

December 2011

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

# Tech Talk



## DECEMBER OBSERVANCES

- December 7  
..... Pearl Harbor Day
- December 21  
..... Hanukkah (lasts 8 days)
- December 22  
..... Winter Solstice
- December 25  
..... Christmas
- December 26  
..... Boxing Day (England)  
..... Kwanzaa
- December 31  
..... New Year's Eve

## Continuously Modify the 5 Year Plan

— Nancy A. Ridenhour

**Many businesses** are currently finalizing their five year plans. Is this the only time of the year that you review your plan (unless an emergency happens)? If so, then now is a good time to change the process.

A Five Year Plan needs to be viewed as a process. It should include actions that will complete one or more of your objectives. Your plan should be updated at least quarterly. Remember that each quarter, the 5 years has moved by 3 months. The plan should also be reviewed when we learn new information.

**Think of the review as a circle.** Each part of the circle can impact the other parts. As we think through one part, we may realize

how it affects another part. You may want to add parts to the areas defined in this article. You may want to change where you start the review.

Since we need to start the review process somewhere, we will start with the business basics. How do we see our industry working in 5 years? How do we see our business working in this industry?

**Now let's look at ourselves.** How do we see ourselves functioning in five years? Be realistic. One person cannot do it all. Some tasks need to be delegated. Some tasks may no longer be necessary. Some tasks may need to be added.

(Continued on page 2)

## Call In The



*In this article, the first in our "Hacker's Corner" series, we examine a tool or technique used to penetrate security, and how you can guard against it.*

**Way back in the 1970's**, the word "Fuzz" was used as a slang term for the police. Today, the word has found a new meaning, but one that is still related to security. It's become part of the Hacker's lexicon.

In order to do anything useful, almost all computer programs need input. When a programmer designs an application, he or she has certain expectations and assumptions about what that input will look like. For example, if there is an input box labeled "First Name", the programmer is likely to

assume that the text box will be accepting letters, not numbers or special characters. The total size of the input ought to be something reasonable – let's say, about 50 characters max. But what happens if the input is actually several thousand characters? Or it contains quote marks, numbers, or other special characters?

**One of several things might happen.** If the programmer has applied proper validation techniques, and if the application has been tested adequately, it won't even try to process the input. Instead, it might do nothing, or maybe return a friendly error message

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## Continuously Modify the 5 Year Plan

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**Will there be family demands** that may prevent us from completing some tasks? I have gone through a long term illness with both parents. Each illness required work to be re-scheduled or outsourced, or both.

Now think about your employees. What changes may be needed in their jobs? What changes may happen to their families within the next 5 years that can impact your business?

Next let's think about our clients. What clients do we expect to still be in business? What clients may go out of business? How will we obtain new clients?

Now let's look at our vendors. I cannot be the only one that has had to change vendors in 5 years. What vendors will you need to change?

**Finally, let's look** at different levels of the economy. Each



level will impact us in some way every day. We can start with the local economy. How do we see that looking in 5 years? Then we need to think about the regional, national and global economies. Again, we need to be realistic. Think in terms of the best outcome, the worst outcome, and then the most likely outcome.

**Before changing the plan**, think about the changes for a couple of days. As you continue to remember information, make notes where appropriate. You may want to communicate with someone in another industry, geographical area, or age range to obtain a different perspective.

Now you should have confidence in your Five Year Plan. If your plan did not have to be modified, someone is fooling somebody. Make sure it is not you, fooling yourself!

## Call in the

# FUZZ

- Tom Warfield

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to the user explaining that the data entered was invalid.

But if the programmer was lazy, or if the program was built using flawed compiler software, or if it was not adequately tested, the invalid data can cause unexpected or even dangerous results. The program might crash, or worse, it might lead to a breach of system or data security.

**How can you be sure** your web site or application is not open to this kind of vulnerability? This is where "fuzzing" comes in. To "fuzz" an application means to send it all kinds of invalid data, and see how it reacts. Hackers know of many different ways to generate invalid data, and they look for certain kinds of error messages or behavior that will identify a possible avenue of attack. Many "hacker tools" include this feature.

