


January 2012

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

Tech Talk

Remember Your Niche

— Nancy A. Ridenhour



This economy has gotten people thinking of multiple ways to obtain money. People are reviewing their businesses to find new products and services, and finding new ways to deliver them. This can be good—or it can be a disaster.

We are each passionate about our own business and ideas. Our emotions influence our decisions. However, we need to take as much of the emotion out of the decision making process as we can. To do this, we need to take ourselves out of the picture. This allows us to view the situation from the outside looking in.

It's not always easy. Sometimes it helps to think about a different business

first. Recently I heard about an architect who added interior design, website design, and graphic design to his business offerings. Do all of these fit? Can they work for this business? You might already have formed an opinion about these additions. However, let's review some basic areas that any business should consider, before adding a new product or service.

We need to define our true business, to know if and where new products and services will fit. Remember hearing about the manufacturer of buggy seats, who never made the switch to car seats? That business closed -- because they didn't understand what their true business was. Not buggy seats, but transpor-

(Continued on page 2)

Happy
New Year!

Stega-WHAT??

The secret word for today is: **Steganography**. No, it doesn't have anything to do with dinosaurs, although "Stegosaurus" comes from the same Greek word, meaning "cover". In the hacker lexicon, *Steganography* means any *method* of *concealing* a *message*. In general, it goes beyond cryptography, which *refers* specifically to encoding or encryption. *Steganography* includes techniques to hide the existence of the message itself, usually by masking it with innocuous looking text, images, or, would you believe, even sound files?

There are a number of techniques used to accomplish this goal. A rather simple and not-very-covert method is illustrated by the preceding paragraph. An even more



innocent-looking concealment trick is called "Snow", available from www.darkside.com.au/snow.

It uses white space to encode a secret message within a plain text file. Just supply the "innocent" text file, the secret message, and a password. The program creates a new text file, containing the secret message encoded using extra spaces and tab characters. Anyone looking at the two files with a normal text editor or email program would not be able to tell them apart, although the encoded file is larger, and it looks quite strange in a binary editor.

(Continued on page 2)



Remember Your Niche

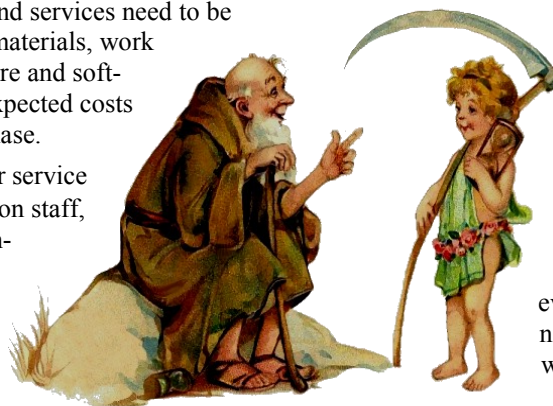
(Continued from page 1)

tation seats. Another business somewhere must have understood this. I can imagine that company was already busy making buggy, train and trolley seats. They heard about cars, and decided to add another product.

The benefits of new products and services need to be documented. We need to estimate the revenue that the new products and services will generate. We also need to estimate any enhancements to the business image they may provide. If it is a product or service that is new to the market, we need to allow time for customers to understand it and decide to use it. In all of these, we need the best, worst and most likely estimates. The 3 values help us form a realistic estimate.

The costs of adding the new products and services need to be determined. These costs include raw materials, work areas, marketing, and computer hardware and software. We can initially budget for unexpected costs by doubling the cost numbers in this phase.

If we are adding a new product or service as a means to avoid having to cut back on staff, we have to think about the new skills involved. Are the existing employees willing to do the new work? Will they need training? How will training bills be paid? If new employees are to



be hired, what will be the costs? We need to include costs for employee searches, new equipment, and work areas.

Does the new product or service need to be a separate entity? Industry and government regulations may dictate employment conditions, work areas, and separation of business entities. Insurance is going to be needed to cover any liability of the new products or services. We need to understand any differences in these areas for a new product or service, compared to the current business.

How will our customers view us? Once these new products and services are added, will customers link them to us, or will they be confused? We need to make sure that our existing customers understand the new business areas. Some may fully understand and want to use the new products and services. Some may not understand the new areas, and need further explanation on how they can benefit. Some may not see

the new products and services as a benefit, and simply decide not to buy.

Others may see them as a problem, and take their business elsewhere. These customers need to be identified in this phase, so those concerns can be handled.

We will need to be prepared for some customers to leave.

We are now at the first decision point. Is everything pointing toward a fit in the business? Are alarm bells sounding? How do we feel about the architect's decision now?

