Bits & Bytes

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

How Employee Inaction Can Make Your IT Problems Go From Bad To Worse

"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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Inside this issue:

Every business operates on a budget and every employee has a responsibility to make sure that their actions keep their company within said budget. Budgets don't like surprises, and employees don't like a busted budget being traced back to them. This reality can make things messy and expensive when it comes to doing IT the break-fix way.

For example, let's say that one of your employees is experiencing a computer issue. The employee doesn't perceive this particular issue to be a serious threat, in fact, they can still accomplish their work, it's just that their workstation is now a little buggy. The bugs from this particular PC problem are annoying and slowing down productivity, but they don't say anything about it and choose to keep trudging along on a sick computer. Why? Because they think that mentioning the problem would result in a costly call to an IT repair company.

If the IT repair company comes to the office to fix what's perceived as a minor PC issue, the company will be slapped with a major repair bill, the budget would be busted, and the employee would feel responsible for putting the company in the red because they just couldn't handle a slow computer. Even though the employee in this scenario may have good intentions when it comes to not saying anything about their slow, unstable computer, their silence may actually be making the situation worse.

This can be the case if the buggy performance was actually a symptom of a bad computer infection slowly spreading on their machine. In a situation like this, the infection would need to be taken care of and eliminated as soon as possible. The longer the infection goes unchecked, the more time the infection has to spread and disable the computer entirely. Eventually, the infection would spread beyond the employees PC and infect other workstations on your company's network, which may eventually disable your entire IT infrastructure. This would cause serious downtime and end up costing you much more than if IT was called to remedy the issue while it was in its early stages.

An employee should never be put in the place where they have to choose between using a computer that eats away at their productivity, or putting in a service request to fix the issue and potentially bust the company budget. This is why Technical Action Group (TAG) has designed our IT service to be a flat monthly rate that includes all-you-can-eat IT repair. This approach to IT assures that your budget won't be devastated by a surprise, like a server crash or a small bug. Flat-rate IT service gives your staff the confidence that they can call TAG to take care of even a small technology issue without taking on the stigma of being loosy-goosy with company resources.

We're able to offer IT service with an all-you-can-eat approach because we use our managed IT services to remotely monitor and maintain your system. Managed IT services do a few things to take the surprises out of IT repair and lower costs:

⇒ Managed IT allows us to remotely take care take care of issues before they turn into problems that can cripple your entire system.

⇒ By taking care of IT issues remotely, we're able to save on the major time and resources associated with sending a technician to your location.

⇒ Because managed IT is a regular expense, you can categorize it as an operating expense instead of capital expense, thus freeing up capital in your budget!

Outsourcing your IT needs with TechSquad IT is a much better way to go about IT repair than the old break-fix-charge-by-the-hour-and-break-your-budget model. Give your staff the ability to be proactive about taking care of computer issues by calling us at 262-501-3708!

What's a Hard Drive Crash And How Can I Prevent It?

You've heard about how bad a computer crash can be. You may have even experienced a crash yourself, but are you familiar with the technical reason behind a crash? A crash happens when the tiny pieces of a hard disk drive stop working by crashing into each other at very high speeds. When this happens, the data on your computer is lost.

To give you an idea of the complexity of a hard disk drive, here's a list of what makes up a typical disk drive.

Disk Case: The rectangular case that houses all of the drive components. It's held together by small screws and it's designed to be so air tight as to keep out even the smallest piece of dust.

Disk Platter: A donut-shaped disk that kind of looks like the shiny side of a compact disc. This is where the precious data is stored. The disk platter has a smooth and magnetic surface, and different disk drives will have a different amount of disk platters based on the capacity of the hard drive. The platters spin at thousands of RPMs, which is what creates that humming sound coming from your PC.

Spindle: The component that sits in the middle of the platter causing it to spin. The spindle is responsible for holding the platters together.

Read/Write Arm: Think back to a record player with an arm that extends over the spinning vinyl. The read/write arm of a hard drive functions the same way, with the disk platter acting as the LP. Actuator: This is what the read/write arm is attached to. The actuator tells the read/write arm where to move so that it can read the data.

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To help computer novices understand the complexity of a disk drive's inner workings, we turn to Tim Hunkin's The Secret Life of Machines, in which he equates a hard disk drive to a flying airplane:

> The speed and accuracy of a hard disk magnetic head is incredible--the equivalent of a jumbo jet flying 2-3 meters over the ground while counting every blade of grass it flies over. The term 'computer crash' originally referred to the magnetic head literally crashing into the disk.

In this example, the grass in the field is the data and the airplane is the read/write arm. Therefore, think of all the grandeur and the devastation of a jumbo jet crashing into a field of grass. The plane would be smashed into bits and the grass in the field would be destroyed in a fireball. When a hard disk drive crashes, it's kind of like a tiny plane wreck happens inside of your computer--with your data being the casualty.

A disk hard drive is one of the most dreaded computer errors because it not only erases your files, but it also destroys many of your drive's hardware components. Once a hard drive crashes, the only way to (maybe) retrieve some of the data is to remove the busted drive and send it to a clean room for a time consuming and expensive data retrieval procedure. A service like this can cost thousands of dollars and only the sectors that haven't been destroyed in the crash can be retrieved. With a data retrieval service like clean rooms, after shelling out lots of money and waiting for a long period of time, you might only get back some of your data.

