Intelligent Technical Solutions

Innovations

Food for thought…

Did you know that Benjamin Franklin was in favor of making the turkey the national bird for America instead of the bald eagle.

"The turkey is a much more respectable bird and withal a true original native of north America."

—*Benjamin Franklin*

Imagine how our quarters and collectors coins would look if Benjamin's idea had taken flight.

Would they depict the plump bird in its natural setting or a dressed and baked bird, the American favorite?

Happy Thanksgiving!

4 ways to protect your computers; don't invite hackers for a Thanksgiving feast

When you step out to partake in the holiday festivities with Thanksgiving just around the corner and Christmas coming soon, do you know your business is protected?

Hackers don't take holidays As a matter of fact, around the holiday season, more malicious websites and e-mails surface than any other time of the year. It is reported that spam messages with links to malicious websites increased 8% within all global e-mail traffic during the third quarter of 2007.

New blended threat techniques now combine spam messages with a link to a website containing malicious software. Watch out! These sites may closely resemble the real deal.

During the kick-off of the National Football League season in September, sports fans became a horrible target for hackers. An infected email went out inviting consumers to download an NFL game-tracker. Talk about a fantastic tool for diligent fans! However, folks were sorely mislead by the quasi-NFL website where all links lead to malware downloads.

Don't take a chance... Here are four basic steps to help you protect your home and work computers from becoming a hacker's Thanksgiving feast:

1. **Use a firewall.** Connecting to the Internet can present dangers to any computer user. A firewall is a software program or piece of hardware that can filter out hackers, viruses and worms that attempt to gain access to your computer over the Internet. A firewall can be put in place at the individual PC level, for laptop or personal use, or on a network as an overall precautionary measure for your business.

2. **Keep your operating system up to date.** No matter what type of operating system you prefer, high priority updates contain the latest protection against malicious online activities. Examples of an operating system update would be a service pack, version upgrade, driver or security update. These critical updates can enhance the security and reliability of your computer improving performance.

3. **Update your antivirus and antispyware software regularly.** Antivirus software is a computer program that can detect,

A cornucopia of entertainment — TiVo your PC today

The world survived the onset of TiVo fever. Now, Nero and TiVo have teamed up to present a new option, Liquid TV.

Have you wanted to convert a PC into a DVR, but didn't like the idea of investing in Windows Media Center? Now you can turn your Windows PC into a full-service TiVo DVR system.

The best part about TiVo is the fully interactive program guide that recommends shows you may have an interest in based on your previous viewing preferences and the online scheduling interface.

TiVo is already a web based service, so changing over to a PC based product only seems natural.

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4 ways to protect your computers...

prevent, and disarm or eliminate harmful programs that attempt to compromise your computer and information. Antispyware is roughly the same, but protects you from pop-ups, spyware threats, unwanted software and slow performance. Remember, hackers don't take holidays. So, keep your antivirus and antispyware software up to date in order to help prevent damage from the most current hacker releases. These preventative programs can also be installed on individual work stations or at the server level to protect your entire company.

4. **Use a spam filter.** A spam filter is a software program that blocks unwanted email messages. When purchasing a spam filtering software program, it is important to test the program to make sure it is simple to use and well supported, but still provides a high level of protection to keep you safe.

Protecting your computers internally is a great start to a secure working environment for your company. However, many employees and business owners alike fail to consider physical security.

Don't forget to lock your computer when you are away from your desk. To lock your computer quickly use "Windows + L" or the more traditional, "Ctrl + Alt + Del" then choose "Lock Computer" or strike the letter "K".

Strengthen your defenses. Did you know the opportunity for theft or internal compromises increases during the fourth quarter each year? Having a network is just the beginning. Keeping it healthy and safe are the ultimate challenges.

Location and accessibility. If your server is located in a high traffic or highly visible area, it may be easily compromised. Keeping your server in a safe and secure location away from unnecessary exposure can decrease the chances of an internal attack and will discourage burglars in case of a break in.

If you have any questions about the current state of your computers or network, do not hesitate to call us for a FREE Network Analysis. We will review each workstation and your server but also look for physical factors that may expose your business to unnecessary harm.

