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3 Ways Managed IT Keeps Your Business in Business

In the natural course of doing business, an owner/operator will have to face many difficult

situations, but none of these situations are as difficult as asking them to determine whether or not to close the doors of the business for good. Many problems could cause a business to fail, but it has to hurt the failing owner a little more when the solution for the problem...



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<http://dti.io/inbusiness>

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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4 Enterprise-Level Security Solutions in One Convenient Package

How big a role does security play in your business's network management? If it takes a secondary role more in favor of operations, you might want to reconsider why this is the case. After all, your organization's critical assets--namely sensitive data like employee information, payment credentials, and usernames or passwords--all hold immense risk for exploitation from hackers. Therefore, even if you don't fear a potential attack, you should at least consider it as a possibility.

To optimize security on your business's network, we often recommend what's called a Unified Threat Management (UTM) tool. This combines several of the most important enterprise-level security solutions into one package for maximum network protection. Here is what a UTM contains and why it's important for your organization.

Firewalls

Firewalls are beneficial in that they keep threats out of your network in the first place, meaning that they don't even have the opportunity to access your network and cause trouble for your business. Firewalls act as the virtual bouncers of your network, keeping dangerous traffic from entering while keeping threats in one place so that they can be thrown out or eliminated quickly.

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How Software License Mismanagement Can Hurt Your Bottom Line

Whenever you install software on your computer, you agree to certain terms put in place by the developer or vendor. Even free software, such as Google Chrome and Firefox, have terms that the end-user opts into during installation. One of the most important terms business owners need to be aware of are those that pertain to software licenses; if you aren't, someone else will be.

How Software Licensing Works

Software licensing is everything but simple. Developers determine where and how often you can install the software, whether or not you can modify or redistribute it, and other terms. Installing the software means you agree to these terms. Most commonly, these terms are designed to protect the developer from having their software shared and distributed without them charging for it. This makes sense, it's theft.

Interestingly enough, there have been some pretty wacky terms snuck into the license agreements of some programs. One of our favorites is Apple expressly forbidding users from using iTunes to create missiles and nuclear weapons. While we hope our clients are not weaponizing iTunes, there is a much more realistic concern that business owners absolutely need to be aware of.

Negligence Can Lead to Huge Fines

Depending on the software, when you install it and "activate" it, the software might phone

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Threats to Your Data Come From All Sides



Just over a third (36 percent) of businesses don't back up business data at all, and apparently this number

isn't keeping some IT providers up at night (not the case for us). Your businesses' data is precious, irreplaceable, and extremely expensive to lose. Let's talk about how delicate and dangerous it is to not have it backed up.

Hard Drives are Extremely Fragile

The device inside your computer or server that holds your data is easily the most sensitive and breakable component. Traditional mechanical hard drives work

by spinning a spindle of platters at extremely high speeds. These platters have a thin magnetic coating that stores your data. A tiny arm rests over the platter with nothing but a cushion of air holding it in place. The spinning of the platter keeps the magnetic head on this arm from touching the platter. If the head were to touch the platter while it is spinning, it would decimate your data.

Modern drives have plenty of safeguards to prevent issues, but like any mechanical device, wear and tear will happen, and outside forces like bumps and shocks can shorten the reliability of a drive. If your data is confined to one drive, it just takes one bad day to lose it all, and recovering the data could be impossible.

Users Make Mistakes

Let's say your company uses a Word document as a template for your sales proposals. Your sales team knows to make a copy of it, drop it in the client's folder, and edit it from there. That is, until someone makes the mistake of editing the original copy and saves over the file after making major edits to it. Now someone needs to scramble to restore the file by hand. If it were backed up, you could simply restore the file from your backup.

Ransomware is Evil

Everyone knows they need to protect their computer with antivirus, but...



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

How Software License Mismanagement Can Hurt Your Bottom Line

(Continued from page 1)

home to the developer to authenticate the license. If the software sees that it's been recently installed or is currently active elsewhere, it might report back and not let you use it. Alternatively, it might not immediately reveal that it sees multiple copies in use. The developer might even give you some lenience (sometimes you can install a copy on your work PC and on a laptop). If you don't understand the licensing, you won't know until the cease and desist letters come in.

Typically, software developers are prepared to catch this and offer ways for you to purchase additional licenses (although not all the time). They might even offer volume or site licensing which will help you save money when purchasing software for all of your employees. While you need to be careful not to upset the vendor by mistreating your software licenses, there are even bigger threats to watch out for.

