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

February 2011
Fargo, ND

Inside This Issue…

BOOK REPORT DUE TODAY

" A grade of 85 or higher will get you favorable mention on my blog."

What do Cars and Computers Have in Common?

Both cars and computers are indispensible, complex and will eventually break.

Do you change the oil in your car? You probably do. But WHY? You do this to prevent problems that you <u>MIGHT</u> have in the future.

When was the last time you changed the oil in your computer? I know computers don't have oil. But they do have parts and software that break … **usually at the *worst* possible time.**

What if … (please use your imagination) the next time that you saw your car mechanic he said to you, "We have a new technology that about 100 of our customers are using and I think it would really work for you. Let me tell you about it.

We install a part in your car that tells us everything about your car all the time. If your tire pressure is low, we know about it. If your brake pads are wearing out, we know about it. We know all your fluid levels, the amount of dirt in the motor, your gas mileage, the condition of your spark plugs and everything else about the condition and workings of your car.

Then here is the great part. When we see that something needs routine maintenance or repair, we fix it for you. If it is a maintenance issue, we come to your garage at night while you are sleeping (so that we don't disrupt your use of the car) and take care of it. Other things we can fix remotely from our shop while you are actually driving your car. You will <u>never</u> even know that we are working. Sometimes, though, we might need you to be with us while we resolve the problem.

Our customers have found that they **love** this service. This is because they don't need to worry about the condition of their car. We take care of it. They get better gas mileage. Their car lasts longer. Their car performs better. They are not inconvenienced.

You might be thinking this must cost a small fortune. At the beginning, as we got our systems and processes in place, we did have some challenges making this affordable and effective. However, since we have 100's of cars using this service, we have **systems** and **processes** that help us make this **financially affordable** for our customers.

We charge $95 per month for your car to be on this service plan. That includes everything except parts."

What would you say to your mechanic?

Well, to my knowledge the car repair industry does not provide this service.

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Shiny New Gadget Of The Month
Digital Pet Cam

Attention all pet lovers! Have you ever wondered what your pet sees and does when you're away? Does he nap or get into all sorts of mischief? Clip on Uncle Milton's Pet's Eye View camera and find out!

You can choose between 1, 5, or 15-minute intervals for your pictures. The photos are taken automatically and can be uploaded to your PC or Mac via the included USB cable for easy viewing. It's lightweight, compact and simply clips right onto your pet's collar!

- Auto-interval photo settings
- Internal memory stores up to 40 photos
- 640 x 480 resolution for 4" x 6" prints
- PC and Mac compatible
- Includes USB cable for uploading photos
- Includes rechargeable Lithium-ion 100 mAh battery.
- Collar and the subsequent dog training you might discover you need are not included.

But the computer industry does. And that's **exactly** what we do. We have software that we install on every PC, server and router in your network. We then watch and monitor your systems 24/7. The system will alert us about both minor issues (like your hard drive space is 80% full) and major issues (like your server is down). In fact, if it is a major issue, the system will call our phones afterhours to let us know there is a problem.

The software also allows us to do preventative maintenance. We can access your computer and fix issues while you are working. We can shadow you so that we see exactly what you are doing when you have an issue.

Aside from the fact that we just love technology, why did we make this major investment in our business?

We started providing this service for two reasons:
1. We can provide a **better service** for our clients than ever imagined.
2. We now have the opportunity to really **help our clients** grow their business and use technology effectively.

So now you are probably asking … why didn't we have the opportunity to help clients in this manner before? Well, to be frank, it is because of the billing process. Charging by the hour creates two problems.

The first problem is that I am financially rewarded the longer it takes to fix your problems. I'm not saying that we (or your current provider) intentionally waste time or pad your bill. But what I will tell you is that our focus and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) were on billable hours per technician.

Now our focus is on how **efficient** your systems run. In other words, we are focusing on how to **reduce your downtime and increase your productivity**.

Secondly, because we billed by the hour, our clients had a tendency to push us out the door. Understandably, they wanted to keep their costs low. They would tell their employees not to talk with our technicians. However, had they been talking to us more, we would know about small annoying issues that could have been easily resolved and we could have improved their productivity. We could have been providing monthly server checkups and backup restores to ensure that if a disaster occurred they could recover their data. But in many cases our clients just wanted to save money … and took their chances.

As you can imagine, this change has *dramatically* impacted our business and our relationships with our clients.

We can truly ADD even MORE value to their business.

If this sounds interesting, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you about how we can help your business.

Contact us today to schedule a time to discuss the IMS Total Care Services.

