With So Many Cloud Options Picking the Best One Can Be Dizzying
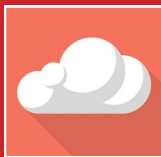
Technology plays an integral part in just about all modern businesses in some way, shape or form. Without a place to purchase devices, however, no one can reap the benefits of them. Some businesses are vendors that provide organizations with these devices. In a sense, they act as the middle man between the producer and the consumer, acquiring devices for sale to businesses and users alike. In this way, vendors are critical for every single business.

There are vendors for just about anything that businesses need…

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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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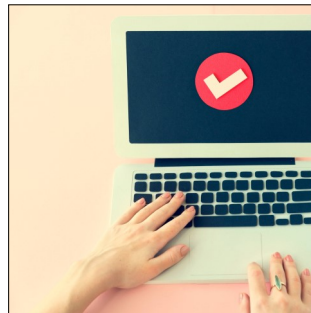**newsletter.directive.com**

Unified Software Brings Multiple Benefits

People have come a long way in a very short amount of time. The development of tools designed to make tasks easier have pushed people from hunter/gatherers across the known solar system in the matter of only a few thousand years. One way humans are able to do so much with seemingly so little is though ingenuity, but another is through consolidating management.

What this means for a business' technology is that the more features one tool has, or the more effectively many tools integrate together, the more effective the business can be. Recently in software, there has been a concerted effort by developers to build tools that integrate several smaller applications into one unified platform. Today we will look at some examples of this consolidation, and how unifying the software tools you use can bring substantial value.

Business Management Software

Probably the best example of an innovative process consolidation is found inside your company's management software. Whether you use customer resource management, enterprise resource planning, professional services automation, or some other form of multi-departmental coordination platform for your business management, the ability for these software platforms to manage large portions of your business in one solution is extremely useful.

Unified Communications

Your organization's communication infrastructure can get complex. There are several software applications that combine to create your communications infrastructure as a whole,

Find a Successful Data Recovery Balance

Businesses deal with compromises every day, whether it's leaving late to let someone else get an early out or coming in on your day off to get a critical project finished on time. One of the compromises you absolutely don't want to leave out is your business' future. It's up to you to acquire a solution that minimizes downtime without costing your organization an arm and a leg, but this is much easier said than done.

Even if you don't anticipate having to use your business' data backup and disaster recovery solution, it's critical that you address specific parts of it and plan for the worst. Remember, even if you never have to use your data backup solution in an emergency, it's worth your investment for the peace of mind alone, and the fact that you can quickly restore files when minor user-based mistakes happen. Specifically, you want to focus on your recovery point objective (RPO) and your recovery time objective (RTO). Both will be instrumental to ensuring your business stays in operation during a disaster event.

Recovery Point Objective

RPO can be defined as how much data you need to recover in order for operations to be unimpeded. While some data might be mission-critical and required in order to keep your business working as intended, other data might not be so important. It's up to you to

Use Innovative Technologies to Help Your Business
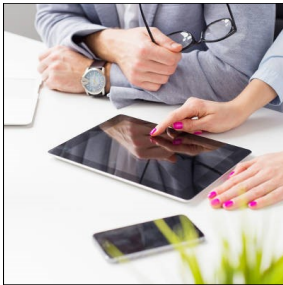
When it comes to innovation, you'd be surprised at what you might be capable of with the right solution. Collaboration in particular opens the floodgates to productivity, and with the right kind of collaborative and innovative technology, you'll be able to unlock a whole new level of progress for your business. We'll discuss some of the most important aspects of innovative collaboration and how your business can start taking advantage of it.

Connecting Solutions

You'd be hard-pressed to find a business out there that doesn't utilize at least some kind of software for their day-to-day needs. Depending on the task, it could be something as simple as using a file sharing service or as complex as a Voice-over-IP system. Either way, communications is one of the main ways your business can take advantage of innovative new services out in the world today. APIs now provide businesses with ways to integrate services with either in-house apps or cloud-based solutions, and they are largely responsible for how well your technology plays with each other.