The best way to protect your data in the event of a hard disk crash is to back it up. Because disk drives are so intricate and its parts are so fast-moving, they won't last forever and the drive will eventually fail--sometimes ending by way of a spectacular crash. Backing up your data to an alternative drive will ensure that, if your hard drive crashes, you will be able to retrieve your backed up files from the other drive.
There are several different ways to backup your data. We've discovered that the best data backup solution is coupled with a data recovery option. This is how TechSquad IT's Backup and Disaster Recovery (BDR) solution works. Our BDR solution will automatically backup all of the data on your server, and BDR can make your data quickly available via a terminal in the event that something happens to your hard drive, like a hard disk drive crash.

Protecting your company's data with BDR is as easy as calling Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 X 204. Give us a call and we'll assess your data needs to equip your business with the a backup and disaster recovery solution customized for them. Call us today to prevent a hard drive crash from crashing your company's bottom line!

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Set To Expire In 2015

Microsoft has announced that as of July 14, 2015, it will discontinue support for its 11-year-old server operation system, Server 2003. This follows in the wake of its recent discontinuation of support for Windows XP this past spring. Failure to upgrade your server off of this operating system dramatically increases any company's cyber-security risks.

With server migrations taking on average 200 days from planning to completion (industry average), if you still have a server running this software active on your network, now is the time to start planning.

End of support for Windows Server 2003 means:

⇒ **No further updates or security patches released.** 37 critical updates were released for Server 2003 in 2013 alone. No updates will be released after 7/14/15.

⇒ **Loss of compliance.** Various industry regulations and industry standards will no longer be able to be achieved if you are using Server 2003 actively on your network.

⇒ **Increased security risks.** Any server running this operating system will be completely exposed to serious hacker attacks aimed at taking control of your network, stealing your data or crashing your systems.

The Lighter Side:

How Balloons Teach Teamwork

Once, in a seminar of about 50 people, the speaker decided to change his presentation to prove a point. He decided to do a group activity. He gave each person a balloon and asked them to write their names on it with a marker.

All the balloons were gathered up and put into a small room. The attendees were all let into the balloon-filled room and were asked to find the balloon with their own name on it within 5 minutes. As expected, everyone was frantically searching for their name, colliding with each other, pushing around others and creating utter chaos.

At the end of the 5 minutes, no one had found their own balloon.

The presenter then asked the attendees to randomly pick up one balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it.

Within minutes, everyone had their own balloon.

"This is what is happening in our lives," the presenter explained. "Everyone is looking frantically for their own happiness, not knowing where it is."

Our happiness lies in the happiness of others. Give happiness to other people, and you shall find your own.

This is the purpose of human life.

3 Black And White Tips To Help You Choose The Right Printer

The office might be moving toward digital filing more and more every day, but that doesn't change the fact that you sometimes need to print something out for your own needs. Some offices need a printer for hard copies of documents in the event that their system can't be accessed. Overall, having a printer around can be very beneficial to your company, but do you know how to choose between the many different types of printers?

TAG can help you make the right decision when buying a printer. There are a variety of printers at different costs and specifications, and trying to find the perfect one can be a bit daunting. Thankfully, with TAG at your side, your decision will be simplified by considering these three tips:

Inkjets vs Lasers

Most people don't know what the difference between the two is. Ultimately, it is a question of quality vs quantity, as the two types of printers use completely different technologies. An Inkjet printer sprays ink onto the page using little nozzles inside the machine, which make microscopic marks on the paper. On anything other than special, coated photographic paper, the ink can bleed and blur around the edges of the text. Because of this, your normal text will not look as great as it could using a laser printer, but Inkjet printers are far better for professional color prints.

The laser printers are the complete opposite of an Inkjet printer. They use high heat to fuse powdered ink to the paper. Because of the nature of the technology, there is no bleeding effect and the prints are smudge-free. Laser prints do not need any drying time, but the sharp images that the laser enables limit the contrast of color gradient for images and photographs. While they are known for having less-than-perfect image quality, the speed is often more than enough to get companies to purchase them.

So, Which One is Right for Me?

As appealing as they both sound, your optimal printer will take advantage of what you need it to do the most. If you want to print out large documents quickly, but have no need for colored photos, consider a monochrome laser printer. TechSquad IT can help you find the right brand to suit your needs. If you deal with a wide variety of documents, such as presentations or brochures, it might be worth your while to invest in a colored inkjet printer, which will give you quality color printing that you're looking for.

Efficiency or Quality?

When buying a new printer, the biggest part of the decision comes down to whether you want speed and efficiency or quality. After you've made that decision, you can concentrate on other specifications, such as surface size and resolution. You generally want the highest resolution possible to guarantee quality prints. Surface size is mainly important for Inkjet printers which will be printing out photos and images. The sheer number of different printers out there is wild, but you don't have to be alone when making your decision. Provide TAG with your business printing