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3 Ways Remote Technology Benefits Both Your Employees and Your Business

In an age when working remotely is a commonly accepted practice, many organizations are still skeptical about letting their employees work from home. They think that doing so will disengage them from the workplace environment and that they'll be too distracted to perform their work to specification. Yet, businesses that aren't flexible on this issue could be missing out on several significant cost savings.

Your Energy Costs Decrease

When you have an office full of workers, there are a lot of expenses that are used to help them perform their duties. Depending on the environment, you have to either heat the office in the winter, or air condition the office in the summer. All of your organization's workstations consume a significant amount of electricity, which can eat up a lot of your assets. That's not to mention lighting, the purchase of snacks, coffee, and other boons that employees might benefit from while at the office.

If you allow your employees to work from home, that's energy that's not used. Energy that's not used leads to more savings on your part, and your organization's bottom line will increase as a result. You'll see yourself spending less money on energy and earning more cash.

The Cloud Makes Everything Easier, But Only If it's Managed Properly

As an increasingly more important component of the modern technology infrastructure, the cloud can be a daunting new addition to any organization's business strategy. Yet, many businesses still haven't made the jump to the cloud, perhaps out of fear that their use of the cloud won't significantly benefit them.

Basically, you can have an idea of how successful a cloud computing endeavor will be for your business, but you won't know for sure until you take a risk and try it out for yourself. Many of the world's top services, like Amazon and Netflix, have achieved mammoth success thanks to the advent of cloud computing. Your business can achieve a similar level of success in your chosen industry, but only if you're willing to take new and daring risks with how you use your cloud solution.

That being said, you should still approach the cloud level-headedly by doing your research and understanding what exactly you want to achieve with your cloud solution. We recommend that you thoroughly consider each of these three unique cloud computing options.

The Public Cloud

Many SMBs are turning to the public cloud for their cloud computing needs. This is usually because the public cloud has the functionality that they need, without requiring the in-depth maintenance and management that an in-house computing system would require. This is the primary benefit of the public cloud; you get all of the base functionality of a

"I do not fear computers. I fear the lack of them."
- Isaac Asimov

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Your Network Needs a Virtual Bouncer to Keep Threats Out

Firewalls are one of the most common IT security measures on the market today, and for good reason. They act as the first line of defense against any incoming threats, and without them, your organization would have to deal with one data breach after another. Of course, that's only if you're taking advantage of a proper firewall; if not, you should seriously consider doing so as soon as possible.

In general, cyber security is an important asset to invest in, especially with the number of data breaches growing by the day. 2015 saw so many high-profile hacks that it feels like nobody is safe.

When major institutions like government offices and healthcare providers have trouble keeping hackers at bay, the unanimous assumption is that hacks can, and will, happen, regardless of what industry you're in and how well you're protected. It's becoming painfully obvious that businesses that fail to utilize any security solutions are at tremendous risk of data compromisation.

Well, it turns out that any business can optimize its cybersecurity measures, and it begins by integrating a simple firewall. Here's how a firewall can benefit your organization.

The Benefits
Firewalls are absolutely critical for any business that wants to maximize its cyber security. Firewalls have the ability to detect unwanted network activity, refuse access to your network, and send notifications to a system administrator. Firewalls essentially monitor data that flows both into and out of your network, scanning for threats and preventing them from entering your network. If any threats are detected on the inside, the firewall can prevent them from exiting the network, allowing for efficient elimination. The idea is that the firewall should be able to identify potential threats and inform the proper administrators before excessive amounts of damage accrue.

There's no reason for a business to not be using a firewall. As the most basic of cyber security measures, it's easily configurable to suit the needs of your…

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3 Ways Remote Technology Benefits Both Your Employees and Your Business

(Continued from page 1)
Your Operational Costs Decrease
When you hire new employees, unless you have workstations, laptops, and other devices on hand for them to use for their jobs, you'll have to purchase new hardware for them. You don't need us to tell you that new hardware is expensive, same goes for software solutions. Outfitting your employees with the tools they need, while your responsibility, can drain your budget.

