Join Us For a CyberSecurity Breakfast Seminar in December!

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Chuck Poole, President of PalmTech Computer Solutions.

Our Mission

To equip small and midsized businesses in the West Palm Beach area with a smooth running and seamless IT platform that enhances productivity, improves efficiency, and creates a competitive advantage.

4 Things You Should Absolutely Demand From Your IT Services Firm

How much do you rely on your IT services provider? It's startling to think that a lot of small businesses outsource their IT (which is a good thing), only to get little to nothing out of that relationship.

Why is that?

Well, some businesses just aren't proactive. They only rely on their IT services company when something goes horribly wrong. If there's a network failure or their website gets hacked, they'll make the call to their IT people, but that's the extent of the relationship.

On the other side of the same coin, there are a lot of IT companies that wait around for that phone call. They don't work with their clients as closely as they should. Both of these

reasons are downright irresponsible.

First and foremost, business owners should work closely with their IT pros. They should have the staff and resources to not only address your IT emergencies but also to keep your business safe and secure to minimize those emergencies. Here are four things you should ask of your IT services provider.

"Keep my business safe!" Your IT company should make sure your network security, firewalls, malware protection, etc., are installed, operating and up-to-date. They should be working with you to do everything to keep your business's data secure and make sure it can be restored in the rare event that data loss does occur.

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Keeping your customer data secure should be a top priority. Don't take unnecessary risks, because when you do, the consequences can be devastating.

"Help me keep costs down!" You outsourced your IT to save money. Hiring an internal IT person or staff is a massive expense (plus, many small businesses simply don't have the revenue to sustain IT personnel). However, your IT company should be working to maintain your network and associated hardware and software. They are there to help you avoid costly disasters like data loss or network downtime. If you do a lot of e-commerce, your IT company can be an invaluable asset. You literally pay them to save money.

"Help me stay proactive!" An experienced IT company can often spot an issue before it becomes an issue. They keep your network updated and maintained, and they can help you avoid unnecessary downtime. Working closely with your IT company means you aren't skimping on security, and this alone puts you ahead of so many other businesses that do. And make sure you have an open line of communication between your business and your IT team, even if that means scheduling regular calls. You should regularly talk about security and know about the issues that may impact

"Waiting until something breaks is a dangerous – and costly – way to do business."

your business, whether it's an equipment concern or a hacker threat. On top of that, tell your customers you care about the security of your business and their data. They will appreciate it – seriously!

"Keep my network up-to-date!" This covers a lot of ground. Your outsourced IT should be keeping your security updated, from your firewall to your malware protection, but they should also be keeping your network tech updated too. Hackers look for weaknesses in network tech every day – weak spots that allow them to capture data from your network. Sometimes they exploit the firmware, and sometimes it's the hardware. Regardless, you should always rest assured that your IT company is doing everything they can within the budget you set to keep your network as updated as possible.

If your IT company isn't doing any of these things, you need to get on the phone with them NOW! Don't put your business at risk because you only make the call *after* the worst-case scenario has occurred. Waiting until something breaks is a dangerous – and costly – way to do business. It's time to be proactive and get the most out of the relationship you have with your IT company.

Shiny New Gadget: Dyson Pure Hot + Cold Air Purifier

The Dyson Pure Hot + Cool Air Purifier takes air purification to the next level. It's a fan, space heater and air purifier all in one. It includes a HEPA filter that helps reduce allergens and pollutants as it quietly cycles air through your home or the room of your choice.

One of the best features of the air purifier is the ability to monitor your home's air quality in real time, and the information appears on an easy-to-read display. Through this display, you can actually see your home's air quality improve! On top of this, the air purifier is an Internet of Things device. Connect it to your WiFi and control it directly from your smartphone, or enable voice control through Amazon Alexa.

7 Ways To Make Your Business Money While You Sleep

1. MAKE YOURSELF INTO A PRODUCT.

Position yourself as the authority in your niche. Develop products like videos or books that share your secrets of success. The beauty of a book is that, once the hard work is over – it's written, edited and published – you simply collect proceeds while you move on to your next project.

2. DO FEWER THINGS.

It's impossible to automate aspects of your business if you do everything personally. Train staff to handle certain aspects of your business and simplify your output. Identify strengths and streamline your offerings, focusing on the items that you can train your staff to replicate.

3. CREATE CONTINUITY.

Billing for each service or product you supply is volatile. Your revenue and your client's expenses vary wildly. By selling a subscription at a flat rate, you create reliable income and provide clients with predictable expenses. Both parties are invested in maximum efficiency – maximizing quality and minimizing hassle.

