TECHMinutes

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Your Small Business Technology Information Source!

How Your Employees' Social Media Behavior Could Impact Your Business

Social media: love it or hate it, it has transitioned from a casual pastime to a business necessity in the relatively few years it has been around. However, as beneficial as it can be to your business' efforts, it can easily have the opposite effect if it isn't used appropriately.

Let's explore this increasingly complicated topic, including what needs to be done to ensure that your...

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HAPPY Holidays

The Global Chip Shortage is Currently Hindering Many Industries

Using microprocessor-based technology is now a way of life for a majority of people, and with that a massive demand is created for these components. Unfortunately, demand—as well as the COVID-19 pandemic—has caused difficulties for many organizations' supply chains, including microprocessors. Today, we will go through the microchip shortage, how it affects consumers and when experts project that it will subside.

First, What is a "Chip"?

When people talk about the "chip" shortage, what they mean is that they can't acquire microchips fast enough to keep up with demand for their products. When they talk about microchips, what they mean is a semiconductor or integrated circuit usually written into a conducting material (typically silicon). These chips make up most of the brains of your modern computing devices, as well as cars, electronics, and millions of other products.

Understand that while these semiconductors fuel a lot of the computers that people use, they also are a major component used in every computerized system. You can find scores

3 Steps You Need to Take to Keep Your IT Running Effectively

Your IT may not be the simplest part of your business but it doesn't have to be a major problem. If you can get just a couple things right, the rest of the work can be made much easier. At the end of the day, three of the most important components of your internal IT infrastructure will be how you maintain it, how you secure it, and how you back it up.

Maintaining and Managing Your Infrastructure

You don't have an IT infrastructure if it's breaking down all the time. IT is not a "set it and forget it" part of your business; it must constantly be monitored and maintained to ensure that it is operating in an efficient manner. Problems like network bottlenecks and hardware failure can get in the way of you and your staff working at optimal productivity, so you need to have policies in place to periodically review your infrastructure and resolve problems that occur. Doing so will keep them from becoming bigger ones in the future.

This might sound like a daunting task for a small business, but we assure you that it's easier than ever to remotely monitor your systems for discrepancies and other issues. In fact, this is something that SMBs often outsource to managed services providers like Directive,

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"Quality is more important than quantity. One home run is much better than two doubles." - Steve Jobs

PAGE 2

Why Managed IT Services Just Makes Sense

Technology is what keeps the modern business running, be it something as simple as a word processor or as complex as a server unit. Unfortunately, many businesses struggle with technology procurement, management, and maintenance. Let's take a look at why this is the case and what you can do to help this process along, chiefly by implementing managed services.

The Alternatives Don't Work

The primary reason why managed services work so well is because the alternatives are inferior, at least for small businesses. Many SMBs don't have the same resources as large enterprises and, therefore, cannot effectively manage the solutions that might allow for better management or operations without a hefty investment. Furthermore, hiring professionals can also be expensive and time-consuming, especially for important positions like network administrators or Chief Information

Officers. This combination of a lack of technology leadership and lack of technology maintenance or management creates the perfect storm where technology can start to hinder operations.

By the time technology starts to impact operations, it's a slippery slope. When issues become larger problems, so too does the price tag of doing something about it. Thankfully, managed services give SMBs an out by ensuring that they have access to the same tools and resources that help larger enterprises be successful at a fraction of the cost.

Capital Expenses Can Add Up

Enterprises have the resources to throw at problems up-front, also known as capital expenses, whereas small businesses often do not have the budget to accommodate these costs. When server units or networking components fail, or any plethora of other problems occur all at the same time, this can create problems for SMBs. Managed IT services take capital expenses and transform them into operational expenses, a concept which is much more accommodating for limited budgets.

Minimal Downtime

When you replace technology, you are suffering a financial loss, but you are also paying for the time spent paying the employees who depend on that technology to just sit around and wait for you to offer a solution. This lack of productivity and downtime is remedied by managed services, as your technology stays operational and you will be more likely to have a contingency plan in place.

Hands-Off Maintenance

When you trust a managed IT service provider with the keys to your business technology, you free yourself from the burden of caring for it. You can then invest that time and energy into other endeavors, like implementing new solutions or improving operations. It's amazing what you can fulfill when you don't have to worry about your technology.

To learn more about managed IT services, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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The Global Chip Shortage is Currently Hindering Many Industries

of them in your living room alone. The modern world depends on these little semiconductors, so a shortage wreaks havoc with the economy.

Why Don't They Just Boost Production?

When there is a massive demand for certain products, companies will alter their production in response, but unlike many other products, microchips have to be created in highly-controlled environments. Things such as variances in temperature, the presence of static electricity, or even a speck of dust can completely ruin fabricated semiconductors. Since these sterile conditions cost billions of dollars to set up, it's not as easy as hiring a few new workers and opening new manufacturing plants. As it is, these chip manufacturing "fabs"

are running at full capacity; and, even if manufacturers do spend an enormous amount of capital to build new chips, they take months and years to set up and run.

There is more to the chip shortage than just not enough manufacturing power. Global supply chains have been all over the place since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some industries made decisions with the idea that consumer spending would be stymied by the pandemic. This, of course, turned out to be a non-issue, and it had changed the way businesses operate. As they build up their online presence, consumers' demand for semiconductors increases. Ironically, the new digital economy is actually working against them in this way.

