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Get Rid of Those Filing Cabinets with Document Management



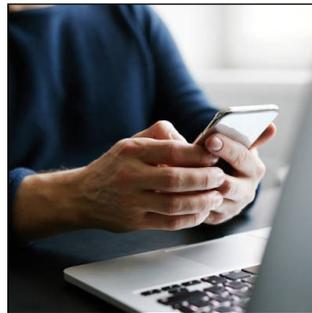
The file cabinet. It may be a staple of the office, but boy can they be a pain in the neck. Every file

needs to be printed and collated only to be filed in a dingy file cabinet with the off chance that it will ever be needed again. For businesses that have a lot of paper filed away, a document management system can go a long way toward modernizing your organization, and providing a access-controlled database where you can find any file in seconds...



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Mobile Computing Works to Boost Productivity



Mobile technology is allowing businesses to make great strides in the way that they conduct their operations, but one of the key reasons why it has been so helpful is that it decreases their costs considerably. Thanks to developments in the way that mobile technology works, it can be fit into pretty much any business model, all the while improving your return on investment for your expensive technology solutions.

In terms of cost reduction, the most notable one comes from always being connected to the office. Without the need to be on-site, mobile computing give a business' employees all of the tools needed to perform their daily duties from wherever they happen to be--whether it's at the coffee shop down the road or a hotel while away on a business conference. Mobile devices break down barriers in the quest for profitability, making them great investments. One great example is a Chromebook. While it isn't as powerful out of the box as a full-fledged workstation, it has the potential to be just as great of a solution with the proper support as long as you stick to certain software titles.

Mobile devices also present a challenge when it comes to security, though. When more devices have access to data of a sensitive nature, it's placed at more risk of being exposed to potentially dangerous entities. Therefore, you need to take measures to ensure that it's secure; otherwise, you could be placing the future of your entire business at risk. Preventative solutions are of the utmost importance and can be the end-all-be-all for keeping hackers and user errors from sabotaging your chances of success.

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Which Management Software Is Right for Your Business?



On the surface, you might think that customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) are the same exact thing. However, they both have very specific niches for a business--particularly when it comes to managing organizational assets and interactions with consumers. Here are some of the specific situations in which you'll find these solutions helpful.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

A CRM solution is specifically designed to provide a service-oriented organization with a way to communicate with clients--both current and prospective. A CRM solution can be used to automate certain functions, which makes for a much easier sales funnel in several ways. The ways a CRM can improve a business:

- Better customer communications
- Organization for your sales teams
- Revenue creation
- Ability to target potential customers
- Customer loyalty and satisfaction

All in all, a dedicated CRM can help keep your customers devoted to your brand or product, securing your business' future through repeat sales and building leads that work to build revenue. In short, it's the ideal way to manage operations, onboard new clients, and guide them through your sales process.

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Managed IT Services Is a Solid Solution for Saving Money



How much money does your business waste on managing its technology solutions? You might be surprised by

the answer to this question. Depending on the way that your organization takes advantage of technology, you'll have different needs than other businesses, but no matter what kind of organization you manage, it's critical that you try to get the best return on investment for your solutions.

Let's start by talking about the way that the average business might leverage technology maintenance solutions. Depending on your business' staffing capabilities, you might have an in-house IT department that is responsible for general upkeep and maintenance. If you don't, then chances are that you are either having your employees manage the maintenance of their own technology, or your devices simply aren't being maintained as well as they need to be. Either scenario isn't ideal, especially since you can't take any risks nowadays

when it comes to your technology maintenance.

For example, let's say that a mission-critical patch has been issued for an important piece of software that your organization relies on. Without it, you would be at risk of infection from all manners of threats, including some of the nastiest ransomware on the Internet. Devices need to be periodically updated with the latest threat definitions to ensure that they don't go unprotected. But the issue here lies in the fact that it's time-consuming and troublesome to update several devices at once with the latest patches and updates.

