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Your Small Business Technology Information Source!

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Maintaining a Work-Life Balance is Crucial When Working from Home

With all that has gone on in terms of the coronavirus pandemic, it is little wonder that many businesses have suddenly changed their tune concerning the use of remote work. However, some workers are in a bit of a crisis as they try to adapt to their new work environment: suddenly, the place they would go at the end of the day to recover is the same place where work must now be done. This shift has led to a not-insignificant amount of stress and mental fatigue.

Maintain the Work-Life Balance

Before the current crisis, while large swaths of people were online, it was more often out of choice than…

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Stop Letting IT Problems Fester

Let me tell you a deep, dark secret about some of your employees... one that you might be a little surprised to hear:

They aren't reporting issues to you.

This can snowball into much larger problems. Let's discuss.

I'm being pretty general here—for a moment I'm taking off my "computer guru" hat and putting on my "business owner" hat. This problem is something that transcends IT. Problems within a business can fester because employees don't speak up. It's how serious issues arise and it's been a problem for a long time.

What kinds of serious issues?

All kinds.

Productivity issues, creep issues, HR issues—you name it. Problems can range from the small and benign to the "get a lawyer involved" emergency.

As your business grows and becomes more complex, there is more of a chance that this could happen. That's why larger organizations hire teams of human resource professionals and other dedicated staff that exist simply to keep the gears spinning smoothly.

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Taking a Look at the IT That Fuels NASA's Success

Perseverance recently paid off, with the successful touchdown of the so-named Mars rover. In light of this, let's consider a past rover launch and how a technical issue it encountered provides a case study for anyone whose business relies on technology.

The Curiosity Rover Self-Administered Brain Surgery on Mars

Bet that wasn't what you expected to read, was it?

When you're essentially throwing a few billion dollars a few million miles into space, you're going to want to have some safeguards… particularly once you consider that it's going to spend just a few months shy of a year in transit, after which it will need to safely land a piece of equipment the size of a car on the planet you've aimed it toward without breaking any of the sensitive equipment hosted onboard.

That was the situation that NASA faced when Curiosity was sent to Mars, and it was one that NASA addressed quite well.

The Curiosity rover had two brains in the form of two identical onboard computers. This meant that, should something happen to the first brain, the second one could take over. It's a good thing this was incorporated, too, as a glitch popped up on day 200 of a two-year mission that took the device offline. Basically, Curiosity stopped saving data to its memory, but continued to ping NASA with requests for instructions whenever an instruction was sent. Fortunately, NASA could switch over to the second onboard computer and Curiosity was able to, well, persevere.

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Tips to Improve Business Productivity

Productivity improves as time management improves. It seems like a simple notion, but if you aren't deliberate about managing your time, there isn't much positive movement that is going to be had in the productivity meter. This month, we thought we would help you by giving you a few strategies that will work to improve your employees' productivity.

The more you focus on productivity, the more you will have to divorce yourself from the humanity of your staff. Rest assured, when managing a corporate culture, the more that is made of productivity gains, the less engaged many of your employees may become. It is essential to your business' success that you find a balance between prioritizing productivity and promoting staff-aimed initiatives to keep your production staff happy and turnover low.

Track Time and Limit Time Taken on Tasks

You may think you are good at gauging how much time you spend on your typical tasks, but really only a small percentage are. By tracking how much time you take on your daily tasks, you may find out that you spend too much time obsessing over your email, or you may spend an exorbitant amount of time swiping through your social media accounts. Knowing how you can save time is a great first step in actually saving some.

Take Regular Breaks

You're probably thinking that taking breaks works counter to being more productive, but taking scheduled breaks can help improve focus and concentration. This is especially true if you are working on large, time-consuming tasks.

Set Attainable Deadlines

A lot of people think they work better on a deadline. It's for this reason it is suggested to set deadlines for yourself that are outside of the deadlines imposed by your organization. A manageable amount of stress is typically helpful to keep ahead of your workload.

Limit Your Exposure to Meetings

If there is a time waster out there, it is the meeting. A normal meeting will resolve the issue in the first ten minutes, or not at all. In fact, according to one study, the average office worker spends around 31 hours a month in meetings. That's far too long.

Quit Multitasking

The more the concept is studied, the more that psychologists believe that multitasking is detrimental to overall productivity when compared with having dedicated focus on one task at a time.

Perfection Isn't Attainable

One big roadblock to productivity is the idea that a task can be carried out perfectly. Sure, you can be…

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Stop Letting IT Problems Fester

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Why Don't Some Employees Report Issues?

It's going to differ based on the person, but some employees don't want to ruffle any feathers. They'll make do with what they have as long as it doesn't cost them a raise or promotion or get in their way too much.

Other employees simply don't air their grievances or feel they have the weight to get something to change.

You might feel like stopping me right here and telling me, "now wait a minute, as a business owner/manager, a pretty decent portion of my day is dealing with internal affairs!"

Same!

The squeaky wheels squeak pretty loudly. Ask yourself though—are the issues being brought up by certain individuals? Are there some employees that never mention anything? What are the chances that they never have a single problem?

That's the thing—we're all human and we all have problems eventually. What's my point?

Unreported IT Problems Can Lead to Bigger Issues Later On

Okay, not just unreported IT problems—any unreported problem could gradually snowball into something bigger, but IT problems can affect your entire organization if left unchecked.

Here's a perfect example, and it's actually the reason why I'm writing this blog post:

(I've changed the person's name to protect all those involved)

Mary knows that when she needs IT to help her with her computer, they usually remote in, take over her screen, and check on things or walk her through something. She recognizes the notification that pops up on the screen when this happens.