Don't leave your business vulnerable. Otherwise, you may be better off just inviting hackers over for Thanksgiving dinner.
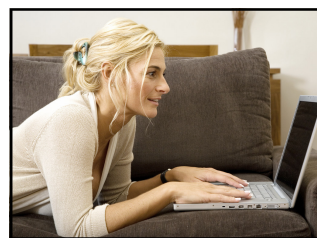
TiVo your PC today...

A few added benefits...

There are a few different packages to choose from, but added benefits include the ability to burn recorded shows to DVDs or transfer them to portable devices like your iPod or PlayStation Portable. This eliminates the need for another system to pull your shows from your current TiVo system and convert them multiple times in order to play them properly on your devices. Simplification is the big advantage of an all-in-one device and with the familiar TiVo design, users feel right at home.

System requirements... Of course, a tool like this comes with some pretty hefty system requirements that will eliminate its use on older PC's, but with the increase in responsiveness and speed from previous TiVo hardware it will be well worth the upgrade.

If you are going to step it up with a new Liquid TV package, make sure the PC you choose is equipped with internal CableCard support. Unfortunately, this is a rare feature but it will allow you to record your favorite shows from HD channels too like Showtime, Comedy Central, HBO and ESPN.

Stealing the fun... Sure, the content providers or broadcaster will use program "flags" to make it impossible for certain shows to be transferred, but that's a risk many are willing to take for the convenience and benefits of Liquid TV.

Harvest your inner password generator

Are you a sticky note password saver? Or avid password recycler? I won't tell, but you may be giving away access to more than your work information if you use the same passwords for personal accounts. Try the CAN password process.

Just remember, use Character, Alpha and Numeric (CAN) values in every password. A survey by Symantec shows that over 60% of us use the same passwords for everything and almost 4% of all users use a single common word found in a dictionary. These habits are very dangerous and can leave you vulnerable to attack.

Here are a few things that are commonly used and easily guessed by intruders:

- Administration - any form of this word.

- Password or Password1 - trivially guessed.

- P@$$W0rd - simple letter substitutions are actually pre-programmed into cracking tools.

- 11/01/08 - avoid dates especially of importance that you have written in an email.

- December03 - avoid using the date of a forced password change, this is also very common.

- nbusr123 - initials followed by "user" or "usr" and a sequence of numbers.

- asdf or qwerty - while these are great memory devices for typing class any sequence of letters or numbers adjacent on a key board are simply out of the question.

- aaaa or bbbb - yyyy not? Repeated letters can be guessed and easily observed by onlookers leaving you completely unprotected.

Don't suffer expensive losses from fraud simply because your password was too weak and vulnerable. Protect yourself with a CAN do attitude and create strong passwords off the top of your head.

Intimidated? Don't be. It is easier than you may think. Character, Alpha and Numeric (CAN) created passwords that are long and random to others but don't have to be difficult to remember.

Create your own personal mnemonic phrases to help you generate seemingly random passwords that others will never guess. For example:

1. IhlesIw4yo! = I have loved elephants since I was 4 years old!
2. K&Igmwiwj22. = Kevin & I got married when I was just 22.

Good luck and remember you CAN create strong passwords just like a password generator.

Do you have a double?

The report "ID Leaks, A Surprising Source is Your Government at Work," based on a Consumer Reports investigation, revels the government among one of the biggest sources of identity leaks.

Joe Protain, an Ohio surgeon, was in for quite a surprise when he received a traffic ticket near Cincinnati a few years ago and paid a far greater penalty than just the $150 fine. His personal information including his address and social security number were posted on a public website for the Franklin County Municipal Court. With this one posting, a ring of identity thieves were able to rack up more than $11,000 worth of charges in his name over a short period of time and Dr. Protain is still clearing up the mess.

Poor Joe, he was only speeding, but the courts hung him out to dry. Information breaches like this are more common than you may think. Identity thieves who deliberately seek personal information for fraudulent purchases, pose the highest risk to individuals.

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