Michael Mellott, President

"As a business owner, I know you don't have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That's where we *shine!* Call us today and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!
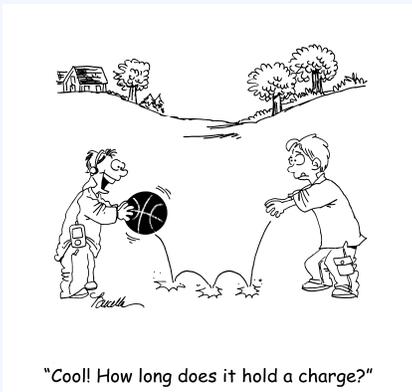
**Volume IV, Issue VIII
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Inside This Issue…

"Cool! How long does it hold a charge?"

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"Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably"

Disaster *Recovery*: The Most Critical Part To Data Backups That Most Companies Overlook

A few months back tornados ripped through   Joplin, MO and Tuscaloosa, Alabama causing massive devastation. If you were fortunate, you only had to suffer through minor interruptions of utility services, with others paying a far steeper price. In fact, a colleague of mine who also offers IT services had his office in Joplin reduced to a pile of rubble (see photo). This got me thinking about how important disaster recovery planning is to any business. No one expects terrible things to happen, but when

they do, having that plan in place can really save your bacon. And one of the MOST important aspects of this is the *recovery* part – how are you going to get that data back onto a working platform that allows you to continue serving your customers and operating your   business. The shocker for most business owners is that simply having a copy of the data does NOT guarantee a fast recovery. Let me give you an analogy to help you understand…

Let's suppose we put a disaster recovery plan for your home. Your house would represent the server and platform, and all your furniture and personal items would be the data. Now let's suppose we could make a backup of your home by making an exact copy of everything that's in your house (all your furniture, appliances, clothing, etc.) and storing it in a "backup" shed. Then the unthinkable happens: your house gets leveled by a tornado, flood or fire and everything is gone (or a critical part of it is damaged and needs to be replaced). You would think, "Well, at least I have a copy!" True, but the first thing you would need to do is replace the home itself (remember, that's the platform that everything resides on). Next you would have to "reinstall" the services like gas, electricity and water (let's call that the software). Then you would have to haul everything from the shed back to the house and "reformat" it by arranging it into the house. Depending on the extent of the damage done to your house, that could take days or weeks; chances are you'd have to find a hotel to live out of in the meantime. In addition, there's the time and cost of moving everything back in and re-arranging and restoring everything to its proper place.

Plus, the above *assumes* you have a recent, working copy of your entire home and everything in it. If you failed to make a copy – or if the shed where you were storing everything had a water leak that destroyed everything inside due to mold – then you're really out of luck.

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Of course, this is a simple analogy – and there are ways to back up your data and network so that recovery can happen inexpensively in a matter of hours versus days or weeks. But if you simply think having a tape backup is going to be your saving grace, you might be unpleasantly surprised. I can't tell you the number of businesses who ended up losing incredibly valuable, irreplaceable data because they didn't think through the RECOVERY part of the backup equation.

So what do you need to think about? First, the way you backup your data should be based on how important your data is and how fast you would need to be back up and running in the event of a disaster. If losing your data would only be a mild inconvenience and you could stand to be down for a couple of days, then tape backups may be okay. If that's not an option for you and there are certain critical functions that need to happen to keep you from getting into hot water with your customers and to prevent you losing a LOT of cash, then you want something more reliable than tape drives.

The BEST thing to do is contact our office to schedule a strategy meeting to go over your needs and expectations for what should happen in the event of a disaster. **Call Michael today at (410) 884-0225.**

5 (Cheap) Ways To Make Old Computers Faster and More Reliable

#1. Add Memory. One of the most inexpensive and effective ways to improve a computer's performance is to install more RAM (random access memory). This will speed up the applications installed on your computer and allow you to open and run more programs simultaneously.

#2. Upgrade The Processor Or Add A Graphics Accelerator. If you are just looking for a little more "zoom," upgrading the processor or installing a graphics accelerator will give your computer the ability to process information faster and improve its overall speed.

#3. Perform Regular Maintenance On Your Servers and Desktops. Computers, like cars, need regular maintenance to perform at top speed and reliability. At a minimum, you should run ScanDisk and the Disk Defrag Utility on your machines once a month. This will make your applications and files load and run faster.

#4. Run A Spyware Scan Once A Week. One telltale sign that your computer is infected with spyware is slow, unstable performance. Spyware sucks up your system's resources to carry out its evil intent, slowing down your computer and even causing it to freeze and crash.

#5. Disable Or Remove Unnecessary Programs Running In The Background. Many computers have pre-installed software programs that use up system resources and slow down your computer.

While these recommendations will certainly speed up your system, they aren't a miracle cure for a seriously out-of-date computer network. If your computer or network constantly crashes, freezes up, or runs painfully slow, then it's time to call XPERTECHS for an upgrade (410) 884-0225.

