This Issue:

Extend Your IT Budget

Budgeting for your technology can be pretty difficult. You never really know when some problem is going to present itself and cost your business an arm and a leg. Since you can't always see what's coming, saving money when you can is important. Let's take a look at a few ways that you can save money on your business' IT.

Automate

Automation is the act of having machines handle repetitive and mundane tasks so that trained workers can focus on productivity. Setting the stage for efficient business can go a long way toward building revenue-generating...

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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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How Managed IT Benefits Professional Services

The role of professional services companies in our society dictates that they need access to information as efficiently as possible. Some of the most crucial jobs in our society would be labeled professional services. Today, we are going to go through three of those careers--lawyers, accountants, doctors --and we will go on to describe just how each of their industries benefit from the presence of managed IT services.

The first thing you should understand about managed IT services is that it is itself a professional service. Most companies depend on their information systems and we ensure that those systems remain running efficiently so that they can continue to focus on their revenue-generating tasks. Most professionals require a support staff, meaning that the professional's subordinates need to have access to solutions designed to help solve business problems and keep the business moving forward. Options that include scheduling, resource management, and data management are, in many cases, needed to facilitate effective service delivery.

When we talk about professional services, we're typically referring to lawyers, doctors of all types, accountants, engineers and architects, and financial managers. In order to do the job productively, the professional services firm depends on technology. Many of these professions are also highly regulated, creating mandatory security standards that need to be met to avoid detrimental situations.

Let's take a look at three of the most prevalent professional service types and how managed IT services can provide major benefits for them:

Celebrating Cybersecurity in Professional Services

The professional services space is filled with important information. Lawyers, accountants, doctors, and many more professionals have access to some of the very most personal information available. For this reason, they are continuously targeted by hackers. Since October is cybersecurity awareness month, we thought we would take a look at modern cybersecurity practices to see which ones were working best for professional services firms.

Costs of a Data Breach

Before we take a closer look at the professional services industry, we need to get across just how devastating a data breach can be for your business. Here are some interesting statistics from a study of 2018's data breaches conducted by IBM:

- The average cost of a data breach: $3.86 million
- The average cost per lost or stolen record as a result of a data breach: $148
- The average cost of lost business after a data breach: $4.2 million
- The average cost of notifying individuals that their data has been compromised: $740,000

I know what you're thinking: "These are enterprise businesses."

No they aren't. These are averages of all data breaches recorded in 2018.

Enhancing Mobility Can Bring Stark Benefits

For a growing business, mobility has a distinct place. It isn't all about using a phone for productivity, or having access to tools when you are out of the office, it is a philosophical decision to get the most out of your company's data. Let's look at the ways that enhanced mobility can benefit your professional services firm.

As we said before, giving your staff smartphones isn't really strategically planning to improve your business. Of course, you aren't going to make that kind of major investment if you think that you won't see a strong return, but ultimately, when people talk about the mobility of a business, they are generally talking about the way that people interact with the company when they aren't at the company. For the modern business there are two ways your business can work to actually improve mobility. They are: Operational mobility and staff mobility. Today, we will go into what each means and how they apply to the modern small business.

Operational Mobility

Say your business does business with regional companies and customers. In the past, your salespeople would be dispatched to call on people that would then call in any orders to a person that would file the work order. This was standard operating procedure for decades. Today, operations are working faster thanks to mobility. Instead of having to call in an order, customers utilize web interfaces and mobile apps to order the goods and services they need. This allows companies to cut down on their payroll costs and automate major parts of product or service delivery, by cutting out inefficiencies and mistakes.

> **"For a growing business, mobility has a distinct place."**

More than that, operational mobility allows companies working in service delivery to track the efficiency and effectiveness of the jobs being undertaken, the procurement of resources, and the billing cycle using a single easy-to-use software. These tools, typically powered by automation or the Internet of Things, cuts down on wasted time. This is not only beneficial for your operational efficiency, it also is noticed by the consumer, who wants a vendor they can rely on to give them the most value for their investment.