Phone Number: 701-364-2718

or

email: info@imsnetworking.com

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How To Raise Your Profits By Raising Your Profile

I recently listened to an interview with David Avrin, author of the book, "It's Not Who You Know, It's Who Knows You." His message is pretty simple but powerful: the more your marketplace KNOWS your brand, the more sales and profits you'll generate. I highly recommend his book since it contains a lot of good, common sense strategies for small business owners. Here are a few of the tips from David that I wanted to pass on to you and my other readers:

You Can't Control Your Brand:

You can only INFLUENCE it. I actually thought this insight was very powerful. If you think about it, your 'brand' is formulated in the mind of your customer. It's the feeling they get when they think of your company, product or service; but since the CUSTOMER generates the feeling, only they get to decide what that association is. To that end, your brand is the sum total of everything you do. For example, you eat at a restaurant where the food is outstanding but the bathrooms are dirty, the waiter is rude and they get your drink order wrong...twice. Unfortunately, the food may not be enough to get you to come back again.

An Important Question You Should Know The Answer To:

As business owners we spend YEARS perfecting our services, working on our operations and building our business – yet most of us only spend minutes thinking about what message we want to portray to the marketplace. During this interview, David posed the following idea: "What question do you want to be the answer to?" For us, it is... How can we keep our customers satisfied with our services?

Marketing Is Not A Department:

Most people think marketing is just about web sites, brochures and postcards. Not so. Marketing should infiltrate every aspect of your business. To that end, make a list of every touch point you have with your customers and prospects and ask yourself, "Am I being INTENTIONAL about how we interact with our clients to make sure we are fulfilling our brand promise?" That would include often overlooked areas like how you answer the phone, or what you print on the invoices you send out.

Being "Good" Is Not Good Enough...Anymore:

With SO many choices, being "good" at what you do is no longer an advantage in the marketplace – it's the entry point to doing business. Think of how many "good" restaurants you go to, or how many "good" stores you frequent. Chances are they deliver a satisfactory product or service, but not one that blows you away. In order to truly win the hearts (and wallets!) of our clients, we have to work on being outstanding.

Rider Golf

Four old men went into the pro shop after playing 18 holes of golf.

The pro asked, "Did you guys have a good game today?" The first old guy said, "Yes, I had three riders today." The second old guy said, "I had the most riders ever. I had five." The third old guy said, "I had 7 riders, the same as last time." The last old man said, "I beat my old record. I had 12 riders today."

After they went into the locker room, another golfer who had heard the old guys talking about their game went to the pro and said, "I have been playing golf for a long time and thought I knew all the terminology of the game, but what's a rider?"

The pro said, "A rider is when you hit the ball far enough to get in the golf card and ride to it."

Women Sleep Better Alone

According to a University of Vienna study, women do NOT sleep as soundly when they sleep with a romantic partner. The complete opposite is true for men, however, who sleep more soundly when they slumbered next to a loved one. So this Valentine's Day, maybe you need to give your spouse or partner the gift of a good night's sleep by sleeping with them…or not.

6 Quick Tips To *Finally* Organize Your Out-Of-Control Inbox

Much like laundry and bills, no matter how much you try to keep up, e-mails just keep piling up in your inbox. E-mail is a critical part of your day-to-day work, so how do you keep it from becoming a distraction while balancing the things you really need to address? Here are 6 tips…

1. **Zero your inbox**. Do you remember the last time your inbox was empty? Probably never; that's because it costs nothing to keep an e-mail and therefore you don't delete items "just in case" you need them at some point. This really causes messages to pile up FAST. Truth be told, you really DON'T need all those e-mails. Make it a goal to "zero" your inbox every week, particularly on a Friday before you leave for home. If you can't "zero" it, at least get the number down to fewer than a dozen critical messages you absolutely need to work on within the next 2-3 days. We recommend GFI MailArchiver. With GFI MailArchiver your email worries are over. All email is stored in a central location, easily accessible in two ways: through a folder in your user's Outlook email client; or by using a web browser.

2. **Use folders sparingly.** Only set up key, strategic folders or you'll end up with dozens of folders filled with messages in addition to a massive number of messages in your inbox. You might keep one labeled as "storage" for any non-urgent messages that may need to be referenced at a later date. This keeps your inbox free of clutter and helps you more easily find something in an old message when it is needed.

3. **Delete first, read the surviving messages later.** Many of the e-mails you get probably aren't even worth reading. Start your day by immediately deleting these emails before you even start to open and read the important ones.

4. **Take action immediately.** Probably the most helpful way to keep your inbox uncluttered is to take action right away on all messages instead of reading them and then going back to them later when you have time to process the message properly. By taking action right away you avoid wasting time re-reading messages. If it does require a follow up that you don't have time for, file the message and mark a reminder to follow up. Otherwise forward it, delete it or file it into a folder

5. **Slow your roll.** Your e-mail can be a constant distraction through your workday, IF you let it! Take control and set aside "e-mail free" time periods throughout the day so you can truly concentrate on projects without interruption. The world won't stop if you don't check your email every few minutes, I promise.

6. **Install a GOOD spam filter.** The vast majority of messages are unwanted spam, some of which contain viruses. But not all spam filters are created equal! We recommend GFI MailEssentials! GFI MailEssentials detects and blocks phishing emails, and adds email management tools to your mail server, including disclaimers, mail monitoring, Internet mail report, and list server.

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