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ITR Technologies, LLC
"Serving All Your Computer & Network Business Needs"

Tech Talk

Who Wants to Win a \$20 Starbucks Gift Card?

Did you know that since the 1940s, to attract tourists and conventions, Houston has promoted itself as "the most air-conditioned city in the nation."

What is the hottest temperature ever recorded in Houston?

- A. 107°
- B. 109°
- C. 111°
- D. 113°

E-mail your answer to info@itrtechnologies.com. All correct answers will be entered into a drawing for a \$20.00 Starbucks gift card.

Good Luck!!!

Confused about cloud computing?

Learn more about the benefits and limitations cloud computing presents for businesses...

Depending on the size of your company, cloud computing may dramatically reduce administrative costs. However, do the benefits outweigh the pitfalls?

Cloud computing is Internet-based computing. This means, all of the shared resources like software and information your company uses every day, would be provided to office computers and other devices as it is needed. By renting usage from a third-party provider, your business can cut costs by eliminating the need for a full physical infrastructure.

Cloud computing terms to remember...

Cloud computing has two bases, Software as a Service (SaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS). Think of SaaS as a software rental car company: In business, you use software as a vehicle to travel through transactions and communicate with others. Whether you are creating a contract for a new client, or processing a regular monthly payment, the software you use costs money. SaaS offers the soft-

ware you need for a fixed monthly fee.

Meanwhile, PaaS is similar to a package deal you purchase from your travel agent that includes all of your travel arrangements. Instead of just renting the vehicle (software), you rent the hotel room (desktop computer) and your agent throw ins coffee and breakfast at the buffet, too (a support contract).

Blah, blah...cloud computing...blah

blah...platform, what? If the last few paragraphs didn't make much sense, this might help: Cloud computing can be described as a public utility. Your business pays for the specific software or other amenities, such as equipment or storage, on a monthly basis just as you would pay for the exact amount of electricity that's used.

The benefits of cloud computing. There are four major benefits of cloud computing for businesses: easy scalability, increased reliability, high performance and specific con-

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Tales from the Trenches

-Candace Doler

This is a series that will allow you an opportunity to look into your colleagues' real world business lives, in order to learn from their mistakes—without having to make those mistakes! These are actual incidents from real organizations. No names or other identifying information is included.

This is another virus story. Virus related issues are often an eye opener, making businesses realize that they need to do

something different so their networks are more safe and secure.

A client called us when one of the computers on their network was infected with a virus. They thought they had adequate virus protection on their entire network, but learned the hard way that this was not so.

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Confused about cloud computing...

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figurability. Comparatively, these benefits surpass the standard dedicated infrastructure method of networking.

New businesses looking for a computing solution, or companies looking to make a change in their infrastructure, may elect to use cloud computing instead of forking over a huge capital investment to setup a network, purchase software packages, and pay someone to manage it all. Cloud computing can be a fantastic way to get a jump-start with little initial investment and fixed, or at least, predictable monthly costs.

The limitations of cloud computing. As with everything, cloud computing has its downsides. Cloud computing isn't suitable for all business types, especially those that are reliant on decade-old software. As a matter of fact, security and compliance are huge factors for decision makers because, cloud computing takes your data out of your office and out of your control. As a result, it is imperative to select a vendor that offers the security and privacy controls you need.

Support for some Windows XP and Vista coming to an end

-Scott Bernstein

“Support for Windows ending?! How can that be? I just bought a new computer!”

Don't panic—there's an explanation! All Windows versions need regular security updates. Major, cumulative security updates are called Service Packs (SP). Microsoft will no longer allow any incremental Windows Updates if your computer is not on the latest Service Pack.

If you want to double check that Windows version you are running, left-click on Start, then choose Settings, then Control Panel, and double-click on System. This will show you the SP you have.

For Windows XP, you will no longer receive monthly critical updates if the computer is not on SP3. This support ended on July 13, 2010. For Vista, if you have never installed a Service Pack, you stopped receiving critical updates on April 13, 2010.

Your computer will not shut down, you will not be reported to Microsoft, and the software police will not show up to take your computer away! But you will need to get the Latest Service Pack in order to continue getting support for Windows.

“Why should I care if I don't receive these critical update things?” Here's why: the bad guys never rest. They want to take control of your computer, because there is big money in doing so. They not only want information

Software compatibility woes... That's right, Vista isn't the only animal with compatibility issues. While it seems that any program you can think of should be available in the cloud, it isn't a software heaven. Cloud computing vendors are still working to offer industry specific or specialty programs. You may need to shop around to find a vendor that has what you need.

However, be aware that transitioning from an older version of software to a newer version may not be a walk in the park. Older software may cause limitation with a newer operating system; it's like trying to change a tire on a car while driving. Be sure to look at the features and advantages to keeping your current software and explore new opportunities for your business if necessary.

Don't be afraid to change. Cloud computing is said to be the “Next big thing!” in technology. If you are ready to make a change for your office, give us a call today at 713.344.1618 or email mtaylor@itrpro.com, to explore cloud computing options for your business.

that resides on your computer—they also want to take control of it so they can use it to infect other computers. By using your computer to infect other computers, the bad guys hide their identity. They can even make you look like one of the bad guys yourself!

So why are these critical updates so important? Security experts say the #1 thing you can do to help combat infections is to keep your computer up-to-date with critical patches. In other words, use Windows Updates, that little yellow shield you see in the lower right hand corner of your monitor every month. It is not enough to have a firewall and antivirus software. You also need to update your Windows computers, and servers too.

