microTECH Times

Technology Decisions Are Not Black And White: What Can You Cut To Save Money During These Uncertain Times?

Today we know every member of the workforce is extremely valuable because when we went home in March, so many things just fell apart. So, where can you cut costs to save money during these uncertain times?

Until a vaccine is available, everyone should stay in quarantine, minimizing social contact. Under this model, we just accept that restaurants, cafes, sports, gyms, theaters, malls cruises, and airlines basically shut down. But business must continue to move forward or the economy will just collapse. So, how can you ensure your business will survive?

Small businesses only have about 27 days of cash flow reserves according to Harvard Business School. At this point, most companies are evaluating what costs to cut in order to save a little money and stay afloat? Everyone is so keen on the concept of "flattening the curve." Really,

business owners should be looking at flattening their business curve by cutting non-essential costs.

Maintain a presence in the market and prepare for the rebound. Here are a few strategies to help you cut costs, while keeping your company safe and visible in your industry.

1. Move your sales online and/or to a more virtual environment. Some companies are able to simply close their brick and mortar store fronts and move to an online only model… others are not. For those of you struggling to convert your business to a more virtual environment, consider cloud computing and online meeting programs to help you stay connected with your team and clients.

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What's Inside

Dirty

- My son tried coffee for the first time today and said it tasted like dirt. I told him, "Well, it was just ground this morning."

- Having dirt in your yard instead of grass is a bold move… But having a giant rock is boulder.

- How much dirt is in a hole that is 2ft deep, 9ft wide, and 10ft long? None. If there was dirt in it, it would not be a hole now would it?

International Mud Day Is Here!

International Mud Day is just around the corner, June 29th. This celebratory day aims to connect kids around the world through earth based activities. Yep! There is finally an excuse to play in the mud.

It's good for your health to play in the mud. It is actually proven to boost the body's immune system. So, toss on some old clothes and get out in the yard with the kiddos. A study from the UK even found that playing in the mud activates neurons that help us produce the brain chemical serotonin.

Fun artistic activities for all. Mud art is a great way to celebrate International Mud Day. It works well with all kinds of surfaces. Paper, cardboard, the ground or even a tree can be great canvas' for your creations. You can make handprints, shoe prints and even full faces with mud and a few other natural items (i.e. seeds, leaves, or other organic materials.) Try building your own mini world with toys in the

Technology Decisions Are Not Black And White...

2. Trim expenses at the office.

It's been a long time since your office has been buzzing with busy bees. Consider talking with your service providers to reduce expenses. Things like disposal services, water delivery, and landscape offerings are a great place to start. Ever wanted to go on that balanced pay plan with your energy company? Now is the time to call and ask about leveling out your expenses or seek cheaper options.

3. Don't panic, begin planning for recovery.

It doesn't cost a dime to make a plan. Have you been holding off on implementing a new program or migrating to a new service? Maybe now is a golden opportunity to get things up and running while the impact of downtime is low for your business. We're not suggesting pushing for pricy projects in the near future, but if your IT guy has been waiting to swap out some old equipment or dump an old copier lease, this may be the perfect time to shop around for a new solution.

Essential technology you should never go cheap on.

Toilet paper! Now there is a topic we've all been hearing about to no end over the past few months. No, I won't pester you on how much to buy or what brand, but it is a great analogy. The cheaper you go on toilet paper, the less protection you have. Technology is very similar. While you're looking at reducing your expenses, don't forget to keep these essential security items in place.

Firewall security.

Sure, you could buy a firewall anywhere, but the ones you find at the local computer store are generally not commercial grade. There are variations of residential and commercial firewalls. Most commercial grade firewalls offer intrusion detection, gateway anti-virus and anti-spam, content filtering, and VPN features to help you keep your network safe.

Data storage.

All businesses have some level of essential data for their clients and company to operate. Don't go cheap on your data storage solution. Not all servers or cloud solutions are created equal. Features and capacity may vary based on the provider you choose. Also, security, data migration, recovery options and storage can be quite spendy. Look for a solution that can house everything you need, backs it up so you have it when you need it most, offers built in security features, and doesn't nickel and dime you for every file you store.

Antivirus protection.

We all use technology to stay connected. Your network is a critical piece of your business to protect. One of the first lines of defense is antivirus software. It guards your computers and networks with the most up-to-date shields against viruses, worms, spyware and even malware. Without this key component, your network may become compromised by infected computers which could ultimately cause data loss and/or down time.

Outsource your IT.

Many small businesses, and even some larger ones, outsource because they don't have to manage IT personnel to get great 24/7 monitoring and services. In addition to availability, the tools an outsourced IT company brings to your company can be invaluable. Why would you want to buy everything outright?

Having trouble identifying what to implement or cut?

Stop playing the Hokey Pokey… give us a call today! We will run a Network Security Audit to review your entire network and present you with a report of vulnerabilities as well as solutions to reduce your expenses.

Network Assessment
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Don't Panic

TO PUT YOUR RIGHT FOOT IN, PRESS 5... TO TAKE IT OUT, PRESS 6... TO PUT...

HOKEY POKEY HOTLINE

Best Video Conferencing Services

Video conferencing is the new meeting space of 2020. Which program should you use?

Check out the features... While many providers offer free plans, some restrict how long a meeting can last, how many people can join and may not open up all the tools like screen share or recording.

Best bang for your buck. Here are a few basic plans that may be a great fit:

- *Zoom:* Large meeting rooms that hold up to 1,000 participants, HD, meeting recording, and calendaring are standard. Basic plans starting at just $15.00.