(Continued from page 1)

A more sophisticated method uses images. Take a look at the two pictures. Can you tell which one has the secret message? The sizes of the two image files match, and they look identical to the naked eye, even when magnified. But the second image, containing the hidden text message "Happy New Year 2012!", was made from the first image using wbStego, from wbstego.wbailer.com. Specialized software is required to detect this technique.

Apart from the obvious applications in espionage, organized crime, and terrorism, Steganography plays a role in corporate security as

Steganography Unmasked



to



well. But how?

Most companies already recognize the need for a firewall, keep intruders from breaking in. A company that maintains sensitive data must also be concerned about keeping their own employees from "breaking out". A disgruntled employee, or worse yet, a "double agent" corporate spy,

might use Steganography techniques to send company secrets through email without detection. This is why your corporate policy might call for ALL email attachments to be inspected, or prohibited altogether.

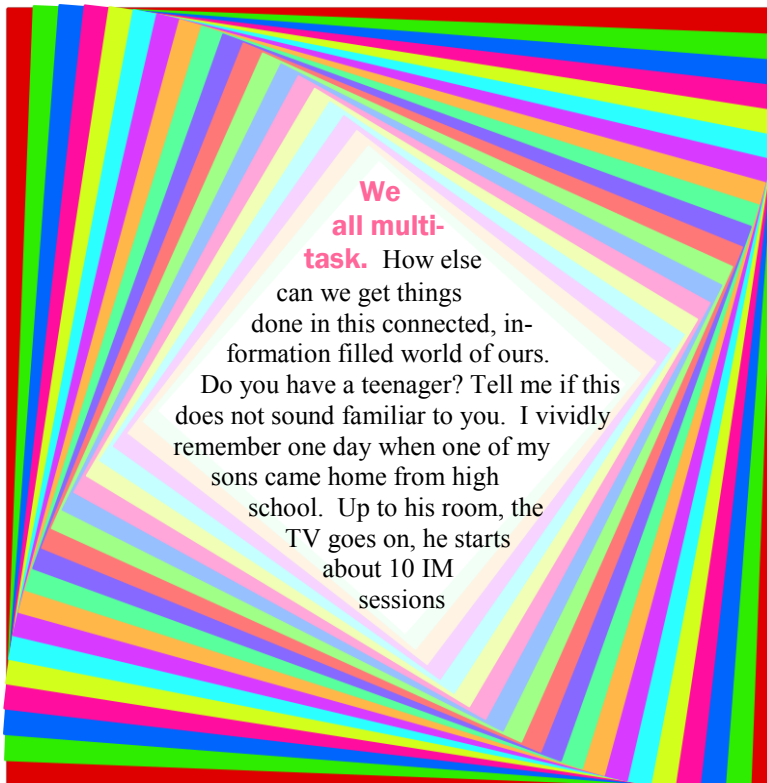
"Blame Someone Else Day"

On Friday, August 13th, 1982, Anne Moeller of Michigan had a bad day. Her alarm clock did not go off, and she was late for appointments all day. She blamed the alarm clock, traffic and others, and then decided that the first Friday the 13th of each year would be "Blame Someone Else Day". The idea caught on, especially with politicians!

There is at least 1 Friday the 13th every year. Some years, like 2012, have as many as 3 - this year they are in January, April and July. In Spanish speaking countries and in Greece, Tuesday the 13th is considered unlucky. In 2012, they will occur in March and November. So if you expect to run into any bad luck this year, try to schedule it on one of those days ... so you can blame someone else!



“Multitasking Increases Productivity”: *It’s a Lie!!* — Scott Bernstein



with friends (this was before texting was popular), he is on the cell phone AND he is doing homework. OMG, how can he possibly get anything done? That may be OK for those in school, but can you effectively do that in the working world?

How often do you talk with someone while *they* are checking their email or text messages? Do you feel you are getting the attention you deserve? And if you are doing this to others, what makes you think you are not insulting them? They are there in front of you—don’t they deserve your attention?

You may say, “Scott, I have way too much to do. By multitasking, I get so much more done.” Maybe, but is the quality of that work what it should be? I would guess not. And if you think you are being productive, guess again.

I had the honor of meeting, listening to and talking to Dave Crenshaw, a CEO coach and author of the book “*The Myth of Multitasking*”. He points out our minds are not wired to handle multiple intellectual tasks at one time. With each interruption, we lose focus, concentration, and productivity.

That’s right, we lose productivity!