Staff Mobility

Staff mobility can mean one of two things, but they are both important. Staff mobility describes the ability for people to work where they are, or outside the organization. With tools such as cloud computing and Virtual Private Networks, it is possible for any worker that needs access to centralized resources while they are outside of the workplace to have complete and unimpeded access to those resources, without complicating or compromising security.

The other staff mobility is managing people who are looking to move up in the organization. Today, with the use of powerful management software, organizations can set up key performance indicators and other analytics to help management make personnel decisions with more accuracy. Business moves fast and to keep your staff engaged and focused on your company's initiatives, having a system that rewards staff for good performance is key to keeping your best employees around.

If you want to build the kind of business that keeps growing year after year because it does things the right way, ensure that mobility is a big part of your strategy going forward. Reach out to us at Directive today for more information about how to incorporate mobility into your business plan.

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How Managed IT Benefits Professional Services

Lawyers

Law firms deal with a lot of sensitive information. Up until recently, most law firms stored their files on paper in file cabinets. Some still do. The shift to the digital workplace can come with major capital expenses, which are typically not in a firm's budget. With managed IT services, there are several parts of the law firm's operations that can be improved, or at the very least, digitized and secured. Our consultants can work with legal office administrators to set up an efficient and cost-effective computing construct that centralizes file management, dissemination of files and schedules, and makes the firm work more efficiently throughout. Some of these services include:

- **Cloud infrastructure -** With cloud infrastructure a law firm can centralize their file management and gain access to that data anywhere on nearly any device. Hosted offsite or onsite, modern cloud solutions provide the flexibility and security that modern law firms look for in their file storage platform.
- **Document management -** A document management platform provides the ability to save, secure, and access any document saved in the file management system. By scanning documents that were traditionally stored in file cabinets, it cuts out the time and expense that comes with having a large clerical staff. Now the modern law firm can be agile without workforce redundancy.
- **Virtual Private Network -** The Virtual Private Network (VPN) solution provides a way to remotely access files…

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Celebrating Cybersecurity in Professional Services

(Continued from page 1)

Can your firm absorb a $4 million data leak? If not, you are like most businesses. This month we will go into how crucial network security is for the modern business; and, what practices your firm should take to keep your data and network safe in the ever-changing threat landscape.

Cybersecurity for Professional Services

Since professional services typically hold a lot of extremely sensitive data there needs to be a concerted effort to protect that information, especially in industries like healthcare and accounting where there are state and federal security regulations that need to be adhered to. To promote enterprise network security, the professional services firm can use the following security tools and strategies:

Virtual Private Networks

With the need for constantly relayed information, having a secure pathway to send and receive data is crucial for professionals that often work remotely. The Virtual Private Network (VPN) delivers just this. It is a great solution if the only Internet connection you have access to is a public Wi-Fi connection or one that is found in any hotel or conference center. The chances of having data intercepted from these connections are a lot higher than from your home or office connection. The VPN encrypts all data packets so that intercepting data becomes virtually impossible.

Comprehensive Training

Like any other business, it is important that everyone in your professional services firm or medical practice is thoroughly trained on the latest threats they would face. Most data breaches are accomplished through phishing attacks. Knowing how to properly judge an email to spot a phishing attack and what to do (or what not to do) with these messages is extremely important nowadays.

Mobile Device Management

Since the modern professional services firm and medical practice use a fair amount of mobile devices in their day-to-day business dealings, a strong mobile device management policy should be put in place. This provides network administrators the ability to control the information allowed in the network from smartphones, laptops, and tablets. With the ability to control all mobile applications and data, a mobile device management platform can work toward the ultimate goal of complete network security.

Penetration Testing

One of the best ways to understand, and address, network and host vulnerabilities is to deploy a penetration test. The penetration test goes beyond the discovery of vulnerabilities, by exploiting would-be holes in the network to ensure that your IT network and infrastructure is compromised. Once you have a good idea about what holes you have in your network, you can work diligently to fill them and build complete network security.