Let's take this a step further and think about a hypothetical worst-case scenario. What would you do if your organization were to suffer from a crippling data loss incident? In the event that our organization falls victim to a flood or fire, your data infrastructure could be destroyed... unless it's backed up and maintained off-site.

Another service that presents substantial value for any business is one that supplies some form of proactive

maintenance and management. This can be an effective way to keep your network free from threats, while keeping all your infrastructure monitored and in working order. Since an outsourced provider can accomplish this maintenance remotely, you can see much less downtime and higher degrees of productivity.

This type of maintenance can be difficult to come by for small businesses if they choose to do it themselves, but a managed service provider can keep your organization from having to stomach some of the largest expenses a thoroughly monitored, maintained, and supported IT infrastructure can incur. Not only do you save money by not adding salaries to your budget, but you also save time and resources by outsourcing the majority of the time-intensive work elsewhere.

To learn more about Directive's professional managed services, call our consultants today at 607.433.2200.



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Mobile Computing Works to Boost Productivity

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For example, mobile device management can be a critical way to shore up weaknesses in your mobile device strategy. Mobile device management contains several solutions that allow your organization to take action against common scenarios involving the management of mobile devices. If you lose a device, you should be able to easily (and remotely) wipe any data that's found on it so that it can't be accessed by those who find it. This means that your organization doesn't have to worry as much if a device is ever lost or stolen.

Another aspect of a mobile device management solution is whitelisting and blacklisting applications, which keeps your employees accountable and responsible with which mobile

applications are downloaded to their devices. You can keep employees from downloading time-wasting or malicious apps so that you don't have to worry about them throwing away their workday on Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, the devices will remain as secure as can be, relieving some of the stress that can come from whether or not your employees are downloading unnecessary or dangerous apps on devices intended for business.

User control is a great way to control risk associated with mobile devices. Simply put, if your employees don't need access to a certain kind of data, then they shouldn't be able to access it, period. For example, your average employee doesn't need access to payroll information or other sensitive data.

Giving their accounts access puts it at risk if they ever lose their device or install some kind of malware that gives access to this data to unsavory characters.

Another great solution for keeping data safe is to deploy a Virtual Private Network (VPN). The VPN sets up a virtual encrypted tunnel between your network and your staff's devices, inherently creating a much more secure data transfer situation than would be typical over normal networking means.

By taking better care of your devices from a security standpoint, you...



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Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

Rather than work on the consumer end of the business model, the enterprise resource planning solution is designed to help a manufacturer manage internal operations, as well as many other functions that contribute to optimizing efficiency. You can think of the Enterprise Resource Planning solution as the central hub for your business's assets.

Some of the ways that a business benefits from an ERP are:

- Procurement and distribution of assets
- Seamless data sharing between departments
- Streamlining communication between departments

In short, an ERP is meant to keep your business's internal operations as streamlined as possible through constant connectivity to important assets and resources. It allows for seamless data sharing throughout your organization to ensure efficiency between the separate departments at work within every manufacturer. This effectively makes your business' internal processes much more streamlined.

It's easy to see why the two could be confused, but a ERP and CRM are two fundamentally different solutions as they are for two totally separate types of businesses. The ERP hopes to increase profits by streamlining the way that you approach your internal operations, while a CRM improves

profitability by optimizing the revenue creation strategies your business uses.

How would your business benefit from these software solutions? To find out how, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.



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Can You Stay Compliant While Using the Cloud?



One of the inevitabilities of working with the cloud is that you have to face a tough question; what kind of

compliance requirements are there for cloud-based data? If you're storing data for your business in a cloud-based environment, it becomes your responsibility to know where and how this data is stored--particularly if you're not the one doing the actual cloud hosting. How do you maintain compliance when you seemingly have so little control over how your computing platform is managed and maintained?

It all starts by asking your cloud provider specific questions about how compliance is handled, as well as what terms are written into the agreement that you have with them. We'll go over some of the details that you'll need to address.

