TV and movies will be viewed over the Internet through subscription services like Roku. As you can imagine, Roku has stiff competition with the likes of Apple TV (which leads the market with over 4.2 million devices sold). Google is also getting into the TV streaming game with Nexus Q.

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## How backup internet saved OUR bacon

We have two internet services that have the exact capabilities. Earlier this year our primary service went offline due to issues with our provider. Without internet, we would not have been able to provide technical support to our clients. During the outage, all of our services (e-mail, CRM and remote help desk tools) became fully functional again within minutes of our backup service taking over. This was all done automatically – we didn't do a thing - it was business as usual.

Sure, it's still possible that internet access gets knocked even with the above backup plan, but this is a great way to greatly reduce your vulnerability and keep working during most outages.

Interested in better protecting your business but need a bit of advice in assessing your needs? Call Joe (with no fee or obligation) for advice. 416-489-6312 x 204 [JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com](mailto:JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com)

## Are You Performing Reverse Backups?

**Here's an important question for anyone using cloud applications to host important files and data:** Are you routinely downloading and backing up a copy of your files to your own servers? If not, you're taking a BIG risk of losing all that data. By now you should know to back up the data on your PCs and server offsite to the cloud; but what you might not have considered is the practice of downloading your data from critical cloud applications as a security measure against that cloud provider closing their doors, losing your data or simply cutting you off.



**True Story:** A business colleague hired a new web designer to update her web site. After 6 months of delays and poor service, she notified the designer that she would no longer need their services. This firm's developer then decided to delete all the web sites she had to get revenge. Apparently, the web hosting company had a "glitch" (as they called it) in their password and security system that allowed this company to gain access to her account after she deactivated their login. Fortunately, her OLD web designer had a copy of her web site, even though it was out of date. This little fiasco caused her web site to be down for a week and cost her thousands in getting the sites back up.

Point is, the more data you host in cloud applications, the more cautious you need to be in keeping a current record of those files in-house; and with more and more software companies ONLY offering a hosted or cloud version of their software, you often won't have a choice but to move your systems and data to the cloud. As a second precaution, you should review your cloud provider's policy on closing your account. In some cases, they have all the power and will shut off your access and even delete your data without warning, never to be recovered. That's why it's absolutely critical that you perform "reverse backups" of your data to your server frequently.

## Are You Inviting Criminals To Rob You?

The next time you think about "Checking In" with Facebook or Tweeting about your vacation, don't. Burglars are now using social media sites to target homes when people are away on vacation, business or just out at dinner.

One such web site, PleaseRobMe.com, swears they never intended to encourage burglars; however, this site pulls information from social networking sites like Twitter, Foursquare and Google Buzz to expose how much information criminals can easily learn about you online.

The Dutch developers, Barry Borsboom, Boy van Amstel and Frank Groeneveld say they like social networking, but that their goal is to shine a giant spotlight on the dangerous side effects of location sharing. Regardless of their intention, our recommendation is to keep your location private.

## Paper Purge

### 10 Steps To Creating A Paperless Office

Running a business means paperwork: contracts, receipts, invoices, bills, memos, reports and letter mail. Add to that copiers, printers and fax machines, and their non-stop output, and you could soon be drowning in a sea of paper (if you aren't already), never mind finding a place to keep it all.

These days, "going paperless" at the office is an increasingly popular, and environmentally friendly, trend. In addition to helping you dramatically reduce clutter and expand your office's available physical space—no need for large filing cabinets anymore—limiting the amount of paper you use and store cuts your operating costs (goodbye fax toner! Farewell postage stamps! Goodbye 4th filing cabinet!), reduces your paper-waste output and saves a few trees in the process.

Depending on the size of your operation, this may sound like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. It's a gradual transition, not an overnight switch. To be clear, it also doesn't mean you're going 100% paper-free so much as reducing the amount of paper that comes and goes on a day-to-day basis. The key is tackling the conversion from hard copy to digital one step at a time.

#### 1. Inform everyone of your plans

Inform your clients, colleagues and suppliers of your plans, and give them fair warning well in advance so they can get used to the idea and take any steps needed to accommodate you on their end. Let the people with whom you do business know that you'd prefer to operate digitally—via e-mail instead of fax, using PDFs instead of printing multi-page reports, billing electronically in lieu of mailing an invoice, and the like.

#### 2. Choose Your Software

Whether it's document management software or secure data-storage software, you'll need something to help keep all your files organized and accessible once they're converted to digital. Try to select a universal file format that most people use to ensure ease of operation when you're sharing material. You'll also need software and apps for things like note-taking, electronic signature capture and finance management.

#### 3. Invest In A Good Scanner

Depending on the volume of paper you're looking to transfer, what you'll be scanning and how often you'll be converting files to digital, you can use a flatbed (one sheet at a time), automatic feeder (multiple sheets) or duplex (scans both sides of the paper simultaneously) scanner.