Beware the Audit Monster

Organizations like the Business Software Alliance (BSA) issues audits to businesses that they suspect are misusing software

licenses. For example, if they think you are running the same license for Microsoft Office or Windows across multiple computers, an attorney representing them will send you a very stone-cold letter that you won't like. To make matters worse, the BSA even offers thousands of dollars to whistleblowers who report their own organization and promise full confidentiality. Got any disgruntled former employees? Organizations like this love hearing what they have to say.

Failing these audits can lead to huge, out-of-proportion fines and in some cases, jail time. If you've received a letter from an organization like this, it is extremely important to reach out to a trusted IT advisor immediately, as well as your lawyer. It's best to not wait for this to happen, and make sure your software licensing is in check.

How to Prevent Software License Mismanagement

Like anything related to IT, the best course of action is being proactive. Documenting your software licenses, including how many you have, who is using it, and where it is deployed is a

good start. If your software licenses include expirations or other terms, it's important to track those as well.

Understanding the rules is crucial. Software developers aren't out to screw you over, they just don't want their product being stolen. If a program is allowed to be installed on a second device, it typically means the user can install it on their laptop or home computer. This does NOT mean you can split the license up across two users.

Having your network audited regularly is a good practice. Your employees might think they are being effective by sharing software with coworkers. The intentions might be good, but the repercussions can be serious. Directive can work with you to audit your network and find issues like this, and help you resolve them if detected.

Don't hesitate to give us a call at 607.433.2200 to get the process started. We're happy to be discreet, even if you have a trusted IT provider.



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Antivirus

An antivirus solution complements a firewall by eliminating threats that do manage to slip through the firewall's grasp. An enterprise-level antivirus solution can identify and eliminate threats of all types; malware, viruses, trojans, and so much more. It's a great way of mitigating risk for your organization by ensuring that you take quick action against any potential threats. The big difference between a centrally located antivirus such as this, compared with standard consumer-grade antivirus is that the updates and scans aren't up to your end users, making the process seamless without interrupting productivity.

Spam Blocker

Spam isn't just an annoying and problematic thing to find in your inbox, it can also be exceptionally dangerous. Hackers will often use spam to spread their malware, and advanced phishing schemes are used to collect credentials and steal sensitive information from unwary users. Enterprise-level spam blockers are used to prevent spam from even hitting the inbox, allowing no room for error on your users' behalf. Of course, advanced threats often know how to dodge these blockers, so training for your employees is still ideal.

Content Filter

The Internet holds countless threats that can put your organization at risk, includ-

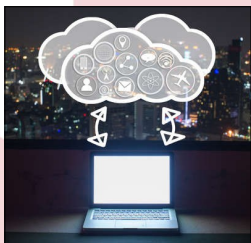
ing malicious websites designed to harvest credentials, and downloadable attachments that can infect your network with ransomware before you know what hit it. The best way to keep users from accessing these dangerous sites, along with time-wasting websites that hold your business back from succeeding, is a content filter. You can block malicious online threats while keeping your employees from accessing social media (YouTube, Netflix, etc.) killing two birds with one stone.

To learn more reach out to us at 607.433.2200.



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The Cloud Revolution: We've Seen This Before



As technologies emerge and trends change, organizations face massive paradigm shifts involving the tools and meth-

ods they use to conduct business. Right now, we're in the middle of one of the most significant shifts in decades; more and more businesses are relying on cloud computing.

As technologies emerge and trends change, organizations face massive paradigm shifts involving the tools and methods they use to conduct business. Right now, we're in the middle of one of the most significant shifts in decades; more and more businesses are relying on cloud computing.

The Basics

Cloud computing is a very broad term describing the usage of off-site computing. Essentially, when you use a cloud-based service, you are using someone else's computer to store and process data. Just for reference, let's say you are using Bob's computer.

Bob basically rents some of his computer's resources to you. Depending on the cloud provider, they might sell computing resources based on storage, processing power, bandwidth, or just how many accounts you need. In order for Bob to keep you as a customer, he needs to have these computing resources readily available. They need to be safe and secure. On top of that, Bob needs to sell you the computing resources for less than you'd pay for purchasing them yourself, taking into consideration the cost of managing, maintaining, and protecting your IT investment.