If your employees are using their own technology to handle their day-to-day tasks, you won't run into this problem. They'll be taking advantage of their own technology, which adds a whole new level of depth to your organization's budget. Granted, you'll want to be using a mobile device management solution and a BYOD policy to ensure that these devices aren't compromising your network security, but equipping your employees with these solutions is simple enough to warrant consideration; especially if you have an outsourced IT department that's willing to help your organization get this technology set up.

Your Employees Will Be Happier
Employees that are capable of doing their jobs from the comfort of their own homes might like working for you, but the effort and time it takes to get ready for work and drive to the office can take its toll over time. Plus, if their job is especially repetitive and doesn't require much oversight, they can quickly become discouraged about their situation. It's a known fact that happier employees are more likely to stick around for long periods of time.

Letting your team members work from home has been known to improve both morale and work ethic. At home, there are less distractions for employees, especially if your office is open and there are several people who work in the same room. Your employees will appreciate the peace and quiet of their own home, and will be able to concentrate better on the task at hand. Furthermore, your employees will be more likely to do something that they've been trying to do for years; save some money. Since they don't have to spend it on gas to get to the office, they'll have some extra cash in their wallet, which is enough to make anyone smile.

If you decide to let your employees work from home (and you should), you'll want to make sure that they're equipped with all of the technology and access to critical information and data that they need in order to perform their daily duties. There are several technologies that aid in this endeavor, like a virtual private network (VPN), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), cloud-based data storage, and virtualization services. Most important of all is the mobile device management solution, which helps to keep employee devices and applications from accessing information that's sensitive to their user role.

If you want to equip your business's employees with the technology required to work remotely, give Directive a call at 607.433.2200.

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The Cloud Makes Everything Easier, But Only If it's Managed Properly

(Continued from page 1)

cloud solution, without all of the hassle of managing it. Where it falls short, though, is the lack of additional security features that the private cloud offers.

Simply put, public cloud solutions are reliable, but by definition, pretty cookie-cutter. They are designed to support lots of customers and get a particular type of job done. The customers don't have control over where specifically their data is hosted, what hardware it runs on, or how it's protected.

The Private Cloud

Business owners who turn to the private cloud tend to be more controlling and security-minded than those who are fine with the public cloud. A private cloud

tends to be hosted in-house on company hardware or managed externally at a secure data center. Private clouds offer more control over the configurations and setup of your cloud infrastructure, making it ideal for those who want to know exactly what's going on with their cloud solution, and why. Plus, private clouds can be combined with additional security measures, like a Unified Threat Management (UTM) solution to optimize data protection, where the public cloud controls all of these things for you.

The Hybrid Cloud

Businesses that want the best of both the private cloud and public cloud have the option to use a hybrid cloud solution. These are designed with the ease-of-use of the public cloud in mind, but

also allow for enhanced security management similar to the private cloud. It's ideal for organizations that need a little bit of both, without compromising on functionality.

If you're unsure about how your business should take advantage of the cloud, Directive is happy to assist you. We can identify major pain points that can be addressed by cloud computing, and assist with the planning and implementation of your chosen hosted solution. To learn more, give us a call at 607.433.2200.

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How to Leverage the Benefits of Mobile Devices While Negating the Associated Risks

Mobile devices have taken the workplace environment by storm, and you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who doesn't use their smartphone, laptop, or other device for work purposes. This trend, called Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), helps employers spend less on new solutions, but it also presents a risk that needs to be managed: the Internet of Things (IoT).

According to a study by Tech Pro Research, 59 percent of businesses allow the use of personal devices in the workplace, while only a modest 28 percent were adamant enough to claim that they have no plans of allowing personal devices in the office. Only 13 percent plan on changing their policy over the next year.