The Lighter Side...

Church Bulletin Bloopers

The following are real messages that were posted on church bulletin boards:

- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It is a good chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

- The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.

- The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks On The Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching For Jesus."

- Next Thursday, there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

- Barbara C. remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.

- The 'Over 60s Choir' will be disbanded for the summer with the thanks of the entire church.

- Missionary from Africa speaking at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine. Name: Bertha Belch. Announcement: "Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa."

- Announcement in a church bulletin for a National Prayer & Fasting Conference: "The cost for attending the Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals."

Why You Should Avoid Using A Debit Card When Shopping Online

If you shop online (and these days, who doesn't?), you'll want to make sure you use a credit card instead of a debit card to protect yourself from online scams and rip offs. The biggest advantage credit cards offer is a buffer for payment. By law, your maximum loss if your credit card number is stolen is $50, and most credit card companies and banks will cover the entire cost.

When you use a debit card, the funds come directly out of your bank account, which means you might have trouble disputing the charge if you get scammed or if you are not happy with the product or service you purchased.

Here are some other tips to make shopping online safer:

- Research your merchant before buying. The Federal Trade Commission maintains a web site (www.consumer.gov) that provides many buyers' guides, lists of tips, and links to helpful resources.
- Never send your credit card number in an e-mail because it can easily be stolen.
- Frequently check your credit card statements for suspicious entries. If you spot anything strange, contact your credit card company immediately to question the charge.
- Call the company before placing an order. See if a real person answers the phone and how difficult it is to get someone live. Ask for their return policy for damaged or inadequate goods, expected delivery dates, shipping and handling fees, and after-purchase support.
- Watch for hidden extras added on at checkout such as postage and packing costs, and handling fees. VAT and Customs charges for goods from overseas can add greatly to the final cost.
- Read the company's privacy policy carefully. Make sure you uncheck any boxes giving the vendor permission to sell or share your information with other vendors.
- Use a 3rd Party service like PayPal or Google checkout to make your purchases. They retain your credit card# and it does not get sent to the merchant.

Attention Bloggers!
(And future followers)

XPERTECHS has launched a new blog where you can read, comment, and discuss the latest technology trends for your small business. Gain our unedited insight into popular technology topics such and mobile computing, cloud hosting, remote backup, and more! Do you have a topic you would like to hear about? Then post us a comment.

www.xpertechs.blogspot.com

Groupon:
Good Idea Or Invitation To Price Shoppers?

Groupon, launched in November 2008 in Chicago, is a highly successful online marketing venue for businesses looking to gain more customers and for consumers looking for great deals on things they already buy. Here's how it works: Businesses wanting to reach more customers sign up for a "daily deal" promotion where they offer some product or service at half off the normal costs. Groupon then sends that offer out to a list of users who have signed up to receive these daily deals. But here's the "catch" (or the brilliance depending on how you look at it): in order for the deal to be "on," a certain number of people must buy the deal – otherwise it's off.

What this does is fuel people who WANT the deal to pass it on to friends and family to try and pump up the offer so they can get in on it. In doing so, Groupon naturally gets more users to sign up for their daily deal and keeps a hefty percentage of the sale. Also, the deal is only good for that day, building in an automatic urgency to buy. Clearly this is a good deal for consumers who get to buy products and services at deep discounts – but is it a good deal for the businesses that are using this as an advertising media?

Some say yes because it allows a new startup business to gain actual buyers to their store or web site at a break even or loss. And if you are providing a service that people really like, chances are they'll come back and tell their friends. However, some say it only attracts price shoppers who have zero loyalty; and no business wants that type of customer, especially when you have to deliver the products and services at a break even or loss. So how do you find out whether or not it will work for you? The best idea is to run a test and track the results. Obviously if you offer a great service that begs repeat business, it makes sense to advertise using Groupon because the upfront loss will be more than made up from in long-term repeat business and referrals. But if you have a problem with customer retention and loyalty, Groupon might not be the best place for you to advertise. To learn more on how to become a featured business on Groupon, visit **www.grouponworks.com**

Thanks for the Kind Words …

Our internal technology needs used to be handled by a full-time IT support person. Yet, we often felt that we were behind in technology and our needs were not being fulfilled. Our decision to outsource our IT support to XPERTECHS has resulted in a savings of 40% using their XperCARE Proactive Managed IT Services. Not only have we cut our costs significantly, but we have reduced our daily computer issues and disruptions. Our move to XperCARE has been a smooth transition and has delivered a new level of efficiency, accountability and security.

**Eric Ward, Director of Business Operations,
Bignell Watkins Hasser Architects P.C., Annapolis, MD**

If you would like to record a video testimonial for our website, contact Michael at (410) 884-0225

Get More Free Tips, Tools, and Services at our Website: WWW.XPERTECHS.COM