

# technology times

## LEVERAGING IT FOR BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY

**Secure remote access for employees who travel or work from home**

**Hardware refresh cycle for portable and desktop computer systems and network hardware**

**Smartphone/  
tablet apps  
for staff and  
customer  
focused  
applications**



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# STUART'S <sup>03</sup> CORNER

“ As a business owner, you don't have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That's where we shine!”



As I write this, I am sitting in a hotel at a conference center in the USA, as I am attending a conference this week and meeting senior executives and owners of other IT MSPs and security consultants. This is something I do every year, and I find it gives me new ideas and a new perspective on what we do. While sitting in front of a desk and reading email newsletters and browsing the internet is certainly useful for keeping up with the industry trends, nothing really beats spending several days with hundreds of other peers and discussing things over breakfast, lunch and late night drinks. It's also a chance to meet vendors in person, and there


is a definite trend this year on security, training and concerns around existing and emerging malware trends. Of course, every vendor wants you to think that their solution is a silver bullet and all of your concerns will go away. Life is nuanced, and unfortunately so is technology and digital security. It is important to have realistic discussions with your in-house IT or external consultants about what your risks are and how they have changed in the last 12 months, and may change in the next 12. This should be an ongoing discussion.


I had an interesting discussion at lunch today. One of my peers made the comment that he now asks one question before going and seeing a prospect. "Do you see IT as a necessary evil or do you see it as a strategic investment, a service differentiator or a way to grow your business." If the answer is the former he politely declines to see the prospect. What is your relationship with technology in your business? Is it a necessary evil, but one you'd rather not deal with? Perhaps it's time to rethink.

As always stay safe online and I hope you are productive and profitable until next issue.

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## LEVERAGING IT FOR BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY

Words: **STUART SANDERS**

**I** was recently posed a few questions around leveraging IT, and thought it would be useful to provide my thoughts here.

### **What gains in productivity can realistically be made by updating or fine tuning my computer systems?**

I hate to say this, but this is very much a case of it depends. If you are finding the computer or systems to be slow, then it may be time for an upgrade which will provide you with an increase in performance. I've worked with users over the years that resisted changing because of the fear of the time that will be needed in getting everything "just right" again, but when they finally went ahead made comments that they should have done it years ago. Other things that may impact this is what is specifically being upgraded. A bigger, higher resolution monitor for people that work in excel all day may mean they can see much more of a spreadsheet at one time and spend less time scrolling and hunting. This can have a huge impact on productivity. Likewise going from one screen to two screens can mean that users are not constantly flipping between applications, or can have the main application open at all times (for example email for some execs). It's important to note that it will depend on the workflow of the user and how they operate. Sometimes by observing how a user works for 15-30 minutes can result in some upgrades that are amazing. In other cases, perhaps not much can realistically be done.

### **Should I consider cloud for some parts of my business?**

This again is going to be a nuanced reply. I very much believe in using the right tools for the job. This applies to mobile devices, operating systems, applications and yes, even cloud. For many years, I was what I would call a cloud conservative. In many cases, I thought people were jumping too soon, and that cloud was not really ready. This has changed. Cloud is very much mainstream now, and at Velocity we both assist some clients to move some

workloads to the cloud and support clients that are cloud (both public and private).

### **Should you move to the cloud?**

Perhaps. Do you have an email server that is getting long in the tooth? Then perhaps the right move is to go cloud. We focus more on Office 365 than other solutions, and this has proven to be a robust solution. However, we do have clients that prefer to keep this in-house. One thing to bear in mind is that don't expect cloud to necessarily be cheaper. Doing cloud right, managing it, ensuring you have a separate backup and perhaps archiving of your email costs money. Perhaps as much or more. There are other server loads and applications that you should seriously consider as a cloud possibility. My recommendation would be to look at cloud with your eyes wide open. Seriously look at both the pros and cons. Some applications are easy to move to the cloud but hard to move elsewhere if you want to change later. Be absolutely certain over data ownership and how you can backup or get a copy of your data.