“But how do I know when I need a patch?” Most likely if you need a critical patch, it is being offered to you in the little yellow shield. Just run Windows Update. It will recognize which updates you need, and offer them to you.

If you know you need a Service Pack, but it is not offered, you will need to either manually obtain it, or have your IT person (that should be us!) get it for you. Be prepared to do without a computer for a while. The download is large and can take 30-60 minutes to install. A reboot is needed when it is done so exit all your applications first.

If you don't want to mess with this, call us. We will gladly do the upgrade for you. Lost support for Windows Updates is here!

Tales from the Trenches..

(Continued from page 1)

In fact, the client had several viruses, which prevented many Windows programs—as well as some virus removal programs—from running. We tried installing additional antivirus programs on this infected desktop, but could not get them to run. The viruses were still blocking our efforts. Eventually, we were able to remove most of the viruses, and restore some normal operation of programs. But then we discovered that Windows had become corrupted to the point where network capability could not be restored, even after many hours of trying. A complete replacement of the Windows operating system was required.

This incident ended up costing our client over \$1,500. On top of the initial costs, the owner was significantly inconvenienced, with appreciable loss of productivity, because she depends on her computer so much for most of her work and projects. She was without her computer for 5 days. And she had to spend time “breaking in” her new Windows programs, re-establishing program settings, rebuilding her email address book, and the list goes on.

When we are called in to work with a business that has a virus we frequently get asked these questions: “Why do computers get viruses? Where do these viruses come from?”

They certainly don’t float around in the air like some human viruses. Instead, like a computer program, a human must create them. As to why people create them, it’s hard to say. Some people do it out of meanness or to get even. Others do it as a challenge, to see if they can get past firewalls, anti-virus, and other security settings. We’re now seeing the “professional” virus writer emerge. There are people making money writing and distributing viruses through spam.

The virus that infected our new client appeared to come from “Facebook Team”. The day before the business owner got this email, she had updated her email address with Facebook, so she thought it was a communication related to this action. She frequently receives Facebook and FanPage requests from businesses regarding a request to become friends with them.

When the owner clicked on a link in that email, she knew

immediately that she was infected. Her existing virus protection found and stopped 3 viruses, but there were others that got through. Her computer immediately started having problems. As the day went on, more problems surfaced and more applications became unavailable. Finally she was not able to access Outlook email or any directories, documents or programs.

If your machine is infected with one of these viruses then it may very well be sending out massive amounts of spam without your knowledge or direct participation. The infected machines are using their spam-sending abilities to send out copies of themselves via email. Needless to say, that’s a very strong argument for making sure you’re keeping your computer safe on the Internet.

If this company had been on our Managed Services Program, her business network would have been on a tried and proven antivirus program. Our e-mail filtering solution includes a Spam blocking capability so these enticing emails would not show up on her email in the first place. Managed Services keeps up to date with all the latest virus and Spam protection, and monitors the network for any potential problems.

Would you like a Free 7 Point Security Audit from ITR Technologies? We come on site and determine if your network and desktops are having problems. We check for spyware and other security threats that could slow down your network and cause it to crash. Please give us a call at 713.344.1618.





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“We make all of your computer problems go away without the cost of a full-time I.T. staff”

*Ask us about our fixed price service agreements —
Computer support at a flat monthly fee you can budget
for just like rent!*



If Cash is King, Who is Queen?

- Temi Vasco

In personal finance and business, cash can be the single determinant in success. With tightening credit and a harsh economy, most businesses have had to scale back and monitor their cash balances closely. However, even businesses with healthy cash balances can find themselves in tight corners, when bank statements are all they look at. Sure your business isn't cash-poor, but how long can you last without increased or any sales? In other words, what is your break-even point? And who are your key customers? Not just those that bring pay the highest revenues/cash, but those that actually add to your bottom-line? How are your customers doing in this economic climate? Is your high cash balance a result of loans? What is your real interest rate and what are your risk factors? And your competitors? How do you compare with them in efficiency? How does your performance compare to your budget? Do you even have one?

These are questions your financial statements cannot answer. Your financial statements play a dominant role in setting the framework of managerial decisions, but the information provided is not an end in itself as no meaningful conclusions can be drawn from these statements alone. However, performing timely financial analysis can identify your business' financial strengths and weaknesses, so that you can make quick, informed decisions. Even better, financial analysis helps your investors and bank get a good grasp on your business, and how it compares with the market,

even though you are not publicly traded. It even helps government agencies analyze your business' taxes. Remember, knowledge is power, and in your hands, it is the power to be the expert at your business. So when you are facing critical decisions like whether using more credit to finance inventory for sales a good idea? Or where your business loan application stands when compared with other applicants? Remember that for your small business, Cash might be King, but **Financial Analysis is Queen.**

Ready, but not sure where to start? Call us for a free financial and benchmark analysis for your business (valued at \$150).

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Finally A Backup Solution You Can Hang Your Hat On!

The best time to prevent disasters is before they happen. We will backup 100% of your important business files to eliminate the risk of losing everything in the event of a fire, flood, theft, hard drive failure or even human error.

The best part, recovering your data is quick and easy. As a matter of fact, your entire office could be rebuilt in just 48 hours if necessary. So, you can rest assured your data is secure and accessible.

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