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Technology Times

“Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably”

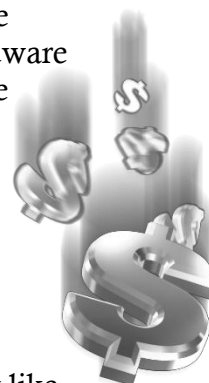
6 Reasons To Choose Hosted Solutions Over Traditional IT

If you want to save your organization a good amount of money on hardware, software and support, you ought to be looking at the various hosted IT solutions that are available.

A hosted solution is simply a business application – be it a CRM system like Salesforce or Microsoft’s Exchange – that is stored (or hosted) on a server outside of your office and is accessed via the web. This is also called “cloud computing.” While some folks are still a bit skeptical of putting their entire computer network in the “cloud,” that fear is starting to subside with the incredible cost savings and ever-increasing security and reliability of hosted applications.

How Hosted Solutions Save You Money And Solve Many IT-Related Problems

1. **Cost Savings.** With a hosted solution, you get the instant advantage of having very sophisticated software running on top-of-the-line, fully supported hardware without having to pay for it out of pocket. Since the resources are shared, you only pay a small fraction of the overall costs. Plus, upgrades and on-going maintenance are included, saving you even more.
2. **You’re Not Stuck With Any One Solution.** Another advantage of a hosted solution is that there is no long-term commitment. If you don’t like a particular CRM or application, you can (usually) cancel the contract and move on to something else. Compare that against building your own in-house solution which costs a LOT more money and is much harder to walk away from because of the investment.
3. **Your Costs Go Up Or Down Based On Users.** Since most hosted solution fees are based on the number of users who have access, you can quickly scale up or down.



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“Sorry, we just filled our ‘Financial Analyst’ position, but we do have an opening in ‘Sacrificial Lambs.’”

Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:

The Magic Wand Scanner



The Magic Wand from VuPoint is a scanner you can carry around in your pocket!

At only 10 inches long and 7.5 ounces, this scanner can easily fit into any computer bag or purse. And its super easy one-button operation means you've got a powerful way to scan pictures, images or documents up to 8.5 inches wide in a matter of minutes. Just fire it up and glide it across the surface of the image, text or pattern you want, and you've got a reasonably high-resolution image, no additional lighting required. (Great for copying a recipe or article from a magazine in any waiting room without having to tear the page out!)

At \$99, this is a great gift idea for the busy executive on the go; but is it a perfect solution for all scans? No; the control screen is so small that you will have to do most of the image management on a PC screen after loading up the images, and the optical character recognition in some text translations can be rough.

That said, it does put a business-class image capture tool in the palm of your hand that no Smartphone camera can come close to.

4. **Less Hassle.** Since your provider is providing these services like a utility, THEY are responsible for all the upgrades, maintenance, security, etc.
5. **Faster Implementation.** Building your own infrastructure is not only expensive, but also time consuming. With hosted applications, you simply turn the service "on," making it much easier (and faster) to get started.
6. **Easy Access From Anywhere.** If you or your employees travel a lot or work from remote or home offices, going to a hosted solution makes even more sense because users can work from anyplace they happen to be connected to the Internet.

What About The Downsides?

Some folks are still a bit too squeamish to put their entire network and data into a hosted solution, usually because of concerns over security or the fear of not being able to access their data if the Internet goes down. While these are valid concerns, they can easily be addressed by choosing a reputable company with a long-standing history of good service (think Salesforce or Rackspace) and by getting a backup Internet connection (something we recommend to all clients).

If you really want to know if your business can benefit from hosted solutions, give us a call. Even if you're not ready to go 100% to the cloud, you can often get certain pieces of your network hosted to save money and provide easier access to those who travel.

4th Quarter Tax Planning Strategy

Now it's time to start planning for end of year 2010 tax planning. I was talking with a CPA friend of mine recently that reminded me that Under the tax code Section 179 Election, the Federal Government has allowed businesses to buy up to \$250,000 in new office and computer equipment and expense-or write off-that entire amount on their current year's tax return.

But thanks to those over-spending weasels in Washington, this special deduction is being reduced down to only \$25,000 in 2011 which means this is the LAST YEAR for you to take advantage of this generous tax break. If you know you need to upgrade or expand your computer network, you have to make that purchase on or before December 31st of this year.

The Lighter Side...

A Funny TRUE Story

A police officer found a perfect hiding place for watching for speeding motorists. One day, the officer was amazed when everyone was under the speed limit, so he went to investigate and found the problem...

A 10 year old boy was standing on the side of the road with a huge hand painted sign which said "Radar Trap Ahead." A little more investigative work led the officer to discovering the boy's accomplice, another boy about 100 yards beyond the radar trap with a similar sign that read "Tips" and a bucket at his feet full of change.

Easy To Swallow?