#### 4. Embrace the Shredder

Use a shredder to protect yourself and any potentially sensitive or confidential information before you toss paper into a recycling bin. If you have a large volume of paper to shred, you can hire a professional bulk-shredding service to handle the job.

#### 5. Upgrade Older Digital Storage Media

If you have data stored on CDs, tapes (or depending on how long you've been in business) floppy disks, move it to more up-to-date formats like flash drives, external hard drives or cloud-based storage.

#### 6. Use External Hard Drives

These are ideal for storing your newly digitized files. They come in an array of storage capacities and many are compact enough to fit in your pocket...be sure to keep these secure from loss and theft!

#### 7. Move To The Cloud

Cloud-based systems make it easy to store, access, send and receive digital files, spreadsheets, photos, videos and anything else you and your business might need. Everything is kept off-site, which further reduces your need for in-office storage.

# 10,000

The number of sheets of paper the average office worker uses in a year.



# 40%

The percentage of wood pulp that goes toward paper production.



# 8%

The Reduction in paper usage simply by changing the default margins on your documents from 1.25" to 1"



# Times New Roman

The most space-saving font for printed documents

## If You Don't Have This App Already.....



### Meet Your New BFF (for now) for Mobile Web Surfing

Just like the marketing says "Search everything. Instantly."

Google Search (available for free in the app store) is the fastest, easiest way to find what you need on the web from your mobile device:

**Quickly search the web on your phone or tablet.**

**Use your voice to search.**

**Get personalized results based on your location**

(for fun, use the voice command to ask Google Search "restaurants with chicken wings near me"; or

"What is a rhutabaga"

For a good laugh, get your kids to ask it something ridiculous. You'll be amazed at what comes up.

Then be wowed by the speed and accuracy of the results!

Also in the app is a "Goggles" feature (Google Goggles – say that 5 times fast...).

You take a picture of something and the app will search for it on the internet. For instance I took a picture of the Keg Restaurant sign near my office, and within seconds, Google brought me to listings that included Keg's website.

## 8. Switch To Online Banking

Mange your money, pay bills, transfer funds and accept payment all without ever leaving your desk or handling a piece of paper. Better still, an assortment of mobile apps are also available allowing you to manage your transactions on the go, anywhere, right from your mobile device.

## 9. Integrate Fax and E-Mail

Documents can be sent—via fax—from one computer to another, or even from a fax machine to a computer. Instead of printing them out once they've arrived, read and respond online.

## 10. Back It All Up!

Once you've transferred everything you can from paper to digital, make sure you regularly back up all your data to avoid losing any of it in the event of a computer crash or other disaster.

Source: Connected For Business Magazine. Text by Vickie Reichardt

## Never Underestimate the Disruptive Power of The Disgruntled Employee

We regularly harp on the importance of keeping a close watch over the security of your network to protect it from obvious threats like cybercriminals and viruses. In the May newsletter we talked about the most shocking security threat to a small business—it's employees; whether human error or downright maliciousness.

I thought it timely to bring up the topic again so as to share a recent real life example experienced by one of our clients of the damage a "happy today, miserable tomorrow" employee can cause.

**Background:** A learning facility had an administrative staff member quit without notice – let's call her "Jane". When another staff member was tasked with the responsibility of assuming Jane's role temporarily, she and management were horrified to discover that all of the working files Jane was using, were deleted from the network. By process of elimination we were able to determine that the deletions happened some time that morning and as such, we were able to recover the deleted files from their hard drive backup system from the previous night's backup within one hour. While the client breathed a huge sigh of relief, it could have turned out a lot worse had our client not had the proper mechanisms in place.

While the above was an easily resolvable issue (thanks to our monitoring the backup solution 24/7 and testing it monthly to make sure it was always functioning and would be reliable when our client needed it), every business should be prepared for such an event at MINIMUM, and even a much more malicious event.

**Delete permissions:** Determine who in your staff should be entrusted with the right to delete files from the network. Special attention should be given to database applications such as accounting and CRM systems and any internal custom made or off the shelf database applications.

**Best practice:** Data should NEVER be deleted from a database or network drive. To deal with data that's no longer needed, you should archive it or if your system supports this function, mark it for deletion (this generally hides the data, without actually deleting it). Think about your key business systems and the impact on your business if someone was to wipe out current quotes, orders, financial transactions, proposals, and other business-critical documents.

**Backup system:** Make sure you have a good backup system in place with these key characteristics: Backups happen on a regular frequency whether that's hourly, daily, weekly (depending on your business requirements)

- They are being monitored for success or failure by your IT support provider.
- They are being regularly tested to make sure the backups are useable.
- That the backups are going off-site.