



A Monthly Newsletter of Invisik Corporation

Spring-time Greetings from Invisik!



Matt Jurcich, President
Invisik Corporation

First and foremost, we sincerely apologize that not everyone got our last two editions of "The Intercom". We think we've gotten to the bottom of the issue with our vendor, and expect all future newsletters to reach you.

Just as important, thank you to the many of you who inquired after it. It made our team happy to know you're not just reading it, but actually looking forward to it. Thanks for letting us know how we're doing!

And as always, if there's anything techie you want us to cover in an upcoming issue, we're all ears. Send us an email at info@invisik.com or call 612.298.3000.

*Good networking,
Matt Jurcich*

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Top 5 Pitfalls of IT Projects and How to Avoid Them



The IT industry is primarily based on projects, and even companies that are not IT related will at some time need to launch into an IT-related project. Regardless of whether the IT project is small or large, too often small mistakes from the outset cause the goal of the project to be missed entirely. Mistakes, delays, and other problems can be costly both to you and your company. Below are the top 5 pitfalls many IT projects fall into, and how to avoid them.

1. **No plan.** Possibly the biggest mistake any company can make is to not have a plan. A project without a plan is like a football team without a quarterback. Before your next IT project, consider putting together a project plan that outlines your final goal, your steps to achieve it, and what resources will be needed. Involving all project team contributors in the early stages of the planning phase is also a good idea. Not only does this help encourage your team to stay on track, but it will assure different perspectives and even minor insights are captured at the start.
2. **Unrealistic budget.** An equally important mistake to avoid is having an unrealistic budget. All managers know they have to set and stick with a budget, however, few managers really know how to set a proper budget. To avoid the pitfall of going over budget consider the following:
 - ☑ *Determine the knowable costs.* These can include software, parts, wages, fixed costs, etc. Be sure to include costs like shipping and tools needed for the project.
 - ☑ *Consider different parts of the project separately.* Try to think which are more likely to have problems. Budget an extra percentage of the total costs based on how risky that aspect is.

☑ *Look at budgets from similar past projects.*
These will help you judge whether you are on the right track.

3. **Poorly defined expectations.** Many projects suffer from members not really understanding the expected outcome of efforts made. This could cause a decrease in morale among your employees. Instead, review and update goals regularly. Tweak the scope or timelines as progress is made. Continuing to involve project team members or employees at this stage of the process is equally important.
4. **Scope creep.** While some change in the focus of the project can be good, beware of scope creep. Scope creep is uncontrolled or big changes to the original plan of the project. This can happen when the extent of the project is not properly defined or controlled. It is important to clearly define the scope of the project for both yourself and for staff, and to try to make as few changes as possible once the project is launched.
5. **Poor communication.** This cannot be stressed enough: communication is key. Many projects fail due to lack of good communication and interaction between the parties involved. We recommend that you stay in constant contact with all parties to ensure clear understanding of the project and your goals. Encourage an open communication environment where team members and staff can talk about anything and suggest ideas.

With good communication, a clear focus on the project, and a solid plan, your next IT project is on its way to success. Contact us for additional resources and assistance planning your next IT project—big or small. Email support@invisik.com or call (612) 298-3000.▲



The Accumulating Cloud Trend

Cloud computing systems are continuing to grow and become more popular with small businesses. As cloud services continue to evolve along with the needs of users and clients, we can look forward to positive developments for the cloud in 2012.



Though cloud computing is already a powerful IT service that has made a positive difference in the way businesses operate, it is far from reaching its peak. In fact, there are still many aspects of it that are continuously being improved and developed—especially for small and medium sized businesses. There are, however, particular trends that have improved significantly in just the past year.

Better security~ One of the major trends in cloud services is improvements in the security aspect. Businesses trust cloud providers with important and sensitive data, and with cyber-attacks becoming more frequent and clever, service providers have stepped up their security protocols to keep client data safe.

Wider integration and compatibility~ As it stands, there are still several issues between clouds (especially public ones) and an enterprise's systems that can limit the connectivity and data exchange between users. The same can be said for the current standards being used, which have the tendency to be very vendor-centric. The trend now is to reverse this, and provide better connectivity and data sharing, as well as less vendor-centric standards for better compatibility and integration.

A more "solid" cloud~ As can be expected with any emerging technology, there are some opportunistic service providers hitching onto the increasing popularity of cloud computing to offer half-baked cloud services. Although this is unfortunate, it also forces the IT industry to better define what cloud computing is and is not. This articulation will help prune away service providers who are not offering the solid cloud solutions.

Though cloud services is still just budding, even at this early stage it has allowed many companies—especially small businesses—to change how they manage their operations. Significant benefits that can be both quantified and qualified make it logical that small businesses are the current leaders in adopting the cloud.

Focus on main business~ When companies move their business management systems to the cloud, the cloud provider takes care of managing the infrastructure. Managers can focus on the needs of the customers and the business to generate more revenue, instead of being sidetracked by IT issues. Compare this to a fish taken out of its pond. Sure, you can put the fish in a tank in your office, but to keep it from going belly up, you have a lot of responsibility: feeding, cleaning, temperature control, sun exposure, etc. Alternatively, if you return the fish to its natural environment, it will flourish—and you can go visit as much as you want!

Save on capital expenditures~ With cloud computing, companies can invest less in servers or upgrades to run new versions of applications needed to run the business. Desktops and laptops can be used for a longer period of time when business management applications are accessed via the web. With most cloud applications, the business only pays for the services and software they need, then adjust user counts as the business grows.

