



# microTECH Times

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## 3 Most Common Technology Pitfalls For Small Businesses And How To Turn Over A New Leaf

Business owners across the nation, heck even around the world, often cringe when they hear the words IT Management. So much of our time is spent engaging clients and vendors through the use of tools online and in our office. However, often progress is stalled because of a hardware failure, software glitch, incompatibility, or even data loss (this list could go on forever as I am sure you know.) The point is awareness and a proactive approach to IT can keep your company up and running as well as efficient. Take a look at these 7 most common technology pitfalls and how to avoid them.

### 1. Data breaches can bring productivity to a screeching halt.

I am sure you've heard about how horrible data breaches have crippled government entities and businesses alike. Data breaches are defined as any sensitive or confidential information that is viewed or stolen by an unauthorized user. While breaches have become common, 2017 was even dubbed the "year of the data breach," no one wants to clean up after such an offence. Data breaches can become very costly for your company and for your clients.

**Avoid data breaches.** Stay on top of current threats with a good antivirus solution, a firewall,

regular system monitoring and backups. In addition, set time aside to review these safeguards with your people. Talk openly with your staff to be sure they know how to identify potential threats and keep your company safe. Security is everyone's responsibility.

### 2. Weak credentials leave an open invitation for attackers to dive into your network.

One of the leading vulnerabilities companies face is ineffective identity access management. Easy passwords or ways to bypass multi-factor authentication may allow you to jump right in when you need to get work done, but may also be a potential weakness allowing others access too.

**Overcome weak credentials.** Many companies have changed over to a single sign-on solution that allows one login for multiple resources. These login credentials are verified against a directory of users to allow the proper access levels. In addition, there are great tools to allocate privileges to specific areas of your

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### Fall Is Here!

September 22nd marks the first day of Fall. Kids are back in school, business is wrapping up the third quarter, and we've all put away our white clothes, right?

### Slow children at play.

Surely by now you've seen a joke or two like this that plays on the use of comma's. This time of year brings us all back to the basics. School has just begun for students around the world. This is a prime time to sponsor a new sports team, get involved in educational events or provide supplies for children in need.

### Businesses are wrapping up the 3rd quarter.

Q3 is always a bit of an indicator for us to position our final focus for the year. Should we market more? Are there any investments we should push before the tax year closes out? New computers, firewalls, servers and software can be a great write-off for your business in 2018, but you've got to get the purchases on the books soon and installation scheduled. Time is run-

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### Does It Feel Like Falling?

"... and all at once, summer collapsed into Fall."  
~O. Wilde

"If money really did grow on trees, what would be everyone's favorite season? Fall!"  
~ Unknown

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."  
~ R. Emerson

"Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall."  
~ F. Fitzgerald

## 3 Common Technology Pitfalls...

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network based on the users necessities. So your employees only have access to what they need to do their job.

### 3. Lack of strategic IT planning.

We often see business owners that are disconnected from IT. They know they need technology to run their business, but they don't know what they truly need to achieve their business goals. In general, most companies strategize annually about how they will focus their resources to be more successful.

**Turn over a new leaf. Plan for your IT needs.** Are your technology tools a part of your annual planning session? Including your IT needs is a great way to ensure your technology can support the growth of your business allowing you to scale without constraints. Don't just wait until things begin to break. Your systems need regular maintenance to ensure they are running properly and safely. Just as Benjamin Franklin said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Of course in cases

where business and technology are concerned, you can toss out the word cure and insert cash. Breaches, back-up failures and broken hardware can quickly translate into significant financial losses. Getting in front of the issues and resolving them before they become a costly mistake will help you push your company to its full potential.

**Need help?** Are you worried about data breaches? Unsure what security your company really needs? Ready to plan for the upcoming year? Give us a call today. We will conduct a Network Security Audit in which we comb through every aspect of your technology, show you potential security threats, and offer our best advice for your company needs in the coming year. Don't just fix things when they break. Turn over a new leaf with annual budgeting for your company's IT needs.