Collaboration Suites

Software suites are one of the many ways businesses get most of their work done, and a single point of access makes it much easier to access them all. One great example of a collaboration suite is Slack, which provides each department within your organization customizable channels of communication. In other words, it is just like an intranet; it helps your employees stay organized and efficient. Collaboration suites can be hosted either off-site in the cloud, or in-house on your hardware.

Virtual Assistants

Virtual assistants make certain tasks much easier to manage in the workplace. For example, you can tell your phone to keep you updated on meeting times or events throughout the day. You can also set reminders of important tasks that must be done. Virtual assistants even have the capabilities to look through your emails to find the most important information, set up a to-do list, and more.

How would your business use these innovative collaboration tools? For information on how to make it happen, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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Unified Software Brings Multiple Benefits

including email, Voice over IP, instant messaging, and any other applications that your organization uses to keep users connected to each other. A unified communications platform isn't necessarily a single solution, but a platform that can be managed by a single hub. The solutions that make up these services are typically designed in a way that allows for cloud-based access on just about any device (desktop workstation, a laptop, or a smartphone), while also providing all types of useful options that you would find in enterprise telephony solutions.

Unified Security

There are a lot of different aspects to network security, and if they're not managed properly, you could be risking a considerable data breach that could threaten the future of your business. Unified security--just like unified communications--consists of several security solutions wrapped into one convenient package where they can be controlled and managed. Unified threat management (a popular type of network security suite) typically includes a firewall, antivirus, spam blocking, and content filtering, as well as other preventative measures like remote monitoring and management.

Unified Data Management

A unified data management platform gives your organization a place for all of the disparate data collected from devices on your infrastructure. The right kind of data management platform will provide your business with options to store and analyze data while also providing dynamic controls that let you manage your organization's data via a dashboard-like interface. Not only can more thorough data management provide you with insight about your business, it can be used to enhance security and operational effectiveness.

Directive can help your business unify its software on your infrastructure to minimize confusion and consolidate your infrastructure. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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Find a Successful Data Recovery Balance

(Continued from page 1)

determine what amount of data will be acceptable for your organization. Keep in mind, though we're talking about data, this also applies to your software applications that might go down in a disaster.

Recovery Time Objective

RTO is defined as the amount of time it you can takes to recover your data (and other resources) in addition to the amount of time it takes for operations to return to normal. Ideally, this should be as low as possible. Having data backups in the cloud can expedite the process, as often times the most trouble you'll have with data backup is making

sure the data can be restored quickly to prevent costly downtime. Downtime can be defined as any time your organization isn't working as normal for any reason--it doesn't have to be from a disaster.

How Do They Work Together?

Both of these statistics work together to make sure your organization suffers from a minimal amount of data loss and downtime in the event of a disaster. After all, without data, there's no point in performing a restoration. In this way, they are both essential if you want to recover with the least amount of trouble and damage.

Directive can equip your business with a responsive and dynamic data backup plan that provides adequate RPO and RTO, even under the worst situations. We implement what's called a data backup and disaster recovery solution, or BDR, to ensure operations aren't interrupted during a disaster.

A BDR can help your business by providing a cloud-based backup that can automatically be deployed as needed. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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When Do You Know When It's Time For an Upgrade?

Nothing lasts forever; this phrase is true regardless of which industry you're in or business you run. We all use technology in the office to a certain extent, and the ugly truth is that someday that technology will fail. It's critical that you monitor technology for warning signs prior to its failure so as to avoid costly repair bills and rushed replacements. You might be surprised by how much you save as a result.

Physical Signs

Your business' technology will showcase physical signs of wear and tear. You might hear a hard drive humming a little more loudly than normal, or you might hear a fan working just a little harder than usual. These are all signs that not all is well inside the machine. Be on the lookout for anything out of the ordinary, especially if there is dust buildup and your machine is an older model. After all, the older a machine is, the more likely it is to suffer from hardware failure--particularly if it's running a hard disk drive (HDD) rather than a solid state drive (SSD).

Digital Signs

This is a particularly good way of identifying issues with your computers. If operational deficiencies aren't resolved by a good restart, chances are there is something going on behind the scenes that is complicating the matter. If your machine has trouble keeping up with your usual workload--when you open up multiple tabs in a web browser, for example--chances are you should be a little concerned about the future of your device.