Of course, there were other considerations that have led to a worldwide shortage of microchips. The innovation of 5G-capable smartphones didn't help matters much either as they use many more chips than previous generations of handsets. As 5G is integrated more and more, more chips are needed. Other factors include political reasons as one of the largest chip manufacturers, SMIC, is partially owned by the Chinese government, and was basically blacklisted by the U.S. government because of that relationship. Also, the growing cryptocurrency market, fueled by warehouses of computers that mine for the thousands of different cryptocurrencies around the clock, chew through…

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3 Steps You Need to Take to Keep Your IT Running Effectively

(Continued from page 1)
especially due to some SMBs not having the staff to dedicate to this important task.

Securing Your Infrastructure

You cannot adequately keep your business running if you fail to protect it from external and internal threats. You must establish solutions and policies that utilize not only powerful security tools, but also established industry best practices. We recommend a Unified Threat Management tool for a great catch-all network security solution, augmented further by options like multi-factor authentication, access controls, and a Bring Your Own Device policy.

Naturally, this also involves getting your staff on board. It's one thing for the boss to have the proper mindset about security, but it's a whole other case for the average office worker. Be sure to show them how network security bleeds into everything they do for your business, too. They will be more likely to buy in then.

Backing Up Your Infrastructure

Finally, all businesses must have a plan in place for when the worst-case scenario strikes. It doesn't matter whether it is a natural disaster, hacking incident, or something as simple as user error. There are moments when you will have to restore a backup, and you will be glad to have one available. Data backup and disaster recovery are two components of a larger solution called a business continuity plan, which is also something that your organization should strive to implement.

Directive can help your business implement any of the above technology solutions, and more. Together we can help your organization overcome its internal IT challenges. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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The 8 Things Every Business Continuity Plan Needs

When considering a continuity plan for your business, you need to consider some scenarios that may not ever happen. This is called risk management and it is the basis of keeping your business up and running regardless of the situations that it encounters. This month, we thought we would outline some of the variables that need to be addressed when creating a comprehensive business continuity plan.

Every business continuity plan should include:

- **A Threat Matrix -** Identifying the threats your business might face has to be the first thing that you do. They should include small issues that could just suspend operations briefly and major disasters that would present substantial disruption. The threat matrix should list threats and the response to each.
- **Critical Processes -** Every business has several critical processes that if they were interrupted, work is made impossible. Any critical processes

that need to be understood need to be in the continuity plan.

- **Command Chain -** Every business has a hierarchy of authority that is crucial to the continuation of the business in times of crisis.
- **Employee Safety and Evacuation Plan -** In order for business to continue, there has to be someone there to continue it. A business continuity plan needs to have a dedicated section that addresses how and when to evacuate employees to ensure their safety in a dangerous situation.
- **Communication Plan and Contact Information -** Depending on the situation you encounter; your business may need to keep people in the know. Having a plan in place that is designed to ensure that your partners, your clients, and your employees are up to date with all the relevant information is essential.
- **Backup Processes -** In order for your business continuity preparations to be complete, you should have a well maintained and current backup stored offsite. Ensuring that your backup and disaster recovery processes are tested and ready is a…

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Tax Scams

Tax scams have been a staple for cybercriminals for years, but 2021 is presenting some new threats that are making this tax season very dangerous.

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Marketing Ideas & Tips for Your SMB

Using "The Pull" Strategy To Generate Leads for Your Business

When we discuss traditional marketing strategies, we usually refer to any marketing that pushes services or products to consumers. This push is accomplished by interrupting what a person is doing to get their attention. For example, a commercial interrupts the show you're watching, or an article has an ad in the middle of the content, forcing you to read the ad. The goal of these interruptions is to continually push a product in front of you (also known as the rule of seven).

While there are decades of data showing outbound marketing to be effective (there's a reason why businesses still pay millions to have their ad run on the Super Bowl), there has been considerable resistance against push marketing. Many of the targets find them to be intrusive and often unrelated to their immediate needs. Moreover, modern technology such as ad blockers, VPNs, and the ability to pay to opt-out of receiving advertising, reduces the opportunity for advertisers to have the type of captive audience needed for push...

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Employee Spotlight: Jared Myers

Here at Directive, we have a motley crew of talented people working together, ensuring that our clients get the services they've come to us for. We like to highlight one person from this bunch every so often so you can get to know them like we've had the privilege to. This time around, we're looking at our Art Director, Jared Myers.

Raised in Saratoga Springs and Valatie, NY, Jared studied at SUNY Oneonta, receiving a Bachelors of Arts in Computer Art. After his studies, he worked for another area business before coming across an advertisement for an available position here at Directive. Leaving his job, it was only three days before he was hired... and ten years later, we still have the pleasure of his company. That's probably because Jared enjoys making and designing things, something his job allows him to do every day.

When he's not working hard for us, Jared partakes in a variety of hobbies, from sports cars and track events to PC gaming to fishing. He's also a proud foodie, undaunted by his mixed track record with some recipes. One of our resident TV and movie junkies, his watchlist numbers in the thousands. Jared shares his home with his baby boy, an American bulldog/pit mix named Enzo.

Someday, Jared wants to travel... not surprising, considering his personal mantra—life before death, strength before weakness, journey before destination—and his dislike of cold weather. In addition to visiting historical sites, he would like to learn to fly a plane and someday, visit space. However, we're happy to have him around as long as his feet are on solid ground!

Thank you, Jared, for being our resident jack of all trades and a true pleasure to have in the office!

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THE STATUS LIGHT IS STILL BLINKING... DO I NEED TO REBOOT IT?