The Cloud Can Be Tampered With

Naturally, one of the major concerns that businesses might have about cloud compliance is the idea of how this data

is being managed, maintained, stored, and transferred. This also means that it can be changed or intercepted while it is in transit. Therefore, the key concern is that data could be changed without the user's knowledge. Those who are concerned about the legal ramifications of this should focus on learning who is hosting the data, how it is being maintained, how it is being transported from the hosting site to your infrastructure, and who can see this data. This line is further blurred by the differences between the public and private cloud. In other words, is your data being stored alongside someone else's data? Are there partitions put into place that limit access based on role and organization? The question of security is of the utmost importance and will be a major point that you'll need to hit for compliance's sake.

What Can You Do?

Using the above statements as a springboard, you'll need to think about how your business plans on securing cloud-based data and ensuring its compliance with any regulations your organization is beholden to. You start by first assessing just how deep into cloud computing your organization actually is. Depending

on the importance of certain data, you may decide that a combination of private and public cloud platforms present the ideal solution. For sensitive information, an internal network or private cloud is ideal, while less sensitive or important data is stored elsewhere.



Next, you'll need to consider who is managing this data, and what kind of agreements you will have to make to guarantee its safety. Is it being managed by an in-house department or a third party? If it's a third party, for example, you'll need to determine responsibilities and consequences of failing to adhere to compliance guidelines. It's also important that you know what types...



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Managing Your Software Requires Three Actions



It's imperative that your organization's software is managed properly.

If you can't do this, then your operations can suffer in the long run. While this might sound like a lot of work, software management isn't as difficult as it sounds if you break it down into compartmentalized tasks. Ultimately, you can group it into three major steps: leveraging available assets, testing strategies, and understanding the software.

Leverage Your Available Assets

The first thing you want to keep in mind is that your software solution should be implemented because it fulfills your specific needs. You should never implement a solution that is purchased on a whim for convenience. You'll only get the most out of your technology if it works for your specific needs. You want comprehensive coverage to make sure that it works to the best of its ability. After all, the last thing you want to do is piecemeal your software strategy together.

At the most basic level, most businesses will need to utilize

at least a productivity suite or payroll/accounting software. Depending on your organization's actual industry, however, you'll encounter more complex ways to implement new software. Most of the top-notch productivity suites out there are created for very specific kinds of organizations, so knowing how you'll be using these solutions can help you plan for the future.

Test Your Strategies

It's unfortunately the case that problems may arise from a new software implementation. This will naturally lead to your organization working out the kinks during the implementation process. A good example is if one of your employees steps beyond the terms of a software developer's service. A mistake like this can easily lead to an unwanted bill, so you want to make sure situations like this are limited.

In the aforementioned scenario, you should be working with your IT department to make sure that both your administrative staff and employees understand the limits of your software's support - i.e., understanding the service level agreements that you agreed to upon implementation. It's critical that your IT department understands how the licensing

and registration of your software works so that they can best accommodate your business' specific needs.

Understand Your Software

Maintaining your organization's software is more than just analyzing the compatibility and cost. It includes taking an inventory of your software solutions, including to what degree your organization uses them. You will want to break down where this software is stored (whether it's on your workstations, server units, or hosted in the cloud), as well as any other information you can think of. You should do this for each of your software solutions--not just your CRM, but any productivity applications, line of business applications, and operating systems used as well.

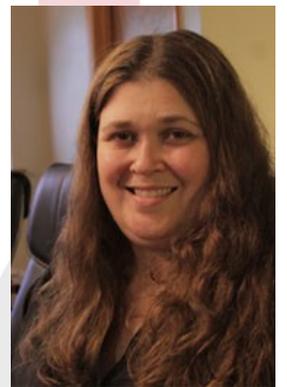
Once you have a comprehensive list of all your software solutions, you'll want to focus on the licensing side of things to ensure that each of them have been implemented legally. Even if you are fairly certain that your company is only using legitimate software solutions, it's always best to check. Furthermore, you can set...



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