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**Are You Having Productivity Problems? Here are Some Possible Solutions**



Productivity is the core measurement of your business' ability to complete the work needed to bring in revenue and to keep that work up consistently. Amazingly enough, most businesses experience similar productivity problems over time. What can a small and medium-sized business do to right the ship when productivity is down? Today we explore some ways to do just that.

**Keep Your Employees Accountable**

The number one cause of a lack of productivity usually comes from employees not carrying their weight. One of the major problems small businesses have is finding ways to keep their people accountable. There can be times during the year when productivity rises and falls due to weather, demand, or simply because managerial oversight isn't as into managing it. This can be a major problem for businesses that depend on getting their money's worth from their human resources. Here are a few ways you can curtail productivity slippage through accountability:

**Manage but Don't Micromanage**

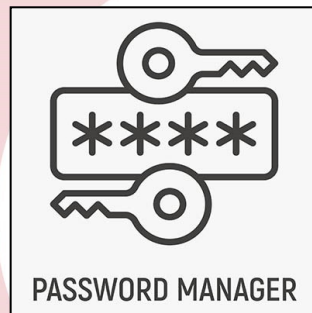
It's one thing to take your team out for lunch, but if managers are friendly with their subordinates outside of work, sometimes those casual relationships can hurt work dynamics. On the other hand, if you hire a taskmaster to oversee a team of creative people, you may often find that the staff just gets bogged down with too much minutiae to actually do their jobs effectively; not to mention the effect that can have on employee morale. Ensuring managers are capable of leading is important. Accountability is about letting your staff prove that they can do the right thing, so managers that develop respect and trust is essential to optimal productivity.

**Clearly Define Expectations**

By setting expectations up front, and making those benchmarks clear to your staff, you can

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**Using a Password Manager Can Keep Your Accounts Secure**



It's true that if they are created to be secure, passwords are hard to remember. There is also no denying, however, how important it is to use different ones for each account, all sufficiently complex. If you are doing things right, you probably have too many passwords to remember, which is why a password management system is a solid tool. This month, let's take a look at the password management system.

**What is a Password Management System?**

A password manager is effectively a program that stores and protects your passwords. It's that simple. The average person has to remember over 175 separate passwords, and sometimes you either don't use the account connected with that password enough to warrant remembering it, or your passwords are just too complicated to remember. Either way, having a secure database of all your passwords is a good resource to have.

**What Should I Look For From a Password Manager?**

Since they are pretty straightforward programs and your needs in this matter are pretty

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**How to Combat the Digital Divide for Students at Home**



As the country continues to embrace remote work and distance learning, the digital divide has become more apparent. In fact, according to a Newsday article, New York State ranks 26th in the nation in regards to the percentage of households with school children not having broadband access, any internet access, or computers. The digital divide has been ongoing for decades, but it has taken the pandemic to finally put the focus on it and bring it top of mind...



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## Ransomware Is Tricky, So Strategize Against It



What if I told you that 92 percent of all organizations that are hit by a ransomware attack and agree to settle with

the scammers, don't ever see their data again? You'd probably say that you would never, ever pay and those that do, don't make sense. Most people keep that stance until their choices are to pay for the data in the hopes of getting it back, or lose it completely. Let's unpack ransomware and the strategy that hackers most utilize to deploy it: Phishing.

### How Ransomware Works

Imagine for a second the surprise you would have if you tried to log into your computer and you were presented with a message telling you that your files have been encrypted and that you need to pay a sum in Bitcoin before the clock runs out or you will lose those files forever. Then you noticed the clock ticking

down. Would you panic? You probably would.

That is ransomware, an ugly malware that could cost your business more than just money.

### How Phishing Works

Phishing attacks appear to be legitimate emails that come in from legitimate sources, such as your bank, your vendors, or even from within your own company. These emails try to trick the user into clicking a link or downloading an attachment. They tend to use extreme levels of urgency to get the user to do so without thinking first. The truth is, most professional organizations that you depend on will never want you using email to do anything other than verify your identity. That means that the emails you get that say you have to act now to avoid going to jail for owing money could be as fraudulent as they seem.

