

This Issue:

Businesses Always Battle Risk

Monitoring Your Network is a Great Way to Build Reliability

3 VoIP Features That Have Operational Benefit

What Can You Do to Improve Data Recovery?

Innovations in Your Office's Technology Can Bring Big Benefits

3 Reasons You Want Experts Handling Your IT

3 VoIP Features That Have Operational Benefit



It isn't as though we haven't said this before but leveraging a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) solution over a traditional business telephone system can bring your organization a few very clear benefits. Many of these benefits come from the advanced features that VoIP offers as add-ons. We'll discuss a few of these features and their advantages.

Video Conferencing

If a business frequently holds meetings, whether they involve their clients, customers, or...



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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.

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Businesses Always Battle Risk



The way that an organization handles risk is a big deal. Despite being born out of opportunity, opening a business itself can be looked on by many a major risk. As a result, every business should be looking to manage their risk. Today, we take a look at the role risk plays in business, and how IT, for all its benefits, carries with it some risk.

What is Risk?

As defined, risk is an event or circumstance that results in a negative outcome for the business.

Business risk may be a little difficult to measure. The exposure of risk presents the possibility that a company will see fewer profits compared to other scenarios; and conversely, how that company manages its risk could be what comes to define its existence.

To manage risk, a business owner, a manager, or an employee has to first acknowledge that it's there. Some people are better at this than others. Typically, organizations that blaze ahead without protecting themselves against risk can only get so far before that lack of diligence catches up to them.

What's more, many organizations will look on their IT risk management as a project. This is largely wrong because there is no end to the risks that keep coming and coming from both inside and outside of an organization; and, it's your job to define exactly what these risks are.

Discovery

Say you run a retail business. When you have a lot of one product and you are having problems getting rid of it, you put it on sale, right? The risk of having too much of one item is a simple one to manage. Not everything is that simple. That's why many businesses put

(Continued on page 2)

Monitoring Your Network is a Great Way to Build Reliability



There are certain processes within an organization that take a considerable amount of time to do. These include applying patches, monitoring network traffic, and updating software as needed. While it might seem like something your business can handle on its own, some small organizations struggle to accomplish everything they set out to do--especially with a limited budget or workforce. Our staff's powerful monitoring and management tool can aid in this initiative.

The Everyday Situation

Small business owners know all about the pains of working with limited resources. More often than not, they don't have a dedicated IT department to handle their operational needs. They instead rely on other employees to pick up the slack when it's necessary. In cases like this, employees are often not trained on how to do specific tasks, meaning that any attempts to apply patches, update software, or other responsibilities run the risk of being done improperly or irregularly.

Furthermore, small businesses that do have an in-house IT department likely have a small one--maybe one or two technicians at the most--who have their hands full with countless

(Continued on page 3)

What Can You Do to Improve Data Recovery?



Let's face it; nobody wants to talk about disaster recovery, as even invoking these words makes the possibility a reality. Unfortunately, this is something that has to be discussed, as your business depends on it. This might seem like hyperbole, but if you knew what is at stake, you'd likely agree with us.

The truth is that, without a backup and disaster recovery solution in place, your chances of redundancy are limited. A BDR solution can be a major preventative measure that can make all the difference.

Determine Your RPO and RTO

Recovery Point Objective (RPO) and Recovery Time Objective (RTO) are both

Businesses Always Battle Risk

(Continued from page 1)

together a committee of department representatives who discuss organizational shortcomings to help identify risks. In IT, risk largely results in downtime and data loss. These two factors are clearly defined, and therefore, can be tested for. How does any organization work to reduce or eliminate downtime and data loss? What practices or procedures could the organization put in place to mitigate the risk of suffering from those effects?

Analysis

Start by singling out every system you have discovered that presents your business with some semblance of risk. Now, take the time to consider how each could be taken advantage of. Define what practical solutions are available to keep the individual systems from exposing the organization to more risk, and then, once you've identified all your potential weaknesses, begin the process of planning a strategy.

key components of data backup and disaster recovery. RPO and RTO correspond to how much data you want to back up, and how much time you have to recover your data before consequences strike, respectively. The primary goal that you want to aim for is to back up as much data as you think you need to get back into a proper operational standpoint. This should also prioritize recovery time, keeping it to a minimum and thereby eliminating downtime and data loss.

