Well Worth a Read!

Great Expectations

In Charles Dickens' famous work, Great Expectations, the story is full of expectations and misunderstandings. When Mr. Jaggers and Pip, the protagonist in the novel, are discussing who is responsible for some of Pip's misunderstandings, Jaggers tells Pip to "Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There is no better rule."

The advice from Mr. Jaggers makes a lot of sense for business owners and managers. This is especially true when considering expectations for a relationship with an IT firm. To avoid misunderstandings, we offer some key concepts to verify and question when selecting a new IT and computer support firm.

Problem Solving Skills
At IT Radix, we often use the phrase, "date us before you marry us" when we are speaking with organizations for the first time. We say that for two reasons. The first is to reduce any anxiety a prospect might have when engaging with us prior to seeing us in action. But, the second is to give the prospect a chance to see us in action and see what we can do. If you have a list of issues or problems that are currently affecting your network, pick the top one and engage a prospective IT firm with the task of solving that problem. Watch them and listen to the questions they ask. This will give you an indication of their ability to analyze situations—a good trait to have.

Accessibility After Hours
Do you have a set schedule for when your computer, cloud, network or application issues are supposed to happen? Of course not. They can happen any time…during, before, after and beyond the traditional work day. Find out how your support will be after hours, during holidays and weekends. Ask about experiences they have had with their clients. See if you can speak to a few of their clients about those exact circumstances so you know how it really will work, if it happens to you.

Ability to Communicate
To avoid a communication breakdown once into a relationship with an IT firm, take a long hard look at their entire organization and give a critical examination of their ability to listen to you and to share what they do. Did the sales person give any wishy-washy statements? Not a good sign. Did you get a reassuring feeling in speaking with their scheduling team? A good sign. How about their technician(s)? Did he or she adequately, simply and clearly communicate processes and potential solutions? The more they avoided "tech-speak," the better off you will be.

Attention to Detail
One of the lesser-known secrets about technology is that it's all related. That means that when addressing one problem or issue, the solution can sometimes negatively affect another set of things in the computer or the network. Our techs are required to test PIES access— Printing, Internet, Email and Software—for each user after addressing each issue. This attention to detail is important and has proven vital in reducing callbacks after a solution has been put in place.
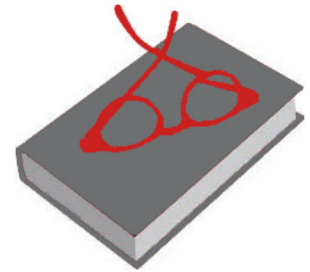
What's New

August 24
WEBINAR
10-Minute Tech Talk:
Cool and Useful Things in Office 365
(Part II)
www.it-radix.com/webinar
Starts @ 12:10pm sharp

Hidden Gems Contest
Share your favorite technology tip, tool, app, gadget, etc.
to win an eReader
www.it-radix.com/contest-hidden-gems
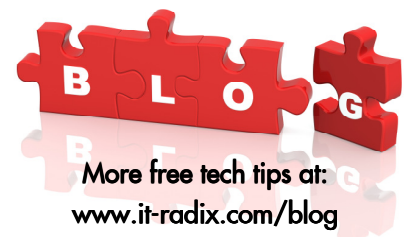Entries due by August 31st.

September 27
WEBINAR
Tech Talk:
Disaster Recovery
Starts @ 12:10 pm sharp

If you would rather receive our newsletter via email, sign up on our website or send an email to resource@it-radix.com

More free tech tips at:
www.it-radix.com/blog

Is Social Media a Force for Good or Evil?

We like to think that social media is an excellent tool—when used in a smart and focused way. Social media platforms offer a great way to keep clients, colleagues and friends informed and entertained. They can also keep an organization top of mind with key constituencies while strengthening connections and making them more frequent.

The Circle by Dave Eggers is a novel that takes on this "of the moment" topic. It was recently released as a major motion picture starring Tom Hanks and Emma Watson and offers a very different and frankly chilling vision of social media giants controlling and monitoring personal information—not always for the good. The Circle is a fictitious company that can be compared to Google, Facebook and Twitter. It creates addictive tools that eat away at people's freedom and privacy. The public willingly gives up their right to privacy for the fun of participating in an internet society. The story describes how the main character, Mae, who works for The Circle, becomes increasingly involved. Here is an excerpt:

"One, two, three, four, finally nine different monitors, she must answer customers' questions while monitoring their satisfaction on a 100-point scale, fill out online surveys, rate people's photos, respond to preference choices piped into her earpiece, 'zing' out newsy tidbits about her activities, swap messages with 'friends,' and send 'smiles' or 'frowns' to help various social causes."

The novel illustrates how real privacy and intimacy can be replaced by a synthetic community of "friends" controlled from afar by The Circle. Yikes!!!

But there are reasons to leverage social media. Here are some tips that will make it "good" for you and your organization—where you are in control, not The Circle!

