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8 Essential Questions to Ask of Your IT Provider



When was the last time that your organization had an unexpected technology

expense blast your IT budget out of the sky? Surprise issues that you don't plan for could potentially derail your budget for months, or even years, depending on the severity of it. Having a clear idea of what your IT service plan covers is a great way to make sure that you don't get hit by surprise billing...



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<http://dti.io/itprovider>

About Directive

We are a technology consulting firm specializing in technology implementation and management for businesses. We're known for providing big-business, Enterprise-Level IT services to small and medium-sized businesses.

Visit us online at:

newsletter.directive.com

Be Deliberate About Cybersecurity and Avoid the Worst Attacks of the Web



They say that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it, and matters of cyber security are no exception. Threats will often follow trends, and so by reviewing what has happened in the past, we may be able to glean some insight into what will be important in the future.

If 2016 was any indication, there are a few things that will be of most concern to IT professionals and end users.

Ensuring All Endpoints Have Appropriate Security Measures

It's staggering to consider how many end points any given business could have, each providing a route in for threat actors. Between company-provided devices, personal mobile devices, and Internet of Things devices, there are plenty of opportunities for a company to be attacked.

As a result, as 2017 progresses, businesses must be aware of what threats exist, as well as better prepared to protect themselves against them. This includes strategies that ensure your organization's digital protections are properly maintained while remaining cognizant of physical security best practices. Pairing encryption and access control, as well as mobile device management, can create a much safer environment for your data.

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4 Ways the Cloud Enhances How You Do Business



When it comes to using technology to improve your business, it's hard to beat the benefits that cloud computing provides. The cloud can help to boost your functionality in a variety of ways. As a result, cloud technologies have seen explosive adoption rates--and it's no wonder, when you consider what the cloud is capable of, and how it can benefit your workforce.

Boosted Mobility

One of the most significant pain points that businesses have experienced in the past is a lack of access to their files. Unless there were multiple copies of a file floating around (which increases the risk of data leakage and inconsistency) an employee would have had to remove the business's sole copy of a file to work on it, greatly increasing the risk of data loss.

However, the cloud mitigates these potential issues almost completely by allowing documents and data to be accessed from anywhere that an Internet connection can be established. As a result, there is a greatly reduced risk of data loss due to misplaced files. Another consideration is that if your organization gets hit with a disaster, a secondary workplace is much easier to set up.

Business Continuity and Data Backup

On the subject of disasters, cloud technologies also enable businesses to better ensure their ability to continue their operations should something befall their physical office. In cases such as floods, fires, or other destructive forces, it is much better to have your data safely

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Want the Best IT Support? You Need Exceptional Availability



When your technology breaks down, can you rely on your IT provider to be there in a moment's notice? What if

you need someone to talk you through a troubleshooting procedure? During the weekday you expect them to be available, but what if you're burning the candle at both ends over a weekend to finish an important project? Furthermore, your office might be closed, but your IT infrastructure still needs to be attended to.

Most organizations would prefer that their technology infrastructures be available and functional to their employees at all times. This includes someone keeping tabs on the infrastructure during off-hours. Can you reach your provider after-hours and on weekends or other times that you may not normally need assistance?

Why You Need 24/7 Support

Countless problems could occur when you least expect them to, especially when nobody is in the office to respond

to them. What happens if you're hit with a sudden DDoS attack, or a piece of hardware experiences some sort of critical failure? Such a large issue could cause widespread damage and downtime that places your budget and reputation at risk.

Most importantly, however, you need to consider just how your employees or customers will react if they try to access your services and are unable to do so. If you don't have someone to resolve the issue, chances are that you're going to be the one taking that 3:00 a.m. phone call telling you that your server is down. Really, it's in your best interest to make sure that someone is on-hand and ready to fix the issue so that you don't have to.