4. SELL YOUR SYSTEM CHEAP AND MAKE MONEY ON THE REFILLS.

We're talking here primarily about businesses that produce tangible goods. The best two examples of this model are printers and Keurig coffee makers. The devices themselves are relatively cheap. The profit is in cartridges of ink or individual coffee refills. If your machine makes a great cup of coffee or great quality copies, once consumers own the device, you're guaranteed continued business.

5. BECOME THE MIDDLEMAN.

Find a way to broker business and let other folks do the work for you. Becoming an Amazon affiliate is a great example. You link to their site, they sell, and you make money. There's also a fortune to be made in consolidating and coordinating the transportation of goods.

6. BECOME A TEACHER.

Find ways to teach other entrepreneurs how to acquire the skills necessary for opening their own business modeled on yours. Say you own a successful pizza shop. You could write a book or create a series of instructional videos on your family's recipes, or you could market a consumable version of your plan for opening a profitable pizza shop. You can even generate greater consumer awareness for your business.

7. BECOME AN INVESTOR.

Money makes money, but it's important that you're careful about how you invest as an entrepreneur. Here's my tip: look at your clients and assess their needs. Find a company that addresses those needs and invest there. Not only will you be forging a bond between your company and others that focuses on enhancing client relationships, but you also cement your position in your customers' minds as the business that caters to their desires. Once you've done the groundwork, you're the good guy who makes money without effort.

MIKE MICHALOWICZ (pronounced mi-KAL-o-wits) started his first business at the age of 24, moving his young family to the only safe place he could afford – a retirement building. With no experience, no contacts and no savings, he systematically bootstrapped a multimillion-dollar business. Then he did it again. And again. Now he is doing it for other entrepreneurs. Mike is the CEO of Provendus Group. He is also a former small-business columnist for The Wall Street Journal; *MSNBC's business makeover expert; a keynote speaker on entrepreneurship; and the author of the cult classic book* The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. *His newest book,* The Pumpkin Plan, *has already been called "the next E-Myth!" For more information, visit www.mikemichalowicz.com.*

What Companies Get Wrong About Business Continuity

Every business owner knows that having a business continuity plan is crucial to the success of their organization. However, when the unexpected does happen, companies tend to overlook how well employees can stick to the plan. To make sure your plan doesn't go up in flames, here are five critical mistakes you must avoid.

Mistake #1: Failing to plan for employees

Companies that survive unexpected incidents are the ones that thought about their employees' needs. Make sure you plan out everything from evacuation routes to emergency communication plans to make sure your employees have everything they need to survive the worst.

Discuss your strategy with your employees to let them know that you will be there to support them and their families in the event of a crisis. This way, your employees will have peace of mind knowing you and the company are there for them, and in turn, they will be there to support you.

Mistake #2: Using only words, not actions

Once you've documented your business continuity plan, you need to think about the small stuff to ensure your plan is executable. This includes logistical considerations like medical aid and monetary support.

Walk the walk and ensure your medical providers have made arrangements in advance. Have an assistance program in place to make sure your employees have access to people who can give them support in the event of an incident. Staff will remember if you provided them with care and support, and will remember even more clearly if you didn't.

Mistake #3: Not showing your employees how the plan will work

While many business owners worry about downtime, they overlook the fact that explaining the plan and its execution to employees is critical to minimizing lost productivity.

As part of your maintenance program, include your employees in the testing process. Execute a live test to show your employees how they're supposed to respond during a crisis incident. Who are they supposed to contact during a natural disaster? What are they supposed to say to clients? Where will they work when the primary office is down? These are just a few questions you need to have answered by the end of the live test.

Mistake #4: Forgetting to check on people after the incident

When an incident occurs, the first assessment most businesses make is to determine the impact it has on the company. But how do you execute that process without people? When disaster strikes, your employees will naturally want to be taking care of their families, not your business.

Ensure your crisis management team addresses people issues first. Where are they? What do I need to do for them? Are there any special employee needs you must address?

Mistake #5: Reacting rather than communicating

The most important thing to get right during a crisis is communication. It is imperative that your employees know you can provide them with the most up-to-date information.

Set up a toll-free hotline so your employees can call in for regular updates or create emergency channels where they can communicate with one another directly. With that, you provide consistent messaging, and you eliminate secondhand information and employee guesswork.

If your business continuity plan prioritizes your employees, you'll have peace of mind knowing that your team is still standing strong even if the worst should happen.

Want to learn more about business continuity and how it can help your business? Contact us today at 561-969-1616 to see how we can help.