- **Publish your content across multiple media platforms**
  Website, Pinterest, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
- **Make an "editorial calendar" and plan/schedule posts in advance**
  Use company/product news to drive content.
- **Leverage your entire staff as much as possible to collaborate**
  The first step in "social" is to ensure your team is "socialized" with your platforms.
- **Experiment with different images and calls to action**
  Try catchy subject lines in articles or eye-catching photos across platforms.
- **Monitor all your social media marketing from a single dashboard**
  A variety of social media management platforms are available.
- **Monitor, measure and analyze all your results**
  Track and change strategy based on your results.
- **Use pictures and videos as much as possible**
  This encourages sharing by your followers—the true magic dust of social media.
- **Leverage the power of community**
  Join communities and create your own.
- **Take social media seriously**

Social media...friend or foe? It's all in how well you nurture your relationship.

Great Expectations

Planning Versus Reacting
One of the biggest complaints we hear from prospective clients is that while their current support firm is responsive, they are totally and solely reactive. Many of these folks report to us that their incumbent support firms have never come to them with a proactive list of items that need strategic thought and budget planning over the course of time. Ask prospective IT support candidates about their approach to ongoing account management. Ask them when they attended the last seminar on emerging technologies or security issues. If they have trouble sharing an answer, you may want to ask a lot more questions.

In order for great expectations to turn into great relationships with an IT support firm, have a go at the advice above. It might help lead to a relationship just like the one Pip finally enjoys with his beloved Estella as is stated in the final line of the novel…"I saw no shadow of another parting from her."

Classic Tech Titles:
Fiction and Non-Fiction for Tech Lovers

The Soul of a New Machine by Tracy Kidder
The Circle by Dave Eggers
The Facebook Effect: The Inside Story of the Company That is Connecting the World by David Kirkpatrick
Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell
Chaos Monkeys: Obscene Fortune and Random Failure in Silicon Valley by Antonio Garcia Martinez
The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon by Brad Stone

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THE BUZZ

OUR CLIENTS SPEAK OUT:

"IT Radix has been an extremely valuable addition to our team. We are a small company but have big IT needs, and we rely heavily on the expertise and attentiveness that IT Radix provides. From something as small as setting up a new computer to big things like replacing a server or restructuring the network architecture, IT Radix has been there every step of the way."
Brian Pray, Business Analyst – Longfield Gardens LLC

IT RadixResource
We make IT Work for You

Life on the Edge: Reading View

How would you like to read an online article without all those annoying advertisements and sidebars? While some browsers have offered plug-ins or setting tweaks that mimic a **Reading View** for a while, this capability is a native feature in Microsoft Edge.

Access Reading View:
Open the page you want to read and click the small book icon in the top, right-hand corner. Note that Reading View will only work as expected on websites that support the feature (highlighted in blue whenever it is available).

Customize Reading View Settings:
1) Click the *More* menu button (···) at the top, right-hand corner of the screen.
2) On the drop-down menu, select the option labeled *Settings*.
3) Scroll down until you see the section labeled *Reading* to customize options:
   Reading view style: Choose background and text color themes (*Default*, *Light*, *Medium*, and *Dark*)
   Reading view font size: Specify the size of the text shown in Reading View (*Small*, *Medium*, *Large* and *Extra Large.*)

Stay tuned next month for a *Life on the Edge* sequel—how to utilize your Reading List!

SPECIAL OFFER
A Good Read

Sign up for a year of IT Radix Management and Support during the months of **July, August** and **September**, and receive an eReader.

Visit www.it-radix.com to learn more about what's included in each of these proactive maintenance plans. Offer for new managed service clients only. Some restrictions may apply. Call IT Radix today to learn more!

A Tale of Two Cities

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness…" This famous line from a A Tale of Two Cities can be said of some of our experiences with our clients. At IT Radix, our purpose is to help our clients succeed. We do this by providing advice, knowledge and services that enable and protect our clients' technology and information. As with any good story, though, not all our clients follow the wisdom shared with them. We'd like to share a couple of stories that illustrate this point—perhaps not as dramatically as Charles Dickens but with outcomes that impacted our clients nonetheless.

Imagine a small law firm with a couple of partners, a few paralegals and admin staff. IT Radix had been working with this client for a while and had identified that their server was aging and there was no functioning backup in place. Due to the nature of the firm's practice, they were not in a position to replace the server; and sadly, at the same time, they opted not to implement a backup. You can guess what happened next… One of the partners fell prey to a ransomware phishing email; and all their computers, including their server, were encrypted. They had no backup and were now faced with a terrible choice—pay the ransom or rebuild all their information from emails, hard copies, etc. They debated as lawyers tend to do. Consequently, the timer for paying the ransom elapsed; and the bounty was increased. At this point, they decided to stay the course and simply rebuild from the pieces that they had. The client has subsequently invested in a new server and backup system; however, we still feel they are missing an important piece of the puzzle. Which leads us to the next character of our story.