If your professional services firm or medical practice needs solutions to help keep your network free from threats and your business compliant with state and federal regulations, contact the IT professionals at Directive today at 607.433.2200.

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Document Management Platforms for Your Professional Service

For decades, companies have been looking for an efficient way to manage their documents. For the longest time, the best way was to fill one side of an office with filing cabinets and file the documents away. With most of the workplace now being run by computers, and with hard costs at an all-time low, companies have begun to file all their new files on computer network.

For a company that has been in business for some time, this can get a little messy. Since there are multiple files, spanning years (sometimes decades), documents can frequently get lost, and create innumerable headaches for employees, administrators, and customers alike. Directive has a solution for this. It's called Document Management.

What is Document Management?

A document management system (DMS) is the use of a centralized computer system to store and manage an organization's documents. This seems simple enough until you consider the loads of paper documents and receipts your business has on file. The DMS provides a solution that puts the information your business needs to store in one central location.

How Does it Work?

When your company commits to centralizing its document management through a DMS, the first problem that needs a solution is to get all the paper files digitized. Using either scan-to-storage or data imaging, the DMS captures a document's information and files it away in an outside storage facility. There are all different kinds of storage options, but the most prevalent nowadays is using a database in the cloud so that people can remotely access any document with the help of the DMS.

When scanned, the image of the new documents are saved as PDF files, providing users the ability to search the DMS for keywords that will bring up...

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Recycling Technology: Is It the Best Answer?

Let me ask you a simple question: how many cell phones have you had over the years? For some of us, upgrades are a yearly occurrence. For others possibly bi-yearly. Have you ever wondered where your old cell phone goes after it is out of your hands?

Recycling is an important, but commonly forgotten topic in today's digital age. Electrical devices are not something that can be mixed into your local landfill. It is a very toxic, hazardous waste. In various states across the US, it is actually illegal to dispose of electronics in the trash. So why is this?

Take a Look at What Is Inside
Inside of most electrical devices, you'll find common materials such as aluminum, copper, and sometimes gold. Aluminum is typically used to create the structure of these electrical devices. It is a very common, strong, lightweight material. Copper and gold are excellent conductors and very resistant to corrosion when housed correctly. However, contained within most electrical devices are also toxic elements and materials. Sulfur, mercury, lead, chromium, beryllium oxide, cadmium; some or all of these could be lurking in that computer monitor you're about to send off to the local landfill.

Dispose of them Safely
As you might imagine with the ever-growing amount of electrical devices, there isn't one set in stone procedure for all of this waste. There are also devices which most people do not even consider to be e-waste but should not be thrown away. When devices are sent away, typically they are crushed into as small of a space as possible. In this process, toxic chemicals and materials become exposed. Electrical devices typically need to be disassembled in order to be disposed of safely. E-waste is typically sent to

processing plants which specialize in disassembling these products. While this is a safer route -- deconstructing these products is still a dangerous task. Let's take a look at one example.

Samsung Note 7 -- A Hot Topic
In the manufacturing industry, recalls are not uncommon. Devices are typically rigorously tested before leaving the plant, but what happens when a fatal flaw appears? This is exactly what happened with the Samsung Note 7. While models were quickly pulled from shelves, the batteries that powered them still are used in a variety of products. These batteries became notorious for short circuiting, which led to them combusting or even exploding. These devices required manual disassembling.

Workers at the recycling plant were in charge of disassembling these potentially dangerous devices. They were equipped with heavy duty gloves, tongs, and even fire containment bins. What makes these devices different from the AA batteries you change every few months in your TV remote, is the fact...

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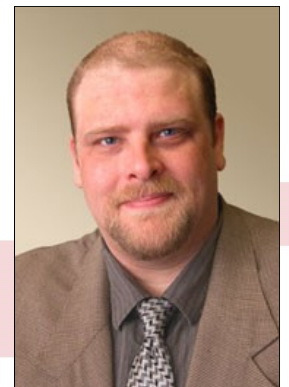
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