microTECH Times

Covered I.T. 24/7—Never Worry Again!

7 Tips To Keep Your Business Running Smoothly During COVID 19

The virus has many business owners very uneasy. Unfortunately, the pandemic has hit small to mid-sized organizations the hardest. Many experts believe this is just the beginning. So, what can you do to keep your business running smoothly?

When will the pandemic end? It could honestly be a few more months for the large restrictions and some say up to a few years for a full recovery. Regardless of how long COVID-19 hangs around, we all need to be prepared. Buckle down a bit, reassess and make a few changes to our business strategy in order to keep things running smoothly. Here are 7 great tips that may help you get started.

1. Review and adjust your business based on your burn-rate. What is a burn-rate? It's typically the rate at which your company is spending money to cover your overhead before generating a positive cashflow from operations; cash spent per month divided by operation expenses. Review how much your company is spending and reduce non-essential spending as much as possible. Most companies have a few items that are just excess like expensive advertising campaigns, unused assets, and extraneous employee expenses. It is also a great idea to call and dis-

cuss reducing your monthly payments with essential vendors like your merchant payment provider.

2. Cut excessive advertising. All those marketing companies out there won't like our advice here, but there are high-end expensive advertising options and there are low-key advertising options. Cut those costly ads and work with other businesses to create co-marketing campaigns, send promotions through the mail, offer expert advice to your community, or even consider telemarketing.

3. Embrace telecommuting as a part of your business landscape. Many business owners restructured how their company operates when COVID first hit. They immediately plunged into telecommuting when the "stay at home" orders were released across the nation. Now, most companies are re-evaluating the need for in office hours. Office overhead can be one of the most expensive parts of owning a business. Reducing the amount of people in your office may allow you to rent or buy a smaller space and

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What's Inside

Quotes

"When one door closes, another opens. But we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we fail to see the one that has opened for us."
~Alexander G. Bell

"Discover what the customer wants. Deliver plus one."
~Ken Blanchard

"Those who enjoy responsibility usually get it. Those who merely like exercising authority usually lose it."
~Malcom Forbes

Happy 4th Of July!

The 4th of July, or Independence day, has only been a federal holiday since in 1941. But, celebrations began in the 18th century to commemorate the birth of American independence.

Historically. On July 2nd, 1776 the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence with the presentation of a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence.

Festivities for this great holiday historically included fireworks, parades, concerts and close family gatherings. However, if you are interested in taking in a large celebration this 4th of July, be sure to plan ahead. Verify through social media, a phone call, or local websites if your favorite events are still on. Many larger venues are cancelled this year due to the necessity for social distancing.

For 2020. There are still plenty of ways to celebrate. Some families are coming together

7 Tips To Keep Your Business Running Smoothly...

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reduce your monthly expenses significantly.

4. Take on a new lease to rejuvenate your business.
Regardless of the pandemic, many business owners have failing or outdated equipment that must be replaced. We are seeing companies enter into equipment leases to spread out the financial obligation for their new hardware and software. This option allows you to bundle your entire project into one low monthly payment.

5. VPN's are the best defense!
A VPN or virtual private network connection is ultimately the best way to keep your company information and communications safe from a far. This type of connection gives you a secure remote path to your data and allows you to take advantage of the security that your organization already has in place. Anyone trying to intercept information sent or received through a VPN connection would not be able to read any of the data communicated due to the high level of encryption.

6. Use an anti-virus solution.
A good up-to-date anti-virus protection program will give you the security you need to keep hackers and thieves at bay. Anti-virus companies work tirelessly to keep their databases updated so you can rest assured your computers are protected. Be sure to update your anti-virus program regularly on any computer you're using for work so you don't miss important protection against new threats.

7. Keep up your IT management.
This may be the single most critical component to ensure your operations are running smoothly. Regardless of where your staff is working, your network needs attention 24/7 to stay online and available. Talk with your IT provider to make sure you have viable backups and ongoing monitoring. Updates from vendors and patch releases can be critical in this new landscape of remote work.

Worried you may be missing something?
Give us a call today. We will conduct a full review of your network and present you with a list of suggestions to help.