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## Cloud Shapes And Sizes

*We recently had a very distressed client. He had invested in a new cloud solution to store all his company information and make things more accessible. However, his new provider quickly proved to be the wrong shape and size for their company.*

**Shapes of the cloud.** There are a variety of shapes for cloud services. Some offer limited space and undesirable security. Look for a beefy cloud solution with ample storage and a clearly defined security policies including a backup and disaster recovery plan to keep your company information safe.

**Of course size matters.** Have you seen the latest coffee meme? It has a huge cup of coffee on it and says, "Of course size matters, nobody wants a small cup of coffee." Cloud solutions are similar. Nobody really wants a tiny provider with inconsistent availability and shotty service. Small fragile cloud providers pose more of a risk than a benefit.

## Upgrade Or Just Update?

*Software companies release updates often to add features, update current feature and patch vulnerabilities. These updates address functionality and security concerns from users just like you. So, how do you know if you should just keep updating or if it's time for an upgrade?*

### What are updates?

Updates simply modify the current product with the latest additional features, security patches, and enhancements. Regular updates will help keep your software secure.

### What is an upgrade?

Upgrading is replacing your current solution with a newer, often better, version of your software or a completely new type of program. This can be quite an undertaking.

### How do you know what's best?

It's all preference really. Some industries have specific software required to stay competitive. In this case, updates may be perfect. However, there are new software solutions released each year that enhance many functions for businesses. Explore additional options for your more generic programs annually. You may find a new upgrade that could help you streamline your operations.





## Fall Is Here...

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ning short. Give us a call today! We'd love to work on your new implementation project.

**Coco Chanel never bought it.** Have you ever heard the old rule; no white after Labor Day? Coco Chanel never bought that rule. She wore white year round. But many people have long accepted that caution as fashion law. Among upper classes in the late 1800's, white was reserved mainly for resort, sport and summer wear. When Labor Day became a federal holiday in 1894, the fashion powers-that-be accepted the day as the end of summer and, thus, the end of white clothing. Those silly rules eventually filtered down from the swells to everyone else and by the 1950's women's magazines were repeating the rule. Even today, white wear still suggests vacation or non-working time.

**Progress.** While back to school time is always considered progress, wrapping up Q3 may prove to be a bit stressful. Many business owners audit and plan during this time of the year. Even though it was easy for Coco Chanel push back on doubting fashionistas, business owners need time to assess and implement new tech.

## The Thrills And Fears Of New Technology

*Consider the advent of digital music and those who hated it. Fans didn't hate it: they were trading tracks for free on the Internet. It was CD makers, album artists, music stores, and most of the record labels, which attempted to copy-right, block, sue or otherwise stop digital music. Their efforts were futile.*

**"New technology is often unwelcome,"** according to Harvard professor Caletous Juma, "especially by those who benefit from existing technology," as in the case of record labels. As early as 1878, Leo Tolstoy was writing in his novel Anna Karenina about how peasants resisted farm machines, preferring to reap and sow in the old ways. But, by the 1900s, technology triumphed as it inexorably made farming faster and less expensive. Farm workers were replaced by tractors and other machines, forcing farm workers to flock to the cities. Juma says it isn't the tractor the farm workers feared, instead they feared that they would lose their jobs and identities. That tends to be the case with all new technology.

**New technology is also often opposed by those who will ultimately benefit from it.** In his book, "Innovation and Its Enemies: Why People Resist New Technologies," Juma notes that genetically modified crops were opposed by people who hated pesticides, which modified crops could potentially eliminate. At the same time, they were also supported by people who opposed pesticides. Regardless of their allegiance, progress continued to move the industry forcing everyone to take a new stance. Many found themselves in a comparable or more profitable market after the transition to new technology.

**As new products and technologies are adopted,** people who oppose them make bold, often spurious claims, Juma writes. Coffee is another fantastic example. It was enthusiastically adopted by imams who found it the best stimulant at prayer times. But as coffee spread, its opponents claimed it would make people sterile and drive them to hysteria. As we all know, today, coffee is a huge industry booming in every corner of the world.