Connectivity and mobility~ Businesses with multiple locations or personnel who telecommute and travel benefit greatly from cloud computing. In addition to the advantages of unlimited storage, on-the-go employees on the cloud have automatic off-site backups, higher-level security, and the ability to access their information from any Internet-connected device *anywhere*.

These are exciting times as the IT industry, vendors, and service providers constantly work on improving what is already a fantastic concept. For additional information about cloud services and what it can do for your business, contact us for a consultation. Call (612) 298-3000 or email support@invisik.com. ▲

INVISIK TRIVIA BOWL

April's Trivia Bowl Question:

Which breed of chicken originally from South America does not need dye to color its eggs their natural color of blue?

- A. Silkie
- B. Araucana
- C. Bourbonnaise



Be the first to respond with the correct answer to win an Amazon.com gift card. Call **612.298.3000** or email trivia@invisik.com.

Congratulations to Sarah Wiley of Eagan. She was the first to correctly answer March's question:

According to the Guinness World Record, what is the most number of leaves found on a clover stem? (C.) 56.

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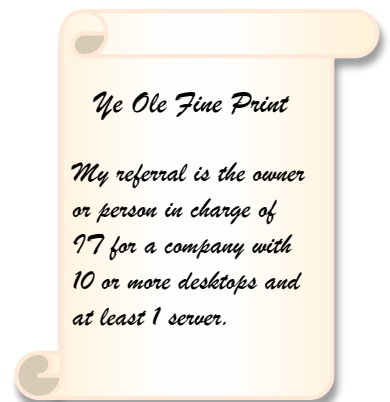
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Why 24/7 Network Monitoring is Good for Business



These days, the majority of businesses—regardless of size—have an IT network of some sort. At a minimum, they are connected to the Internet, and at a larger scale, they are connected to other

networks. Many of these businesses have come to rely on internal/external networks for their day-to-day business. However, when one of the networks goes down, this can be a problem since outages can cause losses in profits. Enter: 24/7 Network Monitoring.

24/7 Network Monitoring helps businesses by acting as an early warning system that alerts company managers or owners of potential problems before they strike. 24/7 Network Monitoring is essential proactive, preventative care for you businesses. If your company has a zero-to-low threshold for downtime, then it is high time to consider 24/7 Network Monitoring.

What Does Network Monitoring Monitor? There are numerous things to monitor with Network Monitoring including application and system performance, bandwidth usage, and server status. You can also set up monitoring of additional areas such as server load, ink levels in printers, time left on software license agreements, which devices are connected to the network, their data usage, and more. It will monitor and alert you to any potential issue 24/7.

It is important to understand that the one thing Network Monitoring does not typically monitor is unauthorized access to networks. It can be set up to look for unauthorized access, but such security features should be handled by a more complex threat management system like a firewall.

How Does Network Monitoring Help Me? Network Monitoring is a preventative system intended to warn of potential network problems so you can proactively seek solutions before a vital component of your network goes down. When implemented correctly, it is a

valuable addition to businesses because it can minimize network crashes and loss of productivity (and loss of profits).

What Should I Monitor? In an ideal world, businesses should monitor each and every network. However, most small businesses do not have the budget to implement a full system all at once, but can get to this point over time. Therefore, we recommend implementing a system like this in stages. The most common areas to start with are:

- Local Area Network (LAN) Data
- Internet data usage
- server status
- alerts to existing networks

For additional information about 24/7 Network Monitoring, contact us to take a look at your network. Email support@invisik.com or call (612) 298-3000. ▲

Capturing iPad Screenshots

If there are times when you want to capture what is currently being shown on your iPad's screen, it is easy to do. Simply press the Home button and then the Sleep/Wake button simultaneously. When you hear a click, the screenshot has been taken. View your captured screenshots in the photo gallery.





Pinterest 101

It is not yet near the gargantuan status of Facebook or Twitter, but lesser-known Pinterest is developing a following. And if your target-market is geared towards women, then Pinterest can be a very versatile and unique online marketing tool for your business—that is, if you use it the right way.

Pinterest is like a social media, scrapbook, photo album, and bulletin board combined in one. Each interest / theme has its own 'Pinboard' where you put photos, videos, or other media that interest you. What makes Pinterest unique is its concept, which has been consistently growing in popularity particularly amongst women. While Facebook and Twitter are more open to overt advertising, Pinterest takes a more conservative stance. That is, advertising is not exactly prohibited, but any marketing should be subtle and consistent with a personal Pinterest profile.

Here are some basic tips that will help you utilize Pinterest to your advantage:

1. Understand your market. The first question you should ask yourself is if Pinterest is something worth

your time investment. Since the majority of Pinterest users are women, ask yourself if your products and services appeal to them directly.

2. Invest time. As in many other social networking sites, you need to put a personal and human touch to your Pinterest profile and in the way you interact with your audience. Log in often, update regularly, and respond quickly to any kind of feedback.
3. Use other social media to augment Pinterest. Since Pinterest is less known, use your other social media accounts to point people your way. Tweet or updating your Facebook status with your most recent Pinterest profile update.
4. Talk about what you represent. As mentioned earlier, since Pinterest is not about overt advertising, you need to market yourself in a different way. Talk about what your brand is all about. What do you represent? What content can you provide that would inspire your audience to share on their own Pinboards? What is good about Pinterest is that it challenges you to be more creative and appealing to potential clients. ▲

More tech tips inside...



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