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There are no great solutions without big problems: Just ask Almon

In a letter to his father, Alexander Graham Bell made this prediction in 1876, before the first telephone was ever sold.

Alexander Grahm Bell would have been laughed at in 1876
for thinking his talking machine would be commonplace, but by the late 1880s it was common enough to make one businessman take action.

Almon Strowger was so angry.
He was an undertaker in Kansas City, Kansas, and his business was beginning to flounder. He thought it might have something to do with his rival's wife, who was an operator at the local telephone exchange.

When people called for an undertaker,
or even asked for him directly,

Strowger believed his calls were sent to the competition. He was forced into a period of creative thinking. Strowger wanted to rid Kansas City, and the world, of telephone operators.

By 1891 he had patented a crude but effective automatic exchange system.
His system was never installed in Kansas City, but his vision ultimately did eliminate the need for operator connections, assuring callers of more privacy and faster service.

Necessity may be the mother of invention,
but pesky problems are apt to bring great solutions too. COVID is our operator error moment. Just like Alexander Grahm Bell, we are all learning to adjust to a new way of doing things in order to invent new ways to proceed with business.

> "The day is coming when (telephone) wires will be laid onto houses just like water or gas. Friends will converse with each other without leaving their homes."
> *~ Alexander Grahm Bell 1876 prediction*

How Do We Move On From COVID?

Today we know every member of the workforce is extremely valuable because when we went home in March, everything started to fall apart.

March changed everything.
The stock market was the first to fall along with retirement savings and incomes in general. Businesses struggles to convert their companies to an all online platform in a rush.

The end is nigh.
We are seeing some relief with restrictions being lifted and businesses slowly reopening their doors. So, what do we do now?

Recommendations.
Harvard Business Review recommends that we test all of our works to ensure they are all feeling well, certify returning workers that were ill, and maintain social distancing guidelines as a new norm.

Tweak your physical environment to accommodate.
Create a work environment to ensure your employees can stay safe and healthy while they do their jobs. Evaluate and adjust open office spaces to allow workers the room they need to stay healthy and conduct business over the phone or Internet with clients whenever possible.

Happy 4th Of July...

to share a backyard movie, game night, or barbecue. Other popular activities include camping, bike riding, or even a nature walk. Many state parts are opening their doors and some beaches are now accepting visitors as well.

Social distancing is changing the game.

We are all making our best efforts to be considerate of others and stay healthy. Social distancing and good hygiene are always welcome ways to keep infections at bay. When you settle on your celebration this year, keep these safety tips in mind:

∂ Wash your hands often, especially if you are eating.

∂ Observe the 6ft apart rule whenever possible.

∂ Encourage friends and family in positive ways as well

Happy 4th of July!

No matter where you land to celebrate, we wish you a very happy and safe 4th of July. Whether you stay home, visit with friends and family or take time to explore nature, enjoy the day!

Cybercrime Isn't Rocket Science; It's Actually Rather Boring

Cybercrime has gone mainstream, according to research by Cambridge University's Cybercrime Centre, and it has become a real snooze fest.

Cybercrime seems to attract a certain type of brainy rebel, looking for loot in the wild world of the Internet. At least that is the way cybercriminals have been portrayed. But the reality is much, much different.

Maintaining a network of connected computers designed to perform nefarious tasks is not only hard work, but really boring. That's mainly because cybercrime has become a service, one that bad people can actually hire to do bad things. And if people are hiring you for a service, and if you have competition in the same evil area, you have to give good customer service. You need to collect money and deal with customer's technical questions, all while fending off the cops and fighting wars with other criminals.

Who's going to do the grunt work?

Another thing you have to do is find people who know enough to do the low-level technical work. But, these people are in short supply and in a legal job, your low-level techie would be making more money. That all means costs are high, work is hard with little reward in the thrill of it, while income isn't that great.

Might as well be legit. In fact, the business of running computer crime is nearly the same as legitimate system administrative work. The difference is most cybercrime services are exposed to law enforcement. One former cybercriminal quoted in the Cambridge paper said:

"And after doing [it] for almost a year, I lost all motivation, and really didn't care anymore. So I just left and went on with life. It wasn't challenging enough at all. Creating a (cybercrime network) is easy. Providing the power to run it is the tricky part. And when you have to put all your effort, all your attention...When you have to sit in front of a computer screen and scan, filter, then filter again over 30 amps per 4 hours it gets annoying."