We think it's safe to say that BYOD will continue to grow more popular as time goes on, but the businesses that are vehemently opposing BYOD have valid reasons to be concerned about employ-

ee devices. Furthermore, the use of Internet of Things devices, which are known for sharing data amongst each other, is increasing in popularity.

Even if a significant portion of business owners have no plans to integrate the IoT with their business, they might not have a choice if employees bring them into the office unknowingly. Therefore, it should be a top priority to protect your business's network from the potential harm these devices can cause. This is why it's important to manage the benefits of BYOD alongside the risks associated with the IoT.

Benefits of BYOD

The Bring Your Own Device revolution provides several great benefits for businesses that want to improve the quality of their operations.

- **Lowered equipment costs:** If you're allowing employees to bring in their own technology for work purposes, that's less money that your business has to spend on outfitting your workers with technology needed for their jobs.
- **Greater workforce mobility and**

satisfaction: If employees are using their own devices for work purposes, it means that they can take their work home with them if need be. They can put in more hours and make more time for other initiatives that create revenue opportunities for your business. Furthermore, employees using their own devices are happier, simply because they're using familiar technology instead of company-provided workstations.

- **Less reliance on IT for maintenance:** This benefit might not seem like much, but think of it this way; if employees are able to use their own devices, they're more likely to take proper care of them. This means updating them with patches and security updates, as well as keeping them in working condition, and it allows IT to spend less time resolving issues with employee devices, and more time innovating and improving operations...

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Can't Name that Song? These 3 Apps Can!

Listening to the radio is a great way to pass the time during your morning commute, especially if you don't have a CD player or an auxiliary port in your vehicle. While listening to the radio, you might hear a catchy tune that you want to look up later. Now, thanks to various smartphone apps and technology solutions, you can do it while listening to the song. Here are three ways that you can use your smartphone to identify songs you hear while out and about.

Shazam

If you're looking for a free way to identify music using your smartphone, look no further than Shazam. According to theGoogle Play store, it's used by more than 100 million people every month to identify music and lyrics. Shazam has a simple and easy-to-use interface. After you download the app, all you have to do is tap the on-screen button and the phone will listen for something to identify. Shazam will then display information on whatever it identifies, including music or tv shows, and you can buy the song or episode right from the app. Shazam is currently available for Android, iOS, and Windows Phone, making it a viable option for most, if not all smartphone users. You can even purchase the app for use on your Mac or Windows PC, through both the Apple store and Windows store respectively. Though there are advertisements on the free version, you can update to Shazam Encore for $5.59 to remove them if you really want to.

TrackID

TrackID, released by Sony, is another great free option that functions in much the same way that Shazam does. The main difference, though, is that TrackID displays information about the artist, like biographies and such. Otherwise, it's more or less the same app as Shazam, but with a different interface. TrackID is currently only available on Android devices, but it has a ton of functionality with other apps, like WhatsApp, Spotify, Facebook, and other sharing apps.

Google Voice Search

Google can search for a song that it listens to with Google Voice Search, and identify it for you. Much in the same way that Shazam and TrackID can identify music, Google Voice Search will listen for music that's playing and search the web for what the song is. Once it has identified the song, it will display it, and if it's available, it will offer to let you buy it from the Google Play Store.

Unfortunately, these apps only recognize the song when the actual song is playing, so doing your best to belt out Adele's "Hello" into your smartphone won't return any results.

As for more great tips for your mobile device solutions, you don't need any recognition software; all you need is to subscribe to Directive's blog.
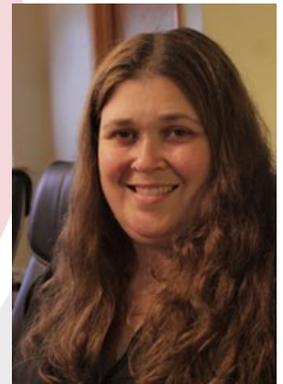
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