Network Monitoring is Also Crucial

Of course, not every IT provider will want to make this sacrifice for your company; though any who dare to call themselves an IT service provider will put their sleep schedules on the line to make sure you don't have to. At the very least, you need an IT provider that can offer your organization 24/7 network monitoring in some capacity. This type of monitoring can be accomplished by having a dedicated technician keeping a

close watch on your infrastructure for any oddities. In situations like this, a technician is contacted to resolve a problem remotely should there be a problem. It's about as easy and hands-off as you can get.



To learn more about proactive monitoring and management, or to understand your technology support options, contact us today at: 607.433.2200.



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4 Ways the Cloud Enhances How You Do Business

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stored in an offsite location, rather than keeping your critical files in a filing cabinet that gets damaged in a disaster.

The cloud also allows businesses to add another layer of data redundancy to ensure that it protected if something terrible happens. It accomplishes this by storing the data in multiple off-site locations, so when it is time to recover data, it is accessible and easily restored.

Collaboration

When was the last time that you wasted reams of paper, as employees who were working on a project printed out copy after copy, only to scribble all over them, crossing out things, and annotating

others? This approach is inefficient, wasteful, and expensive.

The cloud, on the other hand, allows these documents to be shared and edited online, ensuring that all of your resources have the same version to reference and eliminating the vast majority of your printing and production costs.

Scalability

Physical storage solutions generally come in a limited assortment of sizes, meaning that you could potentially have to make a large investment to keep a relatively small number of files. While having to buy a filing cabinet or two may not seem like such a large investment in

the grand scheme of things, it also depends on how much utility you'll ultimately need from it.

This is where the cloud has the advantage once again. Working with the cloud provider, you are able to arrange to have exactly as much storage space as you'll need, with the ability to increase or decrease your allotted storage as necessary. As you do so, the fees that most managed cloud providers charge will adjust incrementally, ensuring that you pay only what your provider is due.



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Getting Back to Basics With Security and End User Education

While it may sometimes be tempting to focus on the massive attacks and breaches that too-often dominate the headlines, no business can afford to devote their full attention to those vulnerabilities and overlook the more common threats. This is primarily because once they do, they become exponentially more vulnerable to these attacks through their lack of awareness and preparation.

Part of being prepared for the threats of the coming weeks and months is to make sure that your employees are also up to speed where security is concerned. Edu-

cating them on best practices before enforcing these practices can help to shore up any vulnerabilities you may have and maintain your network security. This includes restricting employee access to certain websites, requiring passwords of appropriate strength, and encouraging your employees to be mindful of exactly what they're clicking on.

Continuing to Improve Security Measures

Finally, it is important to remember that implementing security features isn't a one-time activity. Threats will grow and improve in order to overcome existing security measures, and so if they are going to remain effective, these security measures must be improved as well.

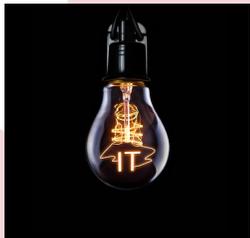
While regulatory requirements can provide an idea of what security a network should feature, they shouldn't be seen as the endpoint. Instead, those requirements should be the bare minimum that you implement, along with additional measures to supplement them.

2016 saw many IT security issues. Directive is out to ensure a safer 2017 with comprehensive solutions to alleviate your network security concerns.



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How to Break the Cycle of Your Technology Breaking Down



Too many businesses suffer due to issues with their information technology. The IT department, that is supposed to

be innovating, is just too swamped down solving immediate technical problems to do so. However, if left unchecked, having an IT management deficit could swiftly create larger problems throughout your organization.

No technology is stagnant. Either it improves, or it is replaced by something better. But what if the people who are in charge of improving your solutions were too busy rectifying issues to ever get around to making the necessary improvements? In a situation like this, you'd soon have to make do with insufficient systems, which would only lead to more issues that would eat up IT's time. This would, in turn, keep them from solving the root problem.