Those last few points are all the difference. Uptime and security are crucial for small business success, and businesses either need to proactively manage and maintain their IT or be prepared for unexpected costs when problems occur.

Bob can do something that most small businesses can't. He doesn't just manage the computer he's renting to you. He's managing hundreds or thousands of virtual computers, located all in one data center. This brings the costs-per-unit down. While keeping everything secure is still not necessarily an easy task, Bob is able to control the infrastructure as a whole and invest in higher-end solutions

that a small business might not be able to justify for a smaller IT footprint. This tends to mean better security, better capabilities, and even cutting-edge solutions that keep your business in line with your competitors for less money.

So why does this sound so good?

This is Nothing New

If we look back at the late 1890s, long before businesses were worried about computers crashing or malware infections, they were concerned with generating their own electricity. Factories required onsite generators that were expensive, inefficient, and difficult to maintain. In some cases, staff needed to be kept on hand just to keep operations moving. If a generator failed, productivity would stop.

At the turn of the century, in Chicago the Edison Power Company changed all that. They were able to provide reliable, cleaner electricity to factories for less money in the long run. The cost per unit was cheaper for the Edison Power...



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

Next Job on the Automation Chopping Block: Pizza Delivery



Did you know that over 2,000 Domino's Pizza franchises

in Australia, New Zealand, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Japan, and Germany feature delivery by robot? Starship Technologies, a self-driving robotics company, announced on March 29th that they would be partnering with Domino's to revolutionize the way the delivery process works.

It's also worth mentioning that this development comes on the heels of the company's projected growth estimates for the next five-to-ten years, predicting a worker shortage that the delivery robots can hopefully remedy in the long term. It's just one way that modern enterprises are using technology to improve the way they run their organizations.

Domino's Group CEO and Managing Director, Don Meji, states: "Robotic delivery units

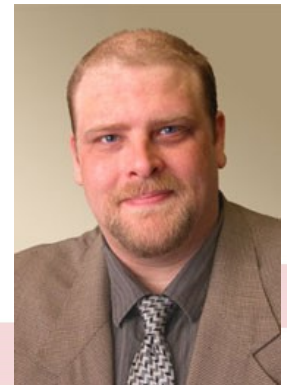
will complement our existing delivery methods, including cars, scooters, and e-bikes, ensuring our customers can get the hottest, freshest-made pizza delivered directly to them, wherever they are."

Just think, maybe someday you can have a way to get fresh, delicious pizza delivered right to your front door via autonomous robot...



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

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.



Chris Chase
Solutions Integrator

Crock-Pot Thursdays at Directive!

Bring Your Child to Crock-Pot Thursday!

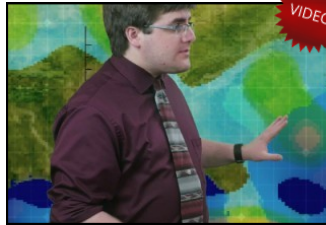


VIDEO!

Crock-Pot Thursday just so happened to be on National Bring Your Child to Work Day! Joining us for lunch and a full afternoon of activities, our special guests got to have a bit of fun while learning about what it's like to work in our office. Coloring, making videos, and playing with puppies were on the agenda. Everyone had a great time!

Get the Recipes Here!
<http://dti.io/byktwd>

Subby with a Chance of Macaroni Salad



VIDEO!

Pretty much everyone knows what it is like to have to work while hungry. However, when your job is to accurately report a weather forecast, there is a big difference between a cold cut front and a tomato warning. Check out today's Crock-Pot Lunch which had 100% chance of Milford Corner Store subs.

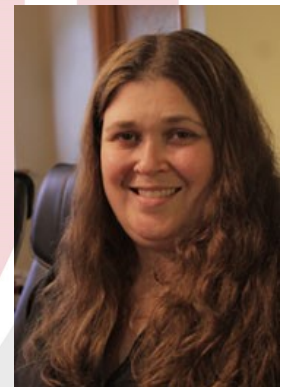
See The Video Here!
<http://dti.io/cornerstore>

Crock-Pot Thursday Turns into a "Peep" Show!



Today's Crock-Pot Thursday lunch was really more of a 'Peep' show - with these adorable Easter Garden Cakes! (Okay, there was a delicious slow cooked ham with a maple brown sugar glaze, with honey glazed carrots and sautéed asparagus and peas, too. They aren't as cute, though.)

Get the Recipes Here!
<http://dti.io/peepshow>



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