These are phishing messages. They can come in through email, social media, or via SMS or phone call. Unfortunately for

the modern user, they are constant, often sophisticated, and can be especially problematic if handled improperly.

### Phishing + Ransomware = Major Trouble

Since many of today's hackers can't just hack their way into an account, they use social engineering tactics to do so. If they are able to expose their fraudulent message to someone that is less than vigilant, they may gain access to a computer (or worse yet, a computing network), and then deploy their ransomware payload. Not a good situation for any individual; and, a major problem for any business. This is why it is essential that your staff understands phishing tactics and can spot fraudulent emails and messages when they come in. Let's take a look at some telltale signs that you are dealing with a phishing message...



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## Are You Having Productivity Problems? Here are Some Possible Solutions

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set up an environment where success is clearly defined. You may be surprised just how much productivity is wasted with operational redundancy, unwanted inefficiencies, and other personnel issues caused by employee confusion or a lack of leadership. Let your people know what's expected of them upfront and you'll see more productivity.

### Give Them the Tools to Succeed

If you are going to successfully hold your workers accountable, you need to put them in a position to achieve the goals you set out for them. Part of that is to provide the necessary resources. More productivity is lost trying to piece-meal together something with tools that aren't there. Chances are the loss in productivity costs more than anything they need to sufficiently meet the expectations of your customers.

### Fear is Not Your Friend

You may think that holding people to unreasonably high standards is the same as holding them accountable. You may think that the more stress you put your people through, that you will eventually find people that meet that standard consistently. If that is your strategy, your business will suffer because you will be perpetually replacing people (at cost to your company). Getting people to want to come to work every day, especially in the most high-stress environments, doesn't happen through fear, it happens through leadership.

### Positivity = Productivity

To that last point, people are going to change jobs; that's the way of things nowadays. But businesses that create a good working environment can bet that their employees will be more productive than in what would be called a

"toxic" environment. According to a study conducted by The American Psychological Association, nearly \$500 billion is lost from the United States economy each year as a result of workplace stress. Jobs have deadlines, they have expectations, and people do those jobs because of compensation they get for doing higher risk jobs, but companies that can keep things positive while also keeping the foot on the proverbial throttle will see better productivity figures and less flameouts and turnover.

Turnover alone is extraordinarily expensive for businesses. It is regularly estimated that to replace an employee, companies can spend between a half to two times one employee's annual...



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## Using a Password Manager Can Keep Your Accounts Secure

(Continued from page 1)

pragmatic, there are only a couple of variables you need to consider. They include:

### Security

While this may seem obvious, not all of your password management options will offer the same protections or do things the same way. Standalone password managers are inherently more secure than those tied to your browser, for instance.

These separate solutions usually have additional features to assist in keeping your passwords secure. A solid password manager will rate your passwords and help you manage your credentials so that you have the best chance to stay secure. All of them will include two-factor authentication, and some will

even notify you to update your passwords regularly.

A password manager should feature security options such as built-in encryption, role-based access, and secure cloud storage.

### Where to Store this Information?

Another important variable you should consider is the location you plan to store your passwords in. Does the password manager you've chosen to use save your passwords to the cloud, or are they kept natively on the device? Not that it makes a major difference, but hosting this information on your own hardware requires that you have a redundancy plan in place so all of your credentials aren't completely lost in the event of a hardware failure.

### Usability

These programs are pretty much the same, so usability is the last thing you should worry about, but the simpler the better. The password manager should provide easy access for verified users and make it impossible to access for anyone else. It should give you a relatively simple process to change your global password and edit saved accounts, but beyond that, it only needs to do what it was designed for, to secure your access credentials.

If you would like to talk to one of our IT professionals about password management, reach out to Directive at 607.433.2200.



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## What are the Most Useful Technologies for New Companies?



