Technology Times

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

"As a business owner, I know you don't have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That's where we *shine*! Call us and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!"

- Rick Johnston,
Information Management Systems

April, 2009
Fargo, ND

Inside This Issue…

Pop Quiz: You Just Discovered One Of Your Employees Had Their Laptop Stolen…

Quick, What Do You Do?

Over the last couple of months, I've come across some alarming statistics that you should know. There are 12,000 or so laptops found in US airports each week and 62,000 lost electronic devices recovered from New York's metropolitan buses, taxis, trains, and stations each year! The bottom line is no matter how careful you are with your laptop, mistakes occur and losing a laptop (or having one stolen) is likely to happen to you or your employees at some point in time.

In the hands of a relatively unsophisticated hacker, all of your laptop information can be siphoned off, allowing an open back door into your network. This is akin to giving a thief the key to your office and the code to deactivate the alarm. Imagine the embarrassment of having to contact all of your customers to let them know THEIR confidential information may be compromised because one of YOUR unsecured laptops is in the hands of a criminal!

Asking employees to be more careful about where they keep their laptop IS a good step in the right direction, but accidents happen and thieves are always on the prowl. That's why it's so important to take measures to lock down and secure any mobile devices you and your staff use to access your company's network. Here are just a few things:

Encrypt All Information – Drive encryption software such as BitLocker (which is included in some versions of Microsoft Windows Vista) or Steganos Privacy Suite (which I personally use) can secure all the data on your hard drive. Also, check your computer to see if it has a Trusted Platform Module (TPM) chip which is generally more secure than those without TPM.

Multi-Level Access Security – Don't rely only on passwords to keep your laptop safe. Hackers can usually break most passwords in a few hours. We recommend adding a second way for people to prove that they are who they say they are BEFORE they are able to log in. Some people use smart cards, but fingerprint pads are gaining in popularity.

Log / Back-Up Information – It's critical to log and back-up all information on business laptops to ensure smooth operations in the event of loss or destruction. We can automate the backups so they are done ON SCHEDULE and in a way that won't interfere with the use of the laptop.

The Right Response - What happens when an employee loses a laptop? Do you have a next step action plan in place? If not, we suggest calling us immediately to report the loss (Note: clients on our IMS Total Care Services Platinum plan will get after hours support for situations like this). The sooner we know, the sooner we can take preventative actions to lock that laptop out of the network. A blame culture where people are afraid to report losses is actually much worse for security.

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"Perfect Hearing…"

An elderly gentleman had a serious hearing problem for a long time. He finally saw a doctor who fitted him with a device that gave him normal hearing.

When the man returned in a month, the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be pleased."

"Oh, I haven't told them yet," the gentleman replied, "I just sit around and listen to their conversations."

The doctor replied, "Doesn't that get boring?" "Absolutely not" the man chuckled, "I've already changed my will three times!"

Call Before May 1st And Get Our "Spring Cleaning" Super Value Service Call For Only $249!

Spring is in the air and there's no better time for a computer network health check! For only $249, we'll send a technician to your office to:

- Conduct a full virus and spyware scan of your network.

- Verify your data backups are working and could be restored in the event of a disaster.

- Review your firewall and security against hackers and viruses.

- Check for system errors, conflicts, and other problems that can slow down your network.

- Look for ways to speed up your computer and network

CALL TODAY:
(701) 364-2718
Offer Expires May 1st 2009

Take the time NOW to secure your laptop and limit the damage to your business if it happens. We specialize in securing business data like yours, and making sure it is available whenever you need it, so give me a call at (701) 364-2718 to discuss encryption options and how to make your business network more secure.

The danger of becoming dependent on Outlook Nicknames; save them as contacts or delete them

Think about how you enter the address for a recipient when you create an e-mail in Outlook. Do you rely on the nicknames that already exist to fill in the address?

Outlook users beware! Nickname files can be lost or erased without notice. Don't rely on Outlook to auto complete addresses for you. Save your contacts in your address book and know their information is always safe.

Did you know… Outlook's auto complete feature attempts to fill in addresses from what is called the "nickname list". Outlook builds this list over time as you send and receive messages and uses it as the *primary source* to auto fill the addresses. Occasionally, the program will pull suggestions from your address book but, there are no guarantees that the program is smart enough to find the contacts you need. Also, it does not prioritize new address book entries over the "nickname list" addresses. You will need to double check the address if you continue to rely on the auto fill function.

Use your address book every time you address a message. Have you ever been disappointed by the auto fill function not finding a contact you know is in your address book? Here is a handy solution to speed things along: press "CTRL + K" after typing the first few letters of the recipients name. This prompts the "Check Names" button that looks at the characters you have typed so far and compares them with your address book entries. If there is only one match, it will complete the entry for you. If there is more than one name that fits the criteria, you will receive a list of contacts to choose from (not including the names stored in your "nickname list").

How can I add recipients in the nickname list to my address book quickly? The next time you address an e-mail and you use the auto fill function to add the contact address, right click on the address after it is entered into the field and chose "Add to Outlook Contacts". Then a window will pop-up for you to enter the appropriate information for the contact.

How can I delete names from the list? Have you ever composed a message and noticed that the name populated did not have the correct address or realized there were other names you no longer needed to save? Clean out your "nickname file" by typing the first few letters and then using the arrow up and down keys to select a name, press DELETE to erase it from the list or ENTER to use the name.

Traveling Sales People Take Notice:
New Micro Projectors Make PowerPoint Presentations A Breeze, Fit Into The Palm Of

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New Study Reveals People Tell More Lies With E-mail

You might not believe a "get rich quick" offer sent by a stranger, but when a message comes from a friend, you may be more likely to think it is believable.