### **If I have a staff that travel a lot what should I consider to help them be more productive?**

**Access to data.** Its not uncommon these days, particularly with start-ups and small companies to use something like DropBox. These kinds of file sync tools can be great productivity tools as they allow for near real-time collaboration and sharing of documents. But, bear in mind that they have downsides, what is shared so easily with the proper people can also be shared easily with inappropriate people. There are some good enterprise grade file sync tools available that you may want to consider.

The enterprise standard is to have a corporate VPN whereby employees dial in to access company resources. Even a small business can have this, as entry level firewall models from SonicWALL, Fortinet and others can easily support this.

# Cloud Software Systems

Words: **STUART SANDERS**

**I**n this article I will discuss what are cloud software systems, and how you might use them as a means to leverage Information Technology. This is not a discussion of the pros and cons of cloud, which I have written about before. If you have specific questions about cloud, then feel free to send me a note and I can discuss this in future issues.

## So what is cloud and why should we care?

Cloud or cloud systems is the name adopted by the media and industry to describe what is essentially a hosted system. The core computing and resources are on someone else's equipment, not yours, and you access it over the internet or a dedicated communications connection. This turns what traditionally has been a capital expense of buying servers and software and putting it in your office or datacentre, and moving it to an operational expense that is usually in the form of a monthly fee. There are variations of this of course and some misconceptions.

Although it has not really changed, Bloomberg for example could be considered to be a cloud service. This puts in perspective what this is, as Bloomberg has not really changed their model and has been around long before the word "cloud" gained public momentum.

In the fund and finance industry many vendors offer private cloud (as do we). What this provides for a customer is a more nimble footprint. No need for server rooms, environment control systems and so on. The systems however are dedicated at least on some level to you the client. At worst, a dedicated connection from an ISP might be needed, but this is much more portable than having your own server room. Private cloud is typically a multi-year contract, but payments are on an ongoing basis. As mentioned above – moving from a capital expense to an operational expense. Private cloud is not necessarily cheaper than running IT systems in-house, which can be a common misconception. Many of the OMS/PMS/RMS vendors will have a private cloud offering if this is what you are looking for.

There are of course true cloud natives. These cover everything from Dropbox and Office 365 to CRM systems and some fund specific technologies. So what is a true cloud native? These were built with cloud and multi-tenant in mind, so many hundreds, thousands or millions of users are on the same system – unlike private cloud which has a dedicated space for you. A good example of a cloud native is Enfusion, a portfolio management system that has a monthly fee and no long term contract.

If you have questions, email us at:  
[newsletter@velocity-technology.com](mailto:newsletter@velocity-technology.com)

## Are people your weakest link in defending against Cybersecurity threats or your greatest strength?

Increasingly, malware authors are thwarting and circumventing anti-virus and other protection mechanisms, so your people are your last line of defence. Do they know how to identify common threats such as phishing emails?

In March 2016 the SFC issued a circular to all licensed corporations indicating, that:

(a) "the SFC has recently conducted a series of reviews of the cybersecurity within selected larger sized LCs, with the aim of assessing whether effective cybersecurity controls have been implemented to guard against cybersecurity threats.", and...

(b) that one of 5 key areas of concern was ["Insufficient cybersecurity awareness training"](#).

Cybercrime has turned professional. Now more than ever, your staff can be the weak link in your network security. Your staff need to be trained and then stay on their toes, keeping security top of mind or else your company will become a victim of ransomware and/or your company's data will be stolen, altered or deleted.

Effective security awareness training is usually hard. Today's IT teams don't have the support, time, or resources they need to provide successful training or maybe missing the skills and experience to effectively engage their organization. Velocity has partnered with the world's most popular integrated Security Awareness Training and Simulated Phishing platform. This training program streamlines the process of training your staff and helps your organization become more conscious of network security.

## What's Included?

### Baseline Testing

We provide baseline testing to assess the Phish-prone percentage of your users through an initial simulated phishing attack.

### Train Your Users

On-demand, interactive, engaging training with common traps, live Kevin Mitnick demos and new scenario-based Danger Zone exercises.