You can turn this to your advantage, by "fuzzing" your own system. Two products that you can use for a "white hat" test are Holodeck from [securityinnovation.com](http://securityinnovation.com) and Wire-play from [ivizsecurity.com](http://ivizsecurity.com) - and there are many others.

Fuzz testing is an essential part of penetration testing, which in turn part of a complete security strategy. If your company does not have a security strategy in place, it may be time to ask your service provider to "call in the FUZZ".

## December is another big month for food.

If you are busy planning menus and looking up recipes for family get-togethers and holiday treats, and you need some new ideas, or if you are just wondering when's a good time to enjoy your favorite dish, consider this list of December National Days for Edibles.

Most of them are for sweets, but just in case of indigestion after all that food, December 30th may bring a remedy.

Date	National Day For . . .
1	Pie
2	Fritters
4	Cookies
8	National Brownies
9	Pastry
13	Cocoa
16	"Chocolate Covered Anything"
17	Maple syrup
24	Egg Nog*
25	Pumpkin Pie
28	Chocolate
30	Bicarbonate of Soda

\* December is also National Egg Nog Month!

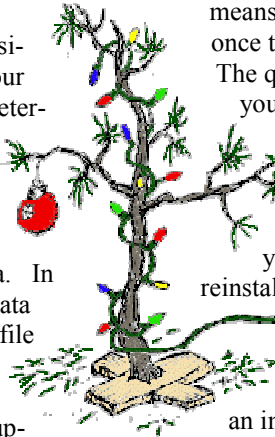
# Backup $\vee$ s Disaster Recovery $\vee$ s Business Continuity

— Scott Bernstein

**You've heard me preach in the past** about good backups. A backup is no good unless you can restore your data and get "back up" and running. I've had clients ask me about Disaster Recovery plans, but sometimes I'm not sure they really know what that means. Do you know the difference between backups, disaster recovery, and business continuity? Which is right for you? Your level of paranoia about your network will determine which one(s) you need, and which you are willing to pay for.

**Backup:** This is the simplest and least expensive of the options. A backup is like a spare tire. It is an extra copy of your data. In case you delete a file by mistake, or some data becomes corrupted, or someone modifies a file but needs to get the original one back, you can retrieve an older copy quickly and easily. There doesn't have to be any interruption to the rest of your network, and other users should not be inconvenienced.

A backup may be created on tape, on a USB drive, or offsite over the Internet into the cloud. Tape backups are NOT for Disaster Recovery or Business Continuity, since you can't run applications from a tape. We have been actively moving clients to USB drives or network attached drives for backup, and in some cases backing up into the cloud.



**Disaster Recovery:** Your server or main computer just crashed. It's no longer functional, and you can no longer get to your data. Disaster Recovery means getting you back up and running once the failed components are replaced.

The quicker this takes place, the better. If you are using tape backup, it means reinstalling Windows and the backup software before a restore can take place. And if your backup system is configured to backup just data, then you need to find all your applications and reinstall them too. This process will take anywhere from 1-2 days, if you have access to all your application media.

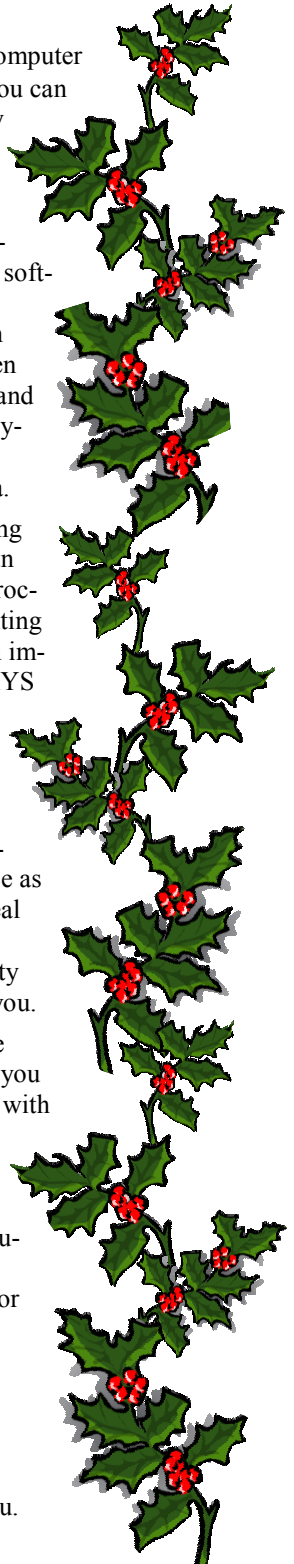
If your backup process includes taking an image of your server, recovery time can be measured in hours, not days. This is the process we are now recommending and implementing for our clients: Local backups that include an image of their main computers, and also ALWAYS getting a backup offsite.