But don't be TOO sure! Researchers from Rutgers and DePaul universities found that more people lie in e-mail communications than verbally or in writing. Why? Because there seems to be a "reduced feeling of social obligation" when sending e-mail.

The more you know the recipient, the less inclined you'll be to lie – but many of the people in the study admitted that they still stretch the truth, even with friends and colleagues.

Another study found that people are far more likely to be overly critical in e-mail than on paper. So as the owner of a company, you might consider getting feedback via e-mail to elicit frank responses.
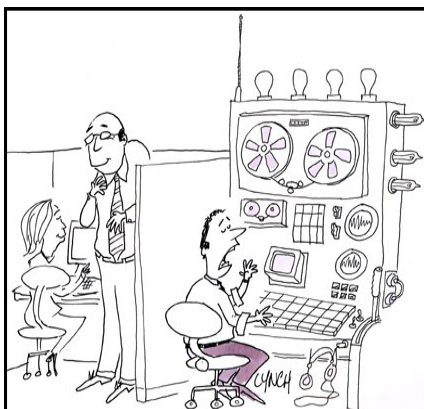
"Go ahead and laugh, but this baby hasn't crashed since 1961."

Your Hand, And Don't Require An Outlet To Work!

If you're like me, you don't need to do PowerPoint presentations on the road very often; but when you do, it's a royal pain! Until now, your choices were to lug a big projector around, pay for a rental, or hope that the client had one available. But thanks to a new generation of micro-projectors, you can take the show on the road very easily.

I've been hearing about various prototypes for a couple of years, but nothing was available commercially. Now two companies, 3M (3Mproprojector.com) and Optoma (Optoma.com) have released micro projector models that claim to have 6-10 hours of battery capacity, projection LEDs that are guaranteed to last 10,000 hours before replacement, and very high resolution images. As a bonus, the 3M MPro110 works with SD memory cards or tethered to an electronic device via USB.

These tiny projectors fit in the palm of your hand and work with batteries so you don't need to find an outlet; a feature that would certainly come in handy. Most project an image from 5" to 50" and are compatible with lots of electronic devices such as cell phones, cameras, PDAs, iPods, and of course, laptop computers.

Reviews for the products have been mixed; most of the disappointing reviews are from people who are used to the performance of a full size projector. However, those who only need a quick and easy way to project a computer screen or PowerPoint are very pleased.

The street price for these projectors range from $350 to $400 but should (like all other electronic devices) drop over time.

If a micro projector sounds appealing to you, I suggest you find a seller that will let you take a "test drive" before making a full commitment to buy. The 3M projector is available from big box office stores, while the Optoma is available at multiple online vendors like Amazon.com,

If you've used a micro projector, give me a call at (701) 364-2718 or write me at RJohnston@imsnetworking.com. I'd love to get your "real world" feedback on how you use a micro projector and how it performs.

How To Unlock Secrets About Your Customers Hiding In Your Web Site Reports

No matter who hosts your web site, it's almost certain that you have web site traffic reporting. These reports can tell you a LOT about your customers and

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Easter rabbit trivia

The saying "mad as a March hare" refers to the wild antics of male hares as they compete with other males in the spring. Mating behavior with females often looks like a crazy dance.

The saying "they multiply like rabbits" probably refers to the ability of hares and rabbits to conceive a second litter while still pregnant with the first. It's not surprising that rabbits became fertility symbols. Rabbits, however, do not lay eggs, in case you wondered.

The idea of the egg-laying bunny came to America in the 18th century with German immigrants in the Pennsylvania Dutch area. They said that on Easter morning, good children found bunny eggs in their hats.

In Australia, there is a long-running campaign to replace the Easter bunny with the Easter bilby. The bilby, an endangered species, is a little smaller than a rabbit. It has a long nose and ears almost as big. A portion of the profit from selling chocolate bilbies goes to protection and research.

We Want Your Input!

Do you have an idea to make this newsletter better? Would you like to submit a story, article, or trivia? We'd love to hear from you!

Rick Johnston

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who is visiting your web site IF you know how to read them. Here's a quick lesson on how to decipher them…

Hits Vs. Unique Visitors
It's been said that "hits" is short for "How Idiots Track Sales." Total Hits is a deceptive number because a single visitor on a single page could easily pull a dozen files or more.

The number you should watch is "unique visitors" or "unique referrers," the best indicator of how many individual people are actually visiting your site. If your number of unique visitors is low, it's either a sign of weak marketing or a technical issue. For example, sites built in Flash or that use images instead of text are difficult for search engines to index and, therefore, will get very low rankings and traffic.

Browsers
Your reports should give you a list of web browsers your clients are using when coming to your site. With multiple browsers being used by web surfers, you need to make sure your site works with all the browsers identified in your reports.

Exit Page
If you're not getting web visitors to "convert" by buying, signing up, or doing something else you want them to do, take a closer look. Why are people leaving? There may be a technical issue, a bad headline (or no headline), no offer, slow-loading graphics, or confusing copy. Something on this page is making your visitors leave without doing what you want them to do. Experiment with various headlines, offers, and designs until you find something more successful.

Update Keywords and Keyword Phrases
Be sure your web site key words line up with the words people use when searching for products or services you offer. Keeping these aligned will allow you to optimize your conversion rate and minimize your expenses when using pay-per-click search engine marketing. Your website designer or web master should be able to provide low cost services to evaluate your keywords.

Errors
Check out the error list from time to time to make sure you aren't experiencing any technical issues. The most frequent error you'll find is a "404" code, which means "document not found"—also known as broken links which occur most frequently with site updates or old external links.

A clever tip is to have a custom "404" page that shows up instead of the stock standard "file not found" page, that contains your company name, phone number, and a way to report the problem. Your web master can set this up for you.

Monitoring and updating your website regularly can be the difference between maintaining a web presence or having a virtual selling machine on the web.