Figure Out Where Your Backups Are Stored

After you know how much data you need to back up and how long you have to restore a backup, the next step is to figure out where you want to store your backups. Storing them on-site can be risky, as the site of the disaster scenario is often in-house. Still, you want to have at least one copy on-premise, supplemented by copies of your data off-site in a data center and in the cloud.

By analyzing the most critical possibilities first, and then running tests on corresponding systems to see what the potential damage could be if the risks are not reduced, you will get a good idea of what kind of capital outlay it is going to take, in products, services, and manpower, to keep risks from sinking your endeavor.

What is most important in the risk analysis phase is to be able to set priorities. This is done in much of the same manner as you would set priority for about anything. You look at your assessment of risk, the potential cost of mitigating that risk, and the possible effect risks could have if they aren't addressed. The ones that could cause the most problems for the most important systems get priority.

Controls

Once you are finished inventorying your organization's risk factors and assigning priority, you have to begin placing controls in these systems to mitigate the

Test Your Backups to Ensure Reliability

What if you experience a disaster and your data recovery solution doesn't work? This is the worst-case scenario, and one that you want to actively avoid by routinely testing your data backups. This ensures that they aren't corrupted or damaged when you need them most. With so many responsibilities on your plate every day, it's not surprising that a lot of organizations turn to third parties to make sure it all gets done.

Directive can help your business with any aspect of data backup and disaster recovery implementation, from deciding on a solution to testing backups to ensure they work as intended.

To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.



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risk of systemic failure. In this case, controls are typically policies or tools that allow for the management of risk. Many times, if it is a problem for your organization, it is a problem for another business, and they may have some documentation or some advice on how they went about implementing a solution to the problem. Additionally, organizations like the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will have a suggested (and often tested) framework available to help you find, and deploy a solution to your problem.

Monitoring and Reporting

Once your controls are in place and functioning effectively, your organization will want to closely monitor them. Monitoring will allow you to get a good idea of how effective your controls are at patching your operational problems and mitigating risk. Fixes can be...



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Monitoring Your Network is a Great Way to Build Reliability

(Continued from page 1)

little tasks, whether it's helping someone set up an email account or resetting someone's password. They might not have time to think about the important tasks, like making sure the latest vulnerability is patched to every single device on the network.

How This Helps

One of the major benefits of remote maintenance comes from its

namesake--the word "remote." The technicians don't have to be on-site to administer the maintenance needed. They can be either in the office scheduling automatic updates, or they can be across the country. Either way, the result is that it gets done with minimal involvement on your part.

Your devices can also be monitored for suspicious activity. This is helpful if you have employees who work remotely.

For example, with Directive technicians watching over your network, you can be alerted if someone with a suspicious IP address logs into your network.

To learn more about how you can implement (and automate) your network and infrastructure management, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.



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Innovations in Your Office's Technology Can Bring Big Benefits



Technology innovation in the workplace is something that is constantly shifting and changing,

depending on what's hot at any specific time. These days, it might seem like office technology innovation is stagnating, but we assure you that it's still constantly improving. We'll walk you through some of our favorites to improve data accessibility and workplace productivity as a whole.

Meeting Technologies

Meetings have been central to the success of many organizations, as they are often places to discuss new initiatives and innovations. Therefore, investment in solutions that augment your ability to hold meetings will be pivotal to the success of your organization. Conferencing software, video chat, and other options for making your meetings more efficient and productive. Interactive whiteboards are another way you can help your employees make the most of their meetings. These meetings should be accessible anytime, anywhere, giving your employees the tools to meet whenever it's most convenient for them, regardless of physical location or connection to the workplace.