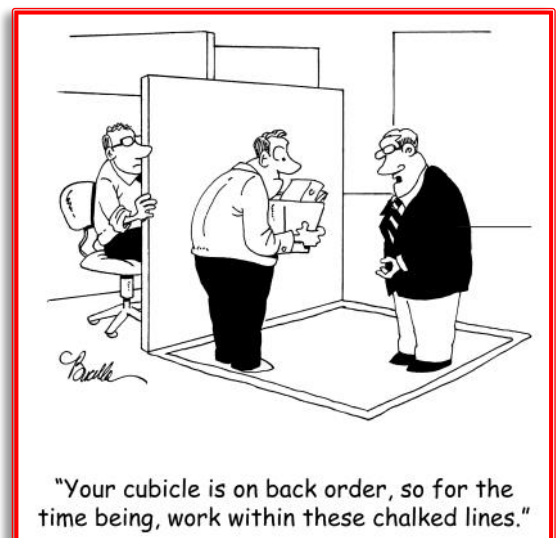## What Is A Firewall And Why Do We Need It?

A firewall for computers is much like a physical firewall used to keep fires from spreading from one section to another. It is a barrier of protection that helps keep destructive forces away from your computer or network.

A firewall is generally a piece of hardware implemented to help keep a network safe. Basically, a firewall filters incoming and outgoing traffic on your network by analyzing the information and determining if it is risky for your company based on preset rules. These rules keep threats like viruses, Trojans, malware and spyware on the Internet from seeping into your internal network. Good firewall protection programs will also notify you of possible intrusions or suspicious traffic.

There are firewalls for individual computers, routers, even your entire network. If you have any questions about firewall protection or if you would like an assessment of your current network security, give us a call today! We will review your firewall protection and network security for loop holes and hang ups to ensure your company is properly protected. Then you will receive a report of our findings and recommendations to help you protect your business during these uncertain times.

"Your cubicle is on back order, so for the time being, work within these chalked lines."

"We make all of your computer problems go away without adding additional full-time I.T. staff!"

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

Inquiring Minds...

5 Lightning Cable Tips: Why Don't They Last? How annoying is it to plug in your phone and discover that, once again, the lightning cable doesn't work. Constantly replacing these things can get expensive, not to mention inconvenient. Then, when you do shop for a new one you have a choice between an Apple cable ($29) and a non-Apple cable ($15).

Are Apple cables that much better?

Yes and no. Good lightning cables are MFI certified. Bad lightning cables, without certification, may never work. In a ZDNet test, of cables priced under $10, they found that 15 percent of the 27 cheap cables tested never worked right out of the box. The cables were easily damaged from being bent and twisted and the connectors fell off easily. Five of those cables had USB connectors that didn't fit.

Recommendations. Of the cables on the market, good alternatives to the more expensive Apple cables come from Amazon, Anker, Monoprice and Nomad, according to zdnet.com. You can keep your cords working properly by following this advice from 9to5mac.com. Look it up for more great tips.

1. Grasp the hard plastic plug jacket to disconnect.
Never yank on the cord to remove it from the power block. This can damage the connection between the jacket and the cable.

2. Make sure the cable isn't bent, kinked or strained in any way. All the tiny wires inside the cable itself are fragile and can break rendering the lightening cable absolutely useless.

3. Keep the plug pins away from liquids. Liquids can cause corrosion on the exposed lightning pins and may even damage your device if they are wet.

4. Avoid high temperatures and direct sunlight. Excessively high temperatures form open flames or even the sun in a hot car can break down the physical structure of your charger causing it to malfunction.

5. Keep your charging cable and block off the ground.
When cables are kicked, stepped on or thrown they can become damaged as well. Keep your cables away from small children and pet. Don't leave them lying around.

Take care of your charging cables and use them properly.
Always take your time plugging in your charge to ensure it is fitting correctly, treat it with care and store it safely when you're not using it. Observe these simple tips to keep your lightening cable running for as long as possible.

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