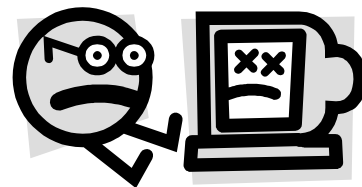
Parents of two young children had just finished tucking their young ones into bed one evening when they heard crying coming from the children's room. Rushing in, they found little Tommy crying hysterically.

He had accidentally swallowed a 5 cent coin and was sure he was going to die. No amount of talking could change his mind. Trying to calm him, the father of the boy palmed a 5 cent coin that he happened to have in his pocket and pretended to remove it from Tommy's ear.

Tommy, naturally, was delighted. In a flash, he snatched it from his father's hand, swallowed it and demanded cheerfully, "Do it again, Dad!"

What To Do When Someone Posts Negative (Untrue!) Comments About Your Company Online

The popularity of user review sites such as Yelp, CitySearch or Google Local Search can be an excellent way for businesses to get some positive PR. But what do you do when a user posts a NEGATIVE comment about you or your business that isn't true?



Unfortunately, people love gossip, especially when it's negative. And since users will often take the word of an anonymous poster over the word of the company being discussed, it's important to keep a close eye on negative comments posted about your company online and address them. (Side Tip: We recommend setting up a Google Alert with your company name to monitor this.)

The best way to deal with a negative comment or complaint is head on; ignoring it is akin to an admission of guilt and will leave visitors assuming the worse. However, your rebuttal shouldn't be nasty or vindictive. Instead, politely address the complaint by giving your side of the story and/or correcting erroneous information.

For example, if a user posts that the customer service stinks at your company, you could reply back that providing top-level service is very important to your company and that you are willing to make good on the problem. You might even offer the person to contact you for a refund, a do-over or other solution to the problem. That way you appear to be a transparent organization that cares about customer feedback.

Another approach would be to ask your happy customers to counter the comment with their own positive comments. Often that will bolster your image and push the negative comment down the line. If the information is an outright lie, be polite but firm. Point out that you don't have any record of the transaction (or other facts surrounding the situation) but would be eager to investigate this further if the user would contact you. In some cases of outright slander or unfounded vicious attacks, you might be able to contact the web site and ask for the post to be removed. Just remember this: it isn't slander if it's true or if it's the opinion of a legitimate customer who is expressing their opinion about your product or service.

If a diplomatic approach doesn't work (and provided the comment is harmful enough) you may want to take legal action to get the post removed. Many social media web sites are becoming more sensitive to this issue and are willing to take down content that is defamatory, slanderous or abusive in nature.

Are Digital Devices Dumbing Us Down?

Cell phones, which have become full-fledged computers with high-speed Internet connections, let people relieve the tedium of exercising, the grocery store line, stoplights or lulls in the dinner conversation. Now, instead of having a moment of downtime, every waking second can be filled with text messages, e-mail, Internet connectivity and games. But is this constant digital connection harming us?

According to scientists, the answer is a resounding “yes.” One of the unanticipated side effects of not giving your brain a break from the constant “noise” of PCs, cell phones, iPods, Blackberry and other digital devices is brain fatigue. People who keep their minds busy with constant digital input are not allowing their brains much-needed downtime.

One study conducted by the University of Michigan showed that a person was more effective at learning, retaining and processing information after a walk in nature versus a walk in a high-strung, noisy urban environment because the constant stimulation fatigues the brain, making it more difficult to be effective. One neurologist was quoted as saying, “People think they are refreshing themselves when they are actually fatiguing their brains.”

So the next time you have a minute waiting in line or at a stop light, resist the urge to pick up your cell phone and text someone!

How To Prevent Employees From Wasting Time Online

Do you have any idea how many hours your employees spend online checking eBay listings, cruising social networks, looking for vacation deals, Googling old flames or (even worse) ogling porn or gambling? A survey by America Online and Salary.com concluded that employers spend nearly \$760 billion a year paying employees to goof off on the Web. And with the ever-increasing popularity of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites, the urge to goof off instead of working increases daily.

Where Do You Draw The Line?

While a certain degree of personal online usage may be perfectly okay, the goal here is to stop employees who waste HOURS online and/or to prevent employees from accessing damaging online content such as pornography or gambling web sites, as well as preventing them from downloading illegal software, inviting viruses into your network or spamming out racist or off-color jokes using your company e-mail – all of which can create bigger problems legally and financially.

Two Simple Fixes

So what's a business owner to do? First, make sure you have a good AUP or acceptable use policy in place that outlines what employees can and cannot do online or with company e-mail and resources. If you have one, make sure it's updated to include the use of social media sites and rules on sharing confidential company information. Next, we recommend installing good content filtering software or appliance that will “police” the network for you 24/7/365. We have several options available and would be happy to work with you on choosing the one that meets your needs. Give me a call at 440 925 4005 ext 128.