> *"Nothing lasts forever; this phrase is true regardless of which industry you're in or business you run. We all use technology in the office to a certain extent, and the ugly truth is that someday that technology will fail."*

What to Do

The second your device, be it a smartphone or desktop, starts to function in a way that doesn't seem normal, reach out to your organization's IT resource. Unfortunately, some small businesses don't have these resources on-site, as maintaining a functional team of technicians can be costly on the budget. You shouldn't see this as a way to eliminate unneeded costs, though. After all, downtime and data loss can have devastating results on any unprepared

organization. What we're here to tell you is that there is a solution out there even for small businesses with limited capital, and it's called outsourced IT solutions from Directive.

We can remotely monitor your devices to check their health at any given time. We can keep close watch on any devices that are failing to perform as intended. This ultimately leads to you knowing when something is wrong with your devices, giving you time to react before they fail and take your data (and productivity) with them. To learn more about how we can take care of your technology, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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Here Are a Few of Our Favorite Security Practices

There will never be a time that we are not committed to improving the security of businesses. To continue striving for this goal, we're dedicating this week's tip to describing some solutions that can assist in locking a business and its data down.

Access Control

One of the best ways to ensure the security of your office (and its contents) is to prevent threats from getting in at all. There are many overlapping ways to do so, ranging from a fence around the office to a magnetic door lock that requires both a password and biometric authentication. Controlling access to your resources means that you are more able to protect them from threats.

If something were to happen to these resources despite an access control solution being in place, they will keep a record of who it was that entered, and when, allowing you to narrow your investigation from the start.

Data Security Policies and Practices

Your data is valuable, whether it contains your clients' financial details, your own business' affairs, or internal documents of sufficient sensitivity. As such, you need to be sure that you are prepared to protect this data before something happens to it.

This will require a few different activities on your part, as there is a lot of ground to cover.

With the number of cyberattacks and data breaches today, many of which rely on businesses being unprepared to deflect them, you cannot afford for your business to be exposed. Furthermore, your team needs to be made aware of the many ways that an attack can sneak through, and how to properly stop them. As more and more attacks are leveraging human error to their advantage, educating your staff is paramount to your success.

It is also crucial to enforce the policies you put in place, embracing your leadership role. By holding your staff accountable to the rules they have agreed to abide by, you can potentially shore up a few vulnerabilities up front, minimizing the rest through implementing the various best practices we recommend. Reach out to us to learn more about these practices, and how we can help you to enact them.

Review Your Insurance

If you haven't reviewed your commercial property insurance in a while, take the time to do so. Based on your business' location and its environment, your data security (and your building itself) could be under threat from a variety of sources. From vandalism to theft to flooding to fire, there are plenty of circumstances that could put your business' future into question. You may want to consider boosting your coverage against certain events based on your risk of them, but you need to make sure you are insured against the risks that your business would be subject to.

Audit and Identify Risks

One of the most effective ways to improve your existing security is to establish what about it leaves you vulnerable. If you can identify the inherent risks to your business and its data, you are better able to prioritize your upgrades and optimization strategies.

A complete audit of your technology is a great way to do so, as it will shine the light on the facets of your IT that need these upgrades more than others may...
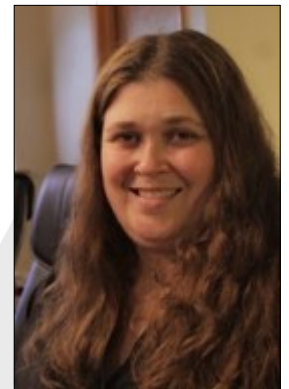
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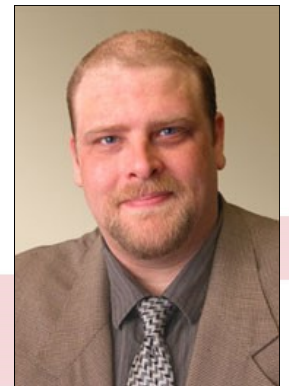
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