This is why one morning, she didn't really question it when someone logged into her computer while she was working. She figured it was IT or an admin doing something. After all, the remote notification only popped up for a few seconds.

It happened two or three times throughout the morning. That notification came up that someone was…

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Taking a Look at the IT That Fuels NASA's Success

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In fact, despite the initial mission being to collect data for two years, Curiosity has been operational and functioning for about eight years… *and there's more.*

Unsurprisingly, the replacement computer eventually began to degrade and experience some of the same problems that afflicted the first. Fortunately, NASA was still able to access the first remotely and perform the required diagnostics to identify and resolve the issue. In exchange for a small amount of memory that had become corrupted, the original computer was able to be restored and could resume control of Curiosity.

All thanks to the redundancies that NASA had put in place.

How Could Your Business Benefit from Redundancy?

We have gone on the record to say that your data needs to be backed up, and in that way, redundant. Any data and files you have should always be stored on at least two separate devices—ideally, one centralized location with a secondary device as a backup, along with a cloud-based copy for true redundancy. That way, you likely won't lose your data even if your internal IT is completely destroyed.

Furthermore, having an extra workstation or two kept onsite can help preserve productivity. If something were to take one of yours out of commission, instead of waiting for a replacement or for Windows to be reinstalled, a spare computer with the basic software and settings preinstalled can get that team member back in business that much faster.

In some cases, a redundant internet connection can benefit a business. With so many processes and procedures now facilitated by an internet connection, keeping a backup connection in case of emergencies to switch over to automatically can help prevent service interruptions.

Whether you're trying to explore our terrestrial neighbor or operate a small to medium-sized business, redundancy can be a huge asset. Learn how else the right technology preparations can benefit your business by giving us a call today at 607.433.2200.

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Not All Industries Use the Same Solutions

Professional services include some of the oldest professions in the world, and some of the newest. Regardless of what kind of professional services business you run, it is hard to continue to meet your customer's needs without incorporating some technological changes. Furthermore, there are new innovations that can help your business thrive. Let's examine some of this technology to see if it could benefit your business.

Professional Services Pen & Paper Approach

Many professionals that have been working for decades were taught their craft by people that didn't have the technology that we have today, and therefore, often dismiss it. There is something to be said about understanding the fundamental reasons certain tasks need to be done, but the truth is that a large chunk of work, some say upwards of one-third of the time spent by a professional services business, is doing mundane, repetitive tasks. If you have an analog strategy it may be time to consider deploying some technology that can help you streamline your business.

Professional Services Technology

There are certain solutions that are created specifically for professional services companies. In professional services, there's that extra responsibility to be the authority that you were hired to be. As a result, today's professional services firms are really looking to use cutting-edge technology. Like any other business, professional services firms need reliable hardware, software tools that promote productivity, and the security solutions needed to protect their network and data. Here are a few technologies that can help.

Document Management

When you think of an office worker…

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Cybersecurity Tips

Your Incident Response Plan – Part 1: Preparation

When creating an incident response plan, the detection and response stages are a critical component. It is important to know how to detect when an incident occurs and the appropriate response to help mitigate the damage.

Learn how you can prepare for an incident before it happens:
https://dti.io/incidentprep

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Marketing Ideas & Tips for Your SMB

Marketing for Those with Little Time

Marketing is an integral part of the business process. If your business isn't allocating any time to marketing, then your business isn't growing. However, if you allocate too much time to marketing, you take time away from other aspects of the business process. You can escape this trap by utilizing your time marketing effectively and efficiently.

Here are 4 ways you can optimize your marketing to save time!

1. **Look for Opportunities to Incorporate Automation** Automation is a great way to streamline your business' marketing efforts. There are many tools in the market that automate the marketing process. Some are offering to create custom landing pages, while others provide an automated campaign building system.

2. **Market to Your Audience, and Only Your Audience** When marketing to your audience it is important that you cater your marketing content to that specific targeted audience. Marketing a ton of different content to your audience is not effective, and a huge waste of time and money. To save time and money you should avoid a general marketing plan and specify your marketing so that your audience actually engages with the content that you are putting out.

3. **Consistency is Good, but Efficiency is Better** You may think that you should be putting out content at all times, but that's not really the case. Yes, consistency is important, but too much content is a waste. If you optimize the times you send out content to the times in which your audience is most active you increase the chances that your content is actually being seen and engaged with. To effectively and efficiently use your time, the content output should correspond with your audience's active timeframe.

4. **Know Your Limits!** Our last method to effectively use your time marketing is to know your company's limits. It is not necessary to perform every form of marketing available. It is better to do away with options that don't fit your company and focus on marketing channels that actually work for your company.

Quick Tip: Engage Your Audience!

Whenever you receive feedback from your audience, make sure to respond and engage with your audience personally. Checking how your audience feels about your content will keep you informed on the content that your audience feels favorably of, allowing you to weed out the less appreciated content, and thus saving you time in the future!

Get Started

We hope that you try one of our tips and get started with saving your business time when marketing. Make sure to subscribe to our blog so you don't miss out on any more great tips!

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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.

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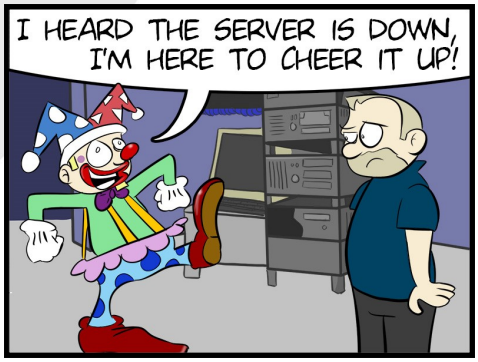
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