- *Blue Jeans:* Up to 50 attendees, with advanced features you'll love. Cloud recording and integration with messaging apps for a slow as $16.65.

- *Microsoft Teams:* This feature of Office 365 offers a platform for 1:1 collaboration, group calls, screen sharing with remote control, and shared files.

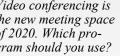*Think* about how your company uses the tool before you decide on a new program.

4 Cybersecurity Strategies To Stay Safe Working At Home

International Mud Day...

mud. Race cars, dinosaurs, or even army guys can be a load of fun as you create your own muddy mini world.

Shake off your fear and stress. Often times we feel reluctant to get our hands dirty for fear of social judgements. So, we're challenging you… this June 29th take a few extra minutes to kick off your shoes, twinkle your toes in the mud and just play like you did when you were ten years old. Let the stress of your week melt away while you sink your fingers in the mud and explore nature.

Mud day origins. International Mud Day began in Nepal. The World Forum Foundation established International Mud Day in 2009. This observation was positioned to encourage global community through nature.

Interested in learning more? Visit https://worldforum foundation.org/ workinggroups/nature/ mud-day/ to read about the full history of Mud Day and grab a few celebration materials. This website has a variety of links to The Mud Book and promotional materials so you can show your support for this fun observance.

Someone in your company no doubt makes sure the networks are secure and safeguards are in place to block bad guys. But who does that at your house? Right, it's you or no one.

Home Internet security. During the current crisis, with employees working at home, many companies have issued employees guidance on how to establish home Internet security. It's definitely guidance worth following. Take a look.

1. When is the last time you changed the locks? Meaning updated your software? You might have noticed that software frequently has security updates. That's because smart hackers figured out how to break the software. But what you may not know is that there is a second wave of crafty hackers who just read the security updates for tips on how to compromise those systems of the folks who don't update. It's like they have a keys to jump right into your computer if you're system is outdated. Your mission is to change the locks and update regularly.

2. Use secret codes. Implement two-factor identification wherever possible. Yes, it is a second step and may be a bit more time consuming. You will have to put in a new secret code every time you do certain tasks, but it is better than a hacker walking out with your briefcase.

3. Use a mask for your computer. Meaning, mask your Internet activity with a VPN. This tool protects your privacy. It doesn't protect you from phishing, malicious software, or digital viruses, but at least you aren't accessing your company website and tools in cyber-public.

4. Reinforce endpoint security. All devices used to access your company information are potential entry points for hackers to infiltrate your network. Setup firewalls and install antivirus software on every desktop or laptop computer used for work. Make a company policy with basic system necessities in order to use personal equipment for work.

Create a company equipment standard. Employees should only be connecting to your network using a VPN, strong passwords, multi-factor authentication whenever possible, and through an updated connection. We encourage everyone to update their home router from the default settings with a new password, make sure your firmware is updated to patch vulnerabilities and set the encryption to WPA2 or WPA3.

Need help? Give us a call. We will help you spot suspicious activities and vulnerabilities.

Bad Times For The Mules

You would think the crazy days of Covid-19 should be a heydey for cyber-criminals, enjoying an unprecedented 'target rich environment' of people working at home. But there have been some major slowdowns. Mules have been having a hard time, according to Krebs on Security.

Mules are the people who receive stolen goods for cybercriminals. The Cybercriminals steal a credit card, buy something expensive, and ship it to a mule who holds it and reships to sell it off for a nice profit.

The mule life has expanded in recent years as goods are now shipped to pickup addresses like hotel lobbies and not the mule's home. But, alas! So many places are closed and social distancing is so extreme that finding someplace open and willing to accept shipments has become more tricky.

The bright side? No one blinks an eye if the mule walks into a hotel wearing a mask these days, it has become a norm for many public settings. Unfortunately, this does make it harder to identify them for authorities, however the limited access to suitable shipment locations is helping to flatten the curve.

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Inquiring Minds...

Changes in the workplace. The virus crisis has changed so much about work and the workplace. According to guidance from ADP, "As of March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has met the direct-threat standard referred to above, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)." That means screening protocols will be in place in the workplace until the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or public officials revise their assessment.

Policy decisions for business owners. Many companies are working hard to implement new policies to guide their employees and clients based on what is currently known about COVID. Here are some basic precautions you might experience when you reenter the workplace for the first time since quarantine:

♦ Your temperature might be taken upon entering the workplace to ensure everyone is healthy and ready for work.

♦ You might be issued a face mask and expected to wear it while working.

♦ Some employees will be expected to telework for an extended period of time.

♦ Physical space separations may be in place, for example, partitions between employees.

♦ Meetings may continue to be conducted via computer.

♦ You might be asked to maintain a work station strictly separate from others. One example: Only every other register might be open at retail establishments.

♦ Sharing tools, food, or drinks could be discouraged.

♦ Six-foot floor marks might be placed on the floors to indicate where you and customers can wait and stand.

♦ Group gatherings may be prohibited.

♦ Business travel could be discouraged.

♦ Hand shaking could be discouraged.

♦ Visitors in office spaces will be discouraged.

Sharing is caring.... Well maybe not these days with regard to coffee or lunch. However, knowing and implementing these basic precautions can save lives. The CDC is encouraging all workplaces to modify their policies to include an Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response Plan in an effort to reduce transmission among employees and maintain a healthy work environment for their continued operation.

Want to learn more? Visit www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf to view the new Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 and learn what steps you can take to keep your company safe.

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