Software Integration

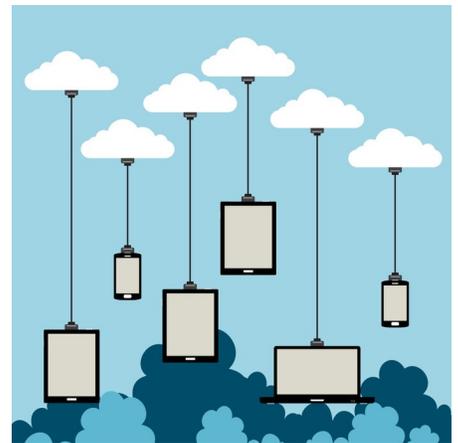
It's no surprise that software integration will play a critical role in the workplace

of the future. Thanks to software developers building APIs (Application Program Interface), your software solutions often have the opportunity to play nice with your productivity tools, whether they are new systems that you have recently put in place or are established ones on your in-house network. It's likely that the future will hold APIs in higher esteem moving forward, as so many modern businesses value integration than ever before.



Intranet Solutions

Your organization's applications need to be found in a place where anyone on your staff can access them. To this end, an intranet solution can help create a single point of access for any and all of your business' critical assets. An intranet can also be a great location for access to important information, like your employee handbook and other policies. Think of it as a portal to all of your organization's most important information.



Cloud-Based Services

We know we talk about the importance of the cloud very often, but it's simply too potent of a concept to dismiss outright. When you store data and applications in the cloud, you're creating an infrastructure that can be accessed on demand at any time from any location, as long as the user has the correct viewing or editing permissions. What this allows is a more open form of getting work done, as it embraces the "always on" notion of mobile technology.

Directive can help you implement any of the new innovations that modern office workers need to stay productive.

To learn more about the solutions and services we offer, reach out to Directive at 607.433.2200.



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3 Reasons You Want Experts Handling Your IT



For a moment, I want you to stop and consider something:

Who do you turn to when your business' toilets suddenly stop working? Who do you call for when the lights stop working? Most likely, an expert... so if you turn to the pros for these needs, why would you do anything different for your IT?

Here, we'll present the value of turning to the IT experts that we have here at Directive for your business' technology needs. These values can effectively be broken down into three essential qualities that our services - known as managed services - are built around.

Predictable Productivity

Regardless of a business' size, this is a primary concern: are they able to sustain their operations at a rate that means that they can remain open? This is one of the reasons that productivity is such a big buzzword in IT - the influence a given solution can have on a business' productivity can easily make or break it over time. Try asking your employees how much they can accomplish if their computers don't work - they'll probably tell you how important an

operational solution is to your business in no uncertain terms.

With a managed service provider (or MSP) like Directive managing your solutions, you can be sure that your technology is maintained. This way, your employees won't find themselves stymied by technical issues out of their control.

Protection

Let's face facts for a moment - business owners today have a lot to worry about. Once upon a time, a business could be protected by storing their documents in a safe and keeping the combination a secret. However, in today's increasingly collaborative world, the safe has been made impractical. This means that your data needs to be both accessible to those who need it to meet the productivity standards we discussed above, as well as secured against cyberthreats and other risk factors, like data loss.

An MSP like Directive can implement the various solutions needed to ensure that this balance is achieved, allowing you the security to focus on your business. With the confidence that our services and solutions--including integrated security measures and business continuity with

backups--can provide, you can breathe easy, knowing that your data stores are secure.

Professionals Pulling For You

As you may have noticed by now, most of the qualities of an MSP's services that we've discussed thus far revolve around you receiving the managed support that gives providers like Directive their self-explanatory title. However, that only scratches the service. When your MSP's team is made up of experts like ours is, you not only have professionals providing your business with support... you have professionals supporting you.

Unlike many other IT service options, the more successful our clients are, the happier we are. After all, that means that our solutions worked for them, only reinforcing the proof that our options are the right ones to leverage. Furthermore, you can be sure that if you do experience a problem with your business technology we'll come correct to fix it. Again, our success is determined by yours - so if something doesn't work, that's a problem for us... and frankly, our professional egos aren't going to let us...



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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.



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