The next character of our story is a local professional services company. For the most part, they chose to handle their IT in-house. The internal IT contact was very capable and a longtime, loyal employee. Together, we partnered up to implement a backup system that they would monitor and manage internally. Time passed, and the internal IT person became complacent about their backup. More time passed and then it hit—ransomware! They called us in and we found that their backup had stopped working about 6 months prior and had gone unnoticed. Once again, the cybercriminals had won—our client chose not to pay the ransom, but they did pay in 6 months of lost work.

Now for a few stories with happier endings… IT Radix managed service clients. While we'd like to say they never fell prey to ransomware, we cannot. The creators of these attacks are clever and constantly changing. It's an ongoing process to put technology and user education in place to avoid becoming a victim. The good news is that as a managed service client, we have a reliable backup in place and perform regular test restores to ensure everything is functioning properly. We even have processes in place to protect against complacency and the absence of backup alerts. For all our managed service clients who were victims of ransomware, we were able to restore from their backup and very little, if any, information was lost. Definitely the best outcome in a terrible time.

The moral of the story—backup, backup, backup and then test and verify. At IT Radix, we prefer happy endings. Let us help you create one for your business' information technology so you too can live happily ever after!

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Bibliosmia (*n.*) The smell or aroma of a good book.

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> "Today a reader,
> tomorrow a leader."
>
> — W. Fusselman

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"Facebook is a website, but Charlotte's Web is a book. I'm really confused!"

Fun Facts About Books

- The first book bought on Amazon was called Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies: Computer Models of the Fundamental Mechanisms of Thought.

- The earliest known written instance of the word "book" is in a book by Alfred the Great.

- "Bibliosmia" is the enjoyment of the smell of old books.

- Ford Madox Ford recommended that readers judge a new book, not by its first page, but by its 99th, the better to gauge the book's quality.

- Science fiction writer, Isaac Asimov, is the only author to have published a book in nine out of the ten Dewey library categories.

From the desk of: Cathy Coloff

I've always enjoyed reading. To be transported to another world, another life or even just another time through the words of a book...so many adventures without ever leaving home! These days, I tend to read more non-fiction; but periodically, I pick up a book recommended by a friend or that catches my eye in the bookstore or online to be whisked away on a new adventure.

Thankfully, my son Alex likes to read as well; but I wonder if that will continue through his school years. So far, he's been reading traditional hard copy books, but I suspect that his textbooks will be digital in the upcoming school years. I've read studies that the brain absorbs information better if your tactile senses are involved (e.g., turning the pages, highlighting, taking notes in the margin). As a result, I wonder about the impact of eBooks on the future generation. Will they somehow adjust? Perhaps learn and/or retain less information? I know that some of the eBook apps allow you to highlight, insert notes, etc.; so perhaps that will help compensate for the loss of the physical book. Only time will tell. I know that I've come to love taking handwritten notes on my iPad in OneNote...and it does help with my retention.

A few years ago, I stumbled upon the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City. I was amazed at the beautiful library and all the books! I felt like Belle in Beauty and the Beast just standing there in awe of it all. I always wanted a library room like it with shelves of books so high you needed a ladder to reach them. Now, as I'm growing older, I've been passing along all my books in an effort to simplify; but there are some books that I just can't let go of. So, while I may not have a room dedicated to books, I still have my personal collection to treasure.

Make the Grade with eTextbooks

eTextbooks are becoming the norm in both K-12 and college settings. Back in 2012, the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and the Federal Communications Commission chair, Julius Genachowski, said that schools and publishers should "switch to digital textbooks within five years to foster interactive education, save money on books, and ensure classrooms in the U.S. use up-to-date content." Well...five years later is NOW...2017!!!!

eTextbooks exceed expectations:
- **Cost effective** – Cost on average 50-70% less than print textbooks.
- **Timely** – Available to download immediately (always in stock).
- **Accessible** – Features like *audio text* not only enhance learning experience by listening to text on the go when driving or walking to class, but also helps students with reading challenges (e.g., dyslexia, visual impairments, etc.).
- **Searchable** – Easily find information quickly.
- **Noteworthy** –eReaders allow notes to be tagged to specific text as well as allow important text to be highlighted to facilitate studying.
- **Web access** – Hyperlink to more in-depth information or interactive learning tools.
- **Stay current** – Easily updates as curriculum changes.
- **Easily portable** – Heavy textbooks are cumbersome. Tablets can hold hundreds of eTextbooks on one, lightweight device.
- **Environmentally friendly** – Save a tree!

The biggest drawback of eTextbooks, or any type of electronic device, is **eye strain**—the medical term for which is "computer vision syndrome." Suggestions for minimizing eye strain are: blinking more often, getting enough sleep, and following the "20-20-20 rule" (i.e., look at least 20 feet away from the screen every 20 mins for at least 20 secs).

eTextbooks help students better prepare for a world immersed in mobile technology.