Finally, you'd ultimately be unable to work around the issue and be placed in a position with two pretty lousy options:

either you finally bite the bullet and update everything, or you wait for your company to slowly be pigeonholed into providing a few very basic services until the effect it has on your business can no longer be ignored.

However, there is a third option that could help prevent you ever reaching that point in the first place: managed IT services.

A trusted managed service provider, or MSP, can help you take back control of your IT strategy by supplementing your internal team's efforts with their own. Is your team overwhelmed by service requests? An MSP can take some of that burden from their shoulders, freeing them up to innovate and improve your business' network and infrastructure. Alternatively, your MSP could devise and implement a strategy to help keep your systems on the cutting edge, while your internal team runs interference on any issues you might encounter...



Read the Rest Online!
<http://dti.io/cycle>

Protect Your Essential Data with Backup and Disaster Recovery.



As unpleasant as it is to consider, how prepared are you for a disaster to strike? How quickly could you resume your business operations? Could your business avoid having to close its doors permanently days, weeks, or months down the line?

With a Backup and Disaster Recovery Solution from Directive, your critical data is automatically backed up and available to be restored whenever you may need it.

To protect your business from disaster-induced data loss, reach out to us! Visit the URL below and complete the form and a representative of ours will get in touch with more information!

Watch the Video Here!
<http://dti.io/bdrservices>

Directive Employee Spotlight: Ben Gifford



Raised in Delhi, NY, Ben Gifford finished high school as

Delaware Academy's Most Valuable Athlete. Afterwards, he attended Finger Lakes Community College to earn an associate degree in New Media. He filled the role as Directive's Videographer/Animator at the recommendation of a

professor at nearby SUNY Oneonta. He has enjoyed working alongside his creative coworkers and producing Crock-Pot Thursday and other marketing videos ever since.

When he isn't creating visual media for his work, Ben can usually be found outdoors. Hiking, fishing, and kayaking are all pastimes of his (along with taking photos in his spare time). His goals are to travel, and document those travels through his

photography. While he does not currently have any pets of his own, he also plans to rescue a few dogs sooner than later.

In the meantime, Ben is content to keep busy here at Directive, putting together videos and seeking out reference material on YouTube. The rest of us are happy to have him here, and congratulate him on being the subject of this month's Employee Highlight. Great job, Ben, we look forward to seeing what you put together next!

We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is our success, and as you grow, we grow.

Crock-Pot Thursdays at Directive!

Pulled Pork or Chicken Sandwiches



Even though the calendar says that it's March, the weather outside is pretty much the opposite of spring. Luckily, we had slow-cooked pulled pork or chicken sandwiches to warm us up! Paired with Corn Pudding (similar to corn bread, and just as delicious), baked beans, coleslaw, and last but not least, pineapple upside-down cupcakes. **Get the Recipe Here!** <http://dti.io/pulledpork>

National Pizza Day Has Never Been So Educational!



Sometimes, when you wake up to much more snow than there was before you went to bed, it's hard to bring yourself to cook. Fortunately, there are restaurants that brave the weather in order to provide their customers with the spoils of their labor, and besides, it is National Pizza Day. **Check Out Our Video!** <http://dti.io/pizzahistory>

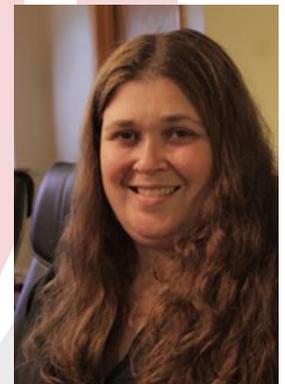
Bruschetta Stuffed Balsamic Chicken



Today's Crock-Pot Thursday menu tasted even better than it sounds! We tried our hand at a brief spelling bee, but it turns out that bruschetta chicken is easier to eat than it is to spell. It is perfect for when you LOVE bruschetta but are doing that whole "no carb" thing. Substitute chicken, it is even better. **Get the Recipe Here!** <http://dti.io/bruschetta>



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