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"TAG specializes in providing management level responsibility for all the technology in your business. This includes support for your network and working with other hardware & software vendors who's technology you use.

We do this with friendly, proactive & responsive service!

Joe Stoll, President
Technical Action Group (TAG)

10 Things You Must Do Now To Prevent A Costly Data Disaster

In less than 60 seconds, you are about to learn 10 things that could save you days – or even weeks – of downtime, not to mention the undue stress on your company, and potentially thousands of dollars lost, due to a data disaster...

Use this article as your checklist in a conversation with your IT company to assure that your business has the right plan in place to get back up and running quickly if and when disaster strikes.

1. **Keep a written plan.** Simply thinking through in ADVANCE what needs to happen when things go south on you, and documenting it, can go a long way toward getting your network back up and running quickly if it gets hacked, flooded or compromised by human error or equipment failure.

Outline the types of disasters that could happen, and a step-by-step recovery process. Be sure to include a budget, what to do, who should do it and how. Store printed copies along with key contact information and login details for essential websites 1) in a fireproof safe, 2) off-site at your home, 3) at each key employee's home and 4) with your IT consultant.

2. **Hire a trusted professional to help you.** Trying to recover data after a disaster without professional help is business suicide. One misstep can result in weeks of downtime, or permanent data loss. To improve your odds of a quick recovery, work with a pro who has experience in both setting up your plan and helping you recover when a loss occurs.
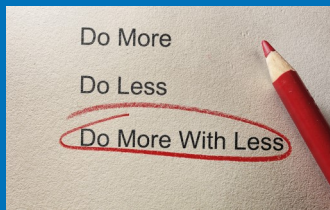
3. **Have a communications plan.** What if your employees can't access your office, e-mail or phone system – how should they communicate with you? Make sure your plan details the alternatives, including MULTIPLE ways to stay in touch.

4. **Automate your backups.** The #1 cause of data loss is human error. If your backup system depends on a human being doing something, it's a recipe for disaster. ALWAYS automate your backups so they run like clockwork.

5. **Keep an off-site backup copy of your data.** On-site backups are a good first step, but if they get flooded, burned or hacked along with your server, you're out of luck. ALWAYS maintain a recent copy of your data off-site.

6. **Be able to access and manage your network remotely.** You and your staff will be able to keep working if they can't

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get into your office. Your IT manager or consultant can quickly handle an emergency or routine maintenance. And you'll love the convenience!

7. **Image your server.** Storing your *data* off-site is great – but bear in mind, if your *system* goes down, the software and architecture that handles all that data must be RESTORED for it to be of any use. Imaging your server creates a replica of the original, saving you an enormous amount of time and energy in getting your network back in gear. Best of all, you don't have to worry about losing your preferences, configurations or favourites.

8. **Document your network.** Network documentation is simply a blueprint of the software, data, systems and hardware that comprise your company's network. Let your IT manager or consultant create this for you. It'll save you time and money in the event your network needs to be restored.

It also speeds up everyday repairs and maintenance on your network when technicians don't have to waste time figuring out where things are and how they're configured. Plus, it may help with insurance claims in the event of losses due to a disaster.

9. **Maintain your system.** While fires, flooding and theft are certainly a risk, it's ever more likely that you'll experience downtime due to a virus, worm or hacker attack. That's why it's critical to keep your network patched, secure and up-to-date. And don't forget: deteriorating hardware and corrupted software can wipe you out. Replace and update them as needed to steer clear of this threat.

10. **Test, test, test!** If you're going to go to the trouble of setting up a plan, at least make sure it works! Hire an IT pro to test monthly to make sure your systems work properly and your data is secure. After all, the worst time to test your parachute is AFTER you jump out of the plane.

Need help getting this implemented? Contact Joe Stoll at JStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com or 416-489-6312 x 204 for a FREE Backup And Disaster Recovery Audit.

6 Things to Consider Before Moving To The Cloud

It's almost impossible to have a discussion about networking technology today without talking about "The Cloud". In fact, as of 2014, nearly 90% of all business have adopted cloud technology to some degree. If you've been thinking about moving to the cloud, here are six things to consider before making your move.

1. **How Will You Use the Cloud?** There are many ways to deploy cloud technology in your business. As a business owner, it's important to decide why you want to move to the cloud in the first place and what you expect the potential gains will be.   Hosted email, robust disaster recovery, document storage, and backup are all ways you can take advantage of cloud technology.

2. **Understand the Advantages of the Cloud.** With cloud technology in place, it's possible to work from virtually anywhere. Employees can access documents while they're out on the road, at home or from a coffee shop or hotel room. Cloud technology has provided unprecedented opportunities for sharing and collaboration that were unheard of even five years ago.

3. Understand the Disadvantages of the Cloud. While there are many advantages to cloud technology, you should also examine some of the pitfalls that come from relying on cloud technology. This may help you evaluate if moving to the cloud is the right decision or help you make contingency plans when things aren't working. Provider downtime, maintenance, glitches and other issues could cause a dip in productivity or customer service. But you should weigh these risks against the many benefits of cloud services.