When someone decides to join the ranks of the entrepreneur, it can be very intimidating regardless of what type of

business they are starting. Technology can help, but finding the right technology isn't always as easy as acquiring a server. This month we thought we would outline three technologies that every new business should consider.

We wanted to qualify something before we start getting into the technology new businesses can use. Every business is going to need some type of computer, whether it be mobile devices, thin clients, or workstations to do their computing on. Additionally, they are going to need a high-speed Internet connection. We won't really touch on these, but these technologies are more necessary than optional.

**Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)**  
Every single new company needs a

telephone system. Instead of adding another vendor and getting an overpriced system through the phone company, consider a hosted VoIP platform. VoIP is an Internet-based phone system so wherever you have a computer, you have a phone. VoIP eliminates the need to do business with the phone system and provides these three great benefits:

- Easy setup - Since a hosted VoIP solution is billed monthly by the user and runs through the Internet, setting up new accounts or removing accounts is a breeze.
- Feature Rich Communication Tools - Not only do you get a reliable business phone solution, it also can provide you with video conferencing, instant messaging, and a whole host of other tools designed to help your business manage its communications.
- Integrated Mobile Solution - Every VoIP account can turn an individual's smartphone into a work phone through the use of an app...



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## Cybersecurity Tips

### Vacation Scams

Whenever you are ready to begin planning your next vacation, it is important to be mindful of some of the common vacation scams that dupe consumers each year.

Learn more about these vacation scams:  
<https://dti.io/vacationscams>

### Get our Cybersecurity Tips to your inbox weekly!

Each week we send an email with **FREE** cybersecurity tips to help you to avoid a data breach. These tips can be used to educate yourself and your employees on security best practices.

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## Marketing Ideas & Tips for Your SMB

### Three Reasons Why SEO Doesn't Work For Your Business



Many businesses believe that, as long as they have some keywords, they have an SEO plan in place. Moreover, they feel that once they have an SEO plan in place, they are done and if they don't rise in placement then SEO doesn't work.

The reality is SEO isn't a strategy, it's a tactic, and SEO requires the support of other tactics in order to be successful. Here are three reasons why SEO might not be working for your business.

#### 1. You Didn't Develop Your Local Brand

All search is local and Google treats search queries as if

they end with "...near me". This is why it is critical you develop your business' local presence organically and with authenticity. Older SEO tactics consisted of merely adding your location to your titles or the more intensive black hat...



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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.

### Employee Spotlight: Michael Flatley



We have quite a few stellar people working here at Directive, so it's only natural that we like to brag every once in a while and let you get to know them too. This time around, we wanted to help you get to know Michael Flatley, one of the Solutions Integrators on our IT team.

up to management, which was a new experience for him despite working in several fields before.

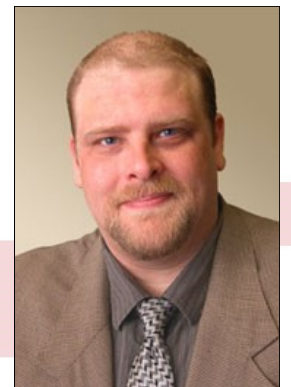
Taking tips from the likes of Linus Tech Tips on YouTube and our very own blog, he enjoys the fact that his job allows him to show people that some things can indeed be fixed. Michael also gets a kick out of the comparison between a client's IT before a project is carried out, and the results that come after that project's conclusion.

When not fixing the "unfixable" for our clients, Michael can be found outdoors for much of his time. Chances are, he's camping or out on a hiking trip, and when he isn't doing that, he's likely playing his guitar and/or drums. Someday, Michael

wants to expand his travels, exploring other cities and countries around the world.

He also plans to expand his collection of baseball caps by acquiring a souvenir after watching a game at each of the Major League stadiums in the country. As of right now, he has approximately 25 hats from the New York Yankees' history alone, amongst many highlighting other teams.

In the meantime, we're happy to have Michael here on our team, going to bat for our clients! Thank you for all you do for us, Michael, by assisting our clients with their technology. Make sure you eat some peanuts and Cracker Jacks for us when you go to all those games someday!



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