**"Technology that makes people more independent and mobile. wins in the end..."** Juma told The Washington Post. The obvious example is cellular phones that were instantly adopted and beloved by all. People no longer had to be at home or at a desk to get that important call. Humans could now move around, at their own convenience, without being tied to a device anchored in their home or office. This mobility created a sense of necessity for consumers. Even late adopters are now finding cellular phones to be useful tools to stay connected with friends and family online.

**A business perspective.** Industry is an ever evolving beast. All business processes from the medical and hospitality industries to business services and legal aid, have grown significantly over the past few decades. New technology is taking over many of the once painstakingly manual processes. Dental practices are a fabulous example, twenty years ago a dental practice needed to keep up their dental records on paper and often develop x-rays in house. X-ray labs and technicians trained in processing the images, were a necessary cost of doing business. In the late 90's, technology began replacing these tedious tasks.

**Technology offers a competitive edge.** Many dental practices were hesitant to implement digital x-ray machines and paperless office solutions due to the costs and learning curve, however, practices that did convert found these operational changes streamlined operations making their businesses more profitable. Today, it is nearly impossible to be competitive in the industry unless you have adapted to these new methods to run your practice. Practices are able to get higher utilization from each employee due to the easily accessible records and efficiency of digitized x-ray records.

**Ready to move forward?** I am sure you've had your eye on a new piece of hardware or a software program for your company. If so, give us a call. We will assess your current network standing and make recommendation for a smooth implementation. After all, putting new technology in place is half the battle.



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**Ask about our fixed price service agreements — Computer support at a flat monthly fee you can budget for, just like payroll!**

## Inquiring Minds...

**Avoiding The Conference Call Cringe.** Ok, it's 2pm you're just getting ready to jump on a conference call with a handful of people. Are you ready? Here are a few quick rules to remember as a host for conference calls.

- 1. Turn off your notifications from your meeting app.** Make sure there is no interrupting ding-dong every time a person joins or drops off. This can really take away from the content and intent of the call.
- 2. Turn off your cell phone or at least silence it.** There is nothing worse than being in the meat of your content when your cell phone ring blares through your mic interrupting your words and derailing your listeners.
- 3. Start promptly.** Even if you are trying to wait for key players to join the call, kick things off with a little question and answer session. Ask the early attendees questions about what they hope to learn or gain from the call. Answer any inquiries with specifics about when you'll discuss their concerns. Keep your attendees engaged from the start.
- 4. Remind everyone about the call and send an agenda.** Don't be shy, send out a friendly reminder about the time of the call the morning of. Give your attendees a little taste of the content with an agenda and ask them to bring questions.

- 5. Pause occasionally and take the temperature of your audience.** Always

take time to breathe and check in with attendees. Make sure you are truly being heard and everyone is on the same track.

- 6. Provide a post-meeting recap.** After the conference call is over, provide a quick recap of the details to give your attendees a refresher of what they've heard. This can spur more questions and conversation.

- 7. Follow-up.** Always, follow-up with each attendee. While this may seem like a given it is one of the most overlooked tasks. Often times there are various attendees on a conference call but only one or two will receive follow-up. The truth is, everyone was there for a reason and has an opinion about the information delivered. Don't discount the opportunity to gather good feedback. While it may not seal the deal, feedback can help you better your content and delivery.

**Conference calls can be an effective tool** for delivering ideas and information to a larger group. Give yourself the upper hand by preparing ahead of time, keeping your attendees engaged, giving attendees all the details and following up promptly.



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## Try A Restore!

My neighbor drove his classic car last weekend for the first time. I was in awe. He's really come a long way on the restoration this summer. This made me think of backups. *Have you restored a file from your backup lately? Is everything you need really in there?* If you cannot answer confidently, **check your backups today!**

Backups are only useful if you can actually recover the data you need it most. Otherwise, backups are really just there to look pretty like a beautiful classic car that has no engine.

Give us a call today for your **Network Security Assessment** and we will review your network including your current backup solution to make sure everything is working as it should.

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