4. Plan For a Learning Curve. Moving some, if not all, of your business infrastructure to the cloud will involve time and training to familiarize yourself and your staff with a new way of doing things. If you're using cloud-based software, it might work differently than standard desktop applications. And any new functionality, like sharing and collaboration, will need to be explained so everyone can take advantage of it.

5. Consider Security. Safeguarding sensitive data becomes even more critical when moving files to the cloud. You will need to establish new policies to allow the safe sharing of data, while simultaneously protecting that data.

6. Who Will Manage Your Cloud Services? While it is possible for small and medium-sized business to manage their cloud deployment on their own, rapidly changing technology can make that deployment confusing and time consuming. If you're moving much of your company's infrastructure to the cloud, consider working with an IT provider that can help make your transition as smooth as possible.

Conquering Connecting

"Everyone looks so much better when they smile." – Jimmy Fallon, host of the legendary The Tonight Show

What a meteoric ride Jimmy Fallon has had to the top!

How did this son of an IBM machine repairman get to the chair once occupied by maybe the most legendary figure in comedy TV for 30 years straight, Johnny Carson?

He did it through exceptional networking. In the span of about five years, Jimmy went from a Saturday Night Live alum, unsuccessfully navigating Hollywood, to a late-night star and host of NBC's The Tonight Show, one of the most respected franchises in entertainment. This did not happen by accident… Fallon's meteoric rise is partly due to his intense focus on developing relationships with people who could advance his career.

Another key? Fallon worked his butt off.
While still a computer-science major at Albany's College of Saint Rose, he performed comedy at small clubs and obsessed about the comedy industry. Through a connection with his former employer at a New York alternative newsweekly, his audition tape reached Hollywood agent Randi Siegel, who had ins with the crowd at *Saturday Night Live*.

Siegel found 21-year-old Fallon's performance to be charmingly amateur, but she could see that he was naturally talented. She gave him a call and was surprised to hear, after introducing herself, "Randi Siegel! I know who you are!"

Randi was so impressed by his knowledge of the comedy industry and enthusiasm that she agreed to take him on as a client. With Siegel's connections, Fallon was able to eventually get hired as a cast member with *SNL* in 1998.

At *SNL* he developed the relationship that would define his career.
The show's creator, Lorne Michaels, is so powerful and respected in the industry that cast members are often intimidated by him. As a rookie, Fallon was no different, but he wanted to befriend Michaels. So after every show, he went over to Michaels and thanked him for the show.

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Michaels developed a rare friendship with Fallon. Following the drama of Conan O'Brien's short stint as host of The Tonight Show, Michaels decided that his trusted Fallon would take the renowned position. Fallon made a point of connecting with former Tonight Show host Jay Leno and would ask for advice. Leno said, "Most people in show business think they know everything. They don't really listen to the other person. 'Respectful' is the best word I can use for Jimmy."

His approach worked. Since starting in February 2014, Fallon has attracted around 4 million viewers each night, with a much higher share of the 18-49 demographic than his predecessor.

What Fallon did is a) he worked hard (let's not forget that), and b) he networked brilliantly by asking questions of others, listening, acting on their advice, showing gratitude and being a genuinely good human being.

So, who are three connections you dream of networking with in order to boost your success?

Darren Hardy is the visionary force behind SUCCESS magazine as the Founding Publisher and Editor, and is the New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author of what has been called "the modern day Think and Grow Rich": The Compound Effect—Jumpstart Your Income, Your Life, Your Success (www.TheCompoundEffect.com) and the world-wide movement to onboard 10 million new entrepreneurs through his latest book The Entrepreneur Roller Coaster--Why Now is the Time to #JoinTheRide (www.RollerCoasterBook.com). Access Darren: www.DarrenHardy.com and get free daily mentoring: www.DarrenDaily.com

The True Cost of Downtime

"But I back up my data daily! Why will it take so long till my network is running again?" The business owner had just been informed that his network would be down for at least a week.

The cause? Their 7 year old server just died.

The Cost of Downtime > Similar situations occur hundreds of times a day across small and medium-sized businesses. Reports suggest up to 70% of SMB's will experience significant downtime in the next year. According to a recent study, network downtime costs 80% of SMB's about $20,000 per hour. For the remaining 20% it costs $100K or more.

Don't Let This Be You . Downtime can range from a few hours to weeks. When it happens, your customers, employees, and bottom line all suffer.

We all know what can cause downtime—viruses, hackers, failed hardware, user errors, fire, theft, flood. These days, simply backing up your data does not protect you against downtime. Organizations like medical practices, law firms, and accountants must not only guarantee that their data is available, but that it's secure and encrypted.

Basic tape or hard drive back up solutions can no longer protect your systems—you need a business continuity plan.

Steps For a Business Continuity Audit >
1. Have a qualified, trustworthy IT company provide you with a business continuity audit.
2. Establish how much downtime you can handle.
3. Analyze the risk points such as hardware loss, building loss or electricity.
4. Create and implement a business continuity plan.

The plan should include both a way to secure and retrieve your system quickly, on premises as well as in the cloud. By doing this, you assure yourself that no matter what caused a system failure, you can be operational quickly as needed.

It's not a question of WILL you experience a significant downtime occurrence. The question is when, and are you prepared for the challenge?