**Business Continuity:** Business Continuity gets your business back up and running after a major disaster, such as a fire, tornado or earthquake. It involves not only your computers and data, but your actual workplace as well. This is obviously a much bigger deal than just restoring data or replacing a server. It means having access to a facility with computers and servers available to you.

If all your data and applications are in the cloud, you probably don't need this. All you have to do is go home, or to any location with internet access, and you can get to your data.

This does not even touch on the procedures that need to be developed to communicate to your staff about what to do and when. This is not an easy undertaking, nor is it inexpensive.

**What is the cost** to your business if your computer system is down? How long can you afford to be down? Answer these questions, and it will lead you towards the backup plan that is right for you.



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— David Do

## Inquiring Minds. . .

**Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday ...**

**Three days dedicated to consumerism:** For the average consumer, it could be slightly overwhelming. But for those who are looking for an amazing deal, they will be willing to stay up late, shop during work, or even leave work early, to get in on three of the hottest shopping days of the year.

On Black Friday, some shoppers waited in line for over a day to be the first to grab a 46" flat screen TV for less than \$300. Amazing deals like this do not happen often, but when they do, they attract hundreds of people. Not only is it the best time for consumers, it is also a great time for retailers, as online sales increased by 26% over the previous year.

The holiday season represents up to 40 percent of annual sales. These three days will be most retailers' biggest shopping days of the year. With a large recession still looming, retailers offer incredible deals so that they can go from the "red or negative profits" to "black or positive profits" (this is the common misconception about the origin of the term, "Black Friday", although it originally referred to the massive traffic jams and overcrowded sidewalks brought on by the influx of shoppers).

**What it all means,** for consumers, is amazing deals.

Petra Cleary of Washington DC arrived at the Columbia Heights Best Buy at 6 PM on Thanksgiving Day, to be one of the first to get into the store. While waiting in line, she did her research and made checkmarks on an advertisement next to the items she intended to buy. When the store was about to open, Best Buy employees handed out vouchers to those waiting in line. Cleary chose a 32-inch LCD TV, another 24-inch TV, a Blu-Ray player, and a laptop computer. Her total came to less than \$500 dollars. Cleary stated, "Nothing beats getting four hot items, that I would normally spend well over \$1500 for, for less than \$500. "

Meanwhile, President Barack Obama went out of his way to support a small business during Small Business Satur-

day, the day after Black Friday. The President visited Kramer Books in Dupont Circle, Washington DC with his daughters, Sasha and Malia. While there, he bought a large number of books as holiday presents.

**And Cyber Monday was not to disappoint.** Online retailers prepared yet more amazing deals for consumers. Individuals who did not want to wait in frigid temperatures had one more chance on Monday to shop from the comfort of their choosing. This is one of the best ways to shop, without the fighting, arguing and waiting of Black Friday.

For those of you who were not prepared for the three biggest shopping days of the year, there is always next year. Visit [www.bfads.com](http://www.bfads.com) for a listing of Black Friday advertisements from the major retailers. Review the advertisements, and prepare your game plan for shopping right after your Thanksgiving meal. You can also get more information about the best Black Friday deals at [www.slickdeals.net](http://www.slickdeals.net). This website also presents consumers with the best deals from brick and mortar (physical stores) and online retailers throughout the year.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

However you celebrate the holidays, we share the holiday spirit with you, and wish you all the best in the coming year!



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