Have you ever had this happen to you: Someone comes by and says “Can I ask you a quick question?” It is not uncommon to be interrupted up to 20 times per hour with such questions. Jonathan Spira, an author and expert in the field of information overload, has noted a phenomenon called “***recovery time***”. That’s the time it takes for you to get back to where you were before the interruption.

Now here’s the shocker: ***Recovery time is typically 10 to 20 times the duration of the interruption.*** If that quick question takes 30 seconds, it can take 5-10 minutes for you to recover. Spira notes up to 25% of a person’s day can be filled with such interruptions. Combine that with up to 20 interruptions per hour noted by Dave Crenshaw, and it is a wonder how anyone can get any focused work done.

So how do you combat such interruptions? Crenshaw and Spira have several suggestions:

- **Set an appointment for yourself:** Block out time to do specific tasks and don’t accept interruptions during that time. Focus on one task only.
- **Schedule one-on-one time with “quick questioners”:** Give these interrupters focused, but scheduled, time, so that they do not interrupt other tasks. Block out time during the day where you specifically see people for such questions. You can’t handle all interrupts or questions this way, but it will cut down on the interruptions.
- **Put up a “Do Not Disturb” sign:** This one came from one of my coaches. She calls it “Orange Cone” time because she puts an orange cone outside her door and no one is allowed to interrupt her unless there is a fire or a medical emergency.
- **The obvious:** Shut off email and don’t answer the phone for a specific time of day. Think about this one. If you work on the weekends, how productive are you? No phones or email; it can be such a pleasure and you get so much done. Try taking that concept to the work week. It is hard but worth trying.

Multitasking may be fine for non-intellectual tasks, and when you do not have someone in front of you. But if you need to have quality thinking time, problem-solving time, or time with people who deserve your attention, multitasking is not a positive work habit. Let me know your thoughts!



January 2012

**1455 Highway 6 South
Suite B
Sugar Land, Texas 77478
(713) 344-1618
www.itrpro.com**

***“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!*

— David Do

Inquiring Minds. . .

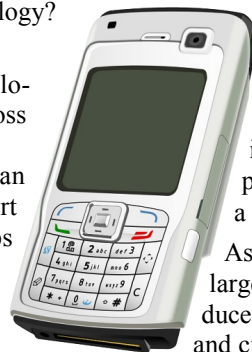
Technology and Reduction in Crime: Cellphones

Most major cities have seen a decrease in crime. For instance, San Diego has experienced the lowest crime rates since 1963. Last year, they experienced about 4 violent crimes per 1,000 people, compared to 9 per 1,000 in 1989. The crime rate fell by more than half in the last twenty years. What could have been the catalyst for this? Technology? Or more specifically, the mobile phone?

Since 1989, we have seen the advent of new technologies that have helped major police departments across the country reduce crime. The regular use of cellphones is one of these technologies. The ability of an average person to call a police department and report a crime, from almost anywhere in a city, really helps the police respond to incidents and make arrests quickly and efficiently.

San Diego Police Chief William Lansdowne credits the use of cell phones for the reduction of crimes, along with an increase in people’s willingness to report incidents. He explains that within seconds of a call being placed, a police cruiser can be sent to the scene of a crime, even before the call with the dispatcher is finished. This notion makes a lot of sense. In the late 1980s, people had less access to phones. They were limited to the use of a payphone, business phone, or residential phone to make an emergency call. Today, almost everyone has a cellphone. In fact, many modern cell phones come already programmed by default with 911 on speed-dial.

As cellphones have advanced into smartphones, they gained the ability to use network location info as well as GPS tracking. For example, Apple’s Find My iPhone application allows users whose phone is lost or stolen to track down their device. The Washington D.C. police department (MPD) also uses this program to catch up with criminals. In October, a young man was robbed of his iPhone and wallet. With the help of a passing couple and their cellphone, he called 911.



Before he was done with the call several MPD police officers were on the scene. The officers were able to use their own iPhones to track down the location of the suspects. After stopping the suspects, police then used a remote-access feature of Find My iPhone, to make the stolen phone emit noises. The phone was recovered, and the suspects were positively identified by the young man.

In this one instance, two different cellphones were used to help apprehend the suspects: the couple’s cellphone to make the initial call, and the police officer’s iPhone. This is just one of many examples of how cell phone technology can help catch criminals and produce a disincentive for crime.

As technology advances further, there will likely be a larger reduction in crime. New technology is being introduced to the market everyday. It is up to law enforcement and citizens to use it, and help make a difference in future crime statistics.



Proud Member of
KatyArea
chamber of commerce



Happy New Year!
***We look forward to working
with you in 2012!***

713-344-1618 x151