### Phish Your Users

Fully automated simulated phishing attacks, hundreds of templates with unlimited usage, and community phishing templates. Velocity will design and manage Hong Kong themed simulated attacks.

### See The Results

Enterprise-strength reporting, showing stats and graphs for both training and phishing, ready for management. Show the great ROI!

### Discussion of Results

Discussion with Velocity Consultants during our regular Management Meetings or Security and Risk Meetings

Features include training Campaigns, Custom Phishing Templates that mix global as well as local themes. Custom landing pages that can provide for point-of-failure or try to phish for sensitive information, simulated attachments in common formats and detailed reporting. In addition there are more advanced features that we can discuss.

**For more information on getting Security Awareness Training for your staff please contact us at**  
[sat@velocity-technology.com](mailto:sat@velocity-technology.com)





## Selecting the most efficient wired and Wi-Fi network systems for your business

Words: **STUART SANDERS**

I often meet with clients and prospects that want to move to a wireless world.

- No ugly cables cluttering the desk for keyboards or mice
- use wifi for the network to avoid cables dangling off desks and cluttering under tables

**Sometimes these are fine, but you need to put them in context with expectations.**

Wireless keyboards and mice have improved dramatically over the years. Newer specifications such as low energy bluetooth and manufacturers improving the ability of devices to go to sleep mean that battery life can sometimes now be in months not days. In the early days, the common standard was infrared devices, which required a receiver to be in direct line of sight to the device. Troubleshooting issues sometimes meant moving the placement of the receiver. Bluetooth has done away with this, and a small, discrete and sometimes hidden USB receiver can be under the desk at the back of a desktop style PC. More mobile devices such as laptops and tablets typically now come with bluetooth built in as standard.

So these small devices are now at the stage where it makes sense to use them. Although there are some specific circumstances I have come across where they can cause issues, for the vast majority of users these are good enough for everyday use.

**Wifi networks however are a different matter.**

While newer versions of the wifi standard are increasingly getting better, one of the issues that a large built up city such as Hong Kong has is that there is wireless congestion.

It is not uncommon for there to be 20 or even 50 wireless networks in range. Congested wifi spectrum results in what can be unreliable performance.

The issue is this. Wifi is split into a limited number of channels. When your computer or device talks to the wifi router, if it detects something else already transmitting on that channel it will wait and then send the signals when the channel gets quieter. The more networks there are the more likely that there will be interference which will require longer waits or the need to resend data. When more networks are using the same channels, the degradation is not linear but much worse. This is made even worse with modern wifi routers, as one of the ways they get more speed is to use multiple channels (channel bonding) at the same time, which exacerbates the issue. Putting in additional routers may also not help if they are not specifically placed and configured to not compete with each other.

The result is that wifi can be fine one minute and completely unreliable another minute. This may be fine when you are doing something like email or web browsing, in which a short delay may not make much difference. However if you are trying to have a real-time conversation or video chat, the result can be jitter and drop outs. You may also find that in congested spaces, that the wifi periodically drops out completely.

So my recommendation is that if you are setting up a new office, then still make sure you plan to have network cable sockets at each location where people may be working. Wifi provides an unmatched convenience for the most part, but if you plan to only rely on wifi, then be prepared for those occasions where it doesn't work, and of course the resulting user complaints.



## Hardware refresh cycle for portable/desktop computer systems and network hardware

Words: **MICHAEL EARLY**

**“Small and medium size businesses can also gain productivity increases, and increase the efficiency of their staff by evaluating the age of their current equipment and not just use equipment until it breaks completely.”**

**A**ll businesses like to gain value from the computer systems that they purchase and use, but this must be balanced with the productivity and efficiency that can be derived from aging equipment that was purchased years ago. Corporations have historically set their computer refresh cycle in the three to five years mark so that equipment purchased years ago will be replaced by the new standard of equipment for different types of users. Longer cycles closer to five years increase the chance of employees being inefficient for much longer. We have found that while some staff may be vocal about performance issues, the vast majority just struggle on without complaint, partly because of the fear of change. Changing to a new computer can be daunting because it can take many days to get everything just “right” again. However in many cases when “forced” to upgrade they are delighted at the increases in speed. Many computers just tend to get slower with age.

Small and medium size businesses can also gain productivity increases, and increase the efficiency of their staff by evaluating the age of their current equipment and not just use equipment until it breaks completely. Hard disk systems on a desktop/laptop computer that were purchased five or more years ago can fail at any

time and if you do not have an adequate backup of that computer then you can lose valuable company data. An older computer that may have insufficient memory and be running an older version of Windows or Mac OSX will be slow to start up and use, and will be impacting on the productivity of your staff as they are continually waiting for the computer to respond to commands.

Purchasing current computer equipment can bring about large productivity gains as systems with faster processors, adequate memory and Solid State Drives running the latest Operating Systems provide much more performance than computers that were purchased even three or four years ago. The cost of computer monitors has also reduced so that staff can now use a larger monitor or multiple monitors with their laptop or desktop to be more efficient and reduce eye strain. Some computer monitors now also include touchscreen functionality to provide the level of interaction with software that we have all become accustomed to through the use of tablet computers and smartphones.

With network hardware such as switches, routers, firewalls and wifi equipment there has also been considerable progress in new security and performance features that will make your network much more secure, and provide more efficient access to your company's information.

The best step forward for any company is to audit the current computer and network equipment in conjunction with your IT department or consultant, and then make a plan for how to phase in a practical level of equipment that will enhance the productivity and efficiency of your staff.





# Secure remote access for employees who travel or work from home

Words: MICHAEL EARLY

**C**ompanies that have staff that travel or need to access the company network from home, have the challenge of providing secure remote access for their staff. If the access provided for staff to the company network is not completely secure, then this becomes a possible target for hackers to gain access and install ransomware on the network or steal Intellectual Property. The effect on a company can be at least the cost of paying a ransom and may include the loss of company information that impacts on the viability of the company's operations. This has become more complex as remote access methods that were common in the past are no longer considered secure.

All companies that provide remote access for their staff need to consider these risks and implement a policy that considers any or all of the following:

- Secure firewall implementations
- Isolation of computers not validated for secure access
- Certificate based access
- Two factor based access
- Secure access to virtual desktop systems

Using two factor authentication greatly increases the security. A password is something-you-know but can be watched, shared or copied. Adding a second factor is usually done with something that must be physically present on the user, so could not be used by hackers in Russia or some other distant location. Typically a second factor is a token like the familiar RSA dongle, an SMS to

**“Providing remote access for your staff to your company's network can provide you with productivity gains from staff that travel or need to work from home and can also be part of a DR plan for pandemic and other types of Business Continuity Plan (BCP) risks.”**

a mobile device or even software on a phone or tablet device that generates a onetime pin code. When used in conjunction with a password, the something-you-know and something-you-have significantly increases the protection.

A virtual desktop is a system that allows a user to connect to resources in a company network, but only sends mouse, keyboard and screen information between the user and the company system. This can allow access from any computer, even one that might not have been setup and secured by the company, and does so securely.

Providing remote access for your staff to your company's network can provide you with productivity gains from staff that travel or need to work from home, and can also be part of a DR plan for pandemic and other types of Business Continuity Plan (BCP) risks. However you must first put in place a secure remote access system, or else you may have some unexpected visitors on your company network that could put you out of business or siphon off data for extended periods.





## SMARTPHONE/ TABLET APPS FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMER FOCUSED APPLICATIONS

Words: **MICHAEL EARLY**

**T**he usage of smartphones in Hong Kong for business and personal use is at an all-time high with 96% of Hong Kong's smartphone users browsing the internet every day which is the highest rate in Asia (Go-Globe report). Hong Kong also has a Mobile subscriber penetration rate (January 2016) of 230.4% according to the Office of the Communications Authority. The smartphone has become the most convenient and common way for people to access online content.

What this means for your business is that you now have a way to provide information to your staff and customers on a device that is more usable and accessible than a tablet/ laptop or desktop computer. A smartphone app provides you with the ability to personally message your customers with new information and special offers, and not have these messages caught up in a spam folder which might happen if you had emailed them. The customer will receive a personal notification on their smartphone from the app and this will get more attention than an email that may get buried within their email inbox. Access to your latest newsletters and reports, providing access to historical information, providing invitations to events that you run, and booking appointments via the app are all possibilities.

Most businesses already have a website and possibly may have what is called a mobile-friendly website. Content that can be accessed quickly and manipulated in some fashion (eg. reports, charts or calculations) could be done via a smartphone app rather than just a mobile-friendly website. This could allow a customer to make a personalized request for a quotation, or ask for further information from within the app, that is tailored to their specific requirements at the time. A customer could also

send personal messages to key members of your staff from within the app. Other possibilities include using the app for support interactions on your company's products and services.

Having your own company smartphone app would allow you to conduct targeted marketing to selected customers that may be more receptive to particular types of new product and service offerings, or those who have not been an active customer for some period of time. To encourage your customers to install and use the smartphone app you can conduct a phased marketing campaign to inform them of special promotions (including loyalty programs and special offers etc.) and the wealth of information that will be available to those who install and use the app. This campaign could include incentives for customers that install the app. The users that do install the smartphone app will have qualified themselves as users that are receptive to receiving information and offers in this format, and you can then market to them accordingly.

Having the ability to market to your customers via a smartphone app can provide your company with an important competitive advantage, and having your own smartphone app also enables your company to provide timely content to your customers that will make you stand out from your competition.

Of course, it is important to bear in mind that having an app may not be suitable for all businesses. Consideration about which services might be moved to an app-centric model needs to be considered. The key benefit is that an app is with the user at all times, so those services that benefit from not having to wait for a user to return home or to the office would benefit the most.

# FEATURED PRODUCTS



## THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES



**L**enovo ThinkPad X1 Yoga is the first convertible device with an OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode) display and one of the lightest 14-inch laptops on the market, weighing 2.8 lbs. It features a 14" 2K (2560 x 1440) touch screen display.

The X1 Yoga's unique design and touchscreen display allow the screen to flip around 360 degrees which support four flexible usage modes for when you want to work, present, create, and connect. The system automatically switches system settings and locks the keyboard in place when you change between four modes – Laptop, Stand, Tablet, and Tent.

The X1 Yoga includes an active stylus, which docks into the keyboard base and when connected it recharge—15 seconds of charging gives up to 100 minutes of stylus use. With Lenovo's exclusive WRITEit technology, you can enter handwriting into any input field across hundreds of apps, and it automatically suggests and corrects your writing.

The X1 Yoga uses Trusted Platform Module (TPM) technology to encrypt your data and keep it secure. A fingerprint scanner, located just below the right edge of the keyboard, lets you keep the X1 Yoga locked down, no need for a password.

It also features a 6th-generation Intel Core i5 processor, 8GB of system memory, 256 GB of SATA storage, Intel HD Graphics 520, a 14-inch FHD display with anti-glare technology, LED backlight, IPS, and a 16:9 aspect ratio making it quite pleasing to view. The battery life lasts up to 8 hours and a 30-day standby – you can work all day without recharging. Lenovo's quick charge technology can add up to 50% capacity with just 30 minutes of charging.

<http://shopap.lenovo.com/ph/en/laptops/thinkpad/>

**T**P-LINK's M7350 is the only MiFi (Mobile Wifi) device that is network-unlocked. Supporting the latest generation 4G LTE network, the M7350 can reach up to 150Mbps download speed and creates a wireless network for up to 10 devices. The M7350's compact and elegant design as well as a powerful 2550mAh internal battery, make it an ideal travel companion. It operates for up to 10 hours on full capacity and 600 hours on standby. With its innovative TFT-display, users can have much more intuitive information on the device's operating status such as battery life and signal strength.

[http://www.tp-link.com/en/products/details/cat-4692\\_M7310.html](http://www.tp-link.com/en/products/details/cat-4692_M7310.html)



**C**ube is a new kind of mini projector designed for mobile devices. It transform any screen into a vivid, 120-inch display that projects anywhere. The LED unit of Cube mobile projector has a lifetime of 20,000 hours. It is an extremely portable and lightweight projector that can be adjusted in your pocket. It is compatible with any HDMI/MHL device and equipped with its own speaker and SD card reader.

<https://rif6.com/product/cube/>





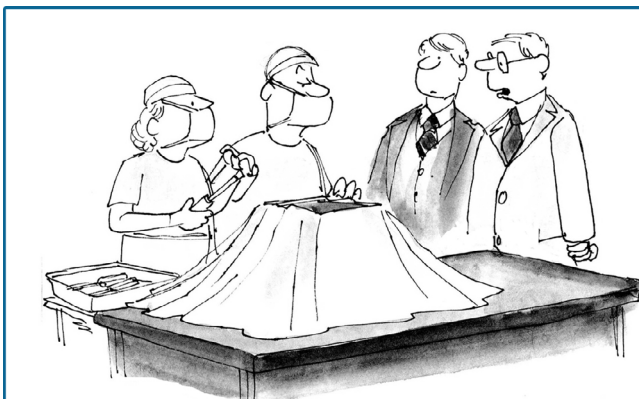
## FREE 1 Hour IT Review for Your Business

Velocity Technology can provide qualifying businesses with a free 1 hour initial consultation to assess your current IT systems. We can examine your current IT systems and highlight any areas that could affect your business continuity or the productivity of your staff.

This is the perfect time to evaluate the state of your IT systems and position your company for increased efficiency and effectiveness in 2016!

Contact us today by emailing: [itreview@velocity-technology.com](mailto:itreview@velocity-technology.com)

Or call us on +852 2915 5096



"The computer repair people take their job very seriously."



"Sometimes we laugh, sometimes we cry, but never do we throw our computers out the window."

## Business Humour

An elderly farmer went to the attorney's office and said he wanted to get a divorce. The attorney asked if he had any grounds. "Yeah, I got about 240 acres," the farmer said. The attorney replied, "But, I mean do you have a case?"

"No, I have a John Deere."

"Well, do you have a grudge?"

The farmer said, "Yeah, I got a grudge. That's where I park my John Deere."

"No, I mean do you have a suit?"

"Yes, sir, I got a suit. I wear it to church on Sundays."

Next, the exasperated lawyer asked, "Well, sir, does your wife beat you up or anything?"

"No, we both get up about 4:30."

The attorney finally asked, "OK, so why do you want a divorce?"

"Well," said the farmer, "I can't have a meaningful conversation with her!"

## Have a Chance to Win a HK\$200 Starbucks Gift Voucher

For this issue of the newsletter we will give away a HK\$200 Starbucks Gift Voucher to the first correct email sent to [trivia@velocity-technology.com](mailto:trivia@velocity-technology.com).

The question for this issue is: Who is the famous tailor in Burlington Arcade in Hong Kong, who is reputed to have made clothes for celebrities such as Pavarotti, Margaret Thatcher, George Bush, Prince Charles and Michael Jackson?

**Email us now with your answer!**



Velocity Technology provides first-class IT services to businesses that are looking to take advantage of new opportunities. With IT services that are matched to meet the specific needs of your business, you can enjoy the advantages of technology without the stress it often creates. Infrastructure Services include:

#### Managed Services



Transfer the day-to-day management of your technology to us.

#### Virtualization



Make the move to a more dynamic infrastructure through Virtualization. Let Velocity show you how.

#### Security



Protect your network from the online threats that could literally put you out of business before it's too late.

We have been in business in Asia since 1998.

Our team is made up of expatriates from Canada and Australia and the best local talent in Hong Kong and Manila.

**We're small enough to care:** Flexible and familiar.

**We're big enough to be effective:** With a management team who have either worked in Fortune 500 companies or advised local listed companies, but have the desire and drive to go out on our own.

**Benefit from a sensible approach to IT:** Common sense and a clear view of what works and what doesn't.

### Other Services & Solutions

#### Cloud Solutions

Business Analytics

Mobile Applications

Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity

#### Hosted Solutions

IT Consulting & Implementation

Software Architecture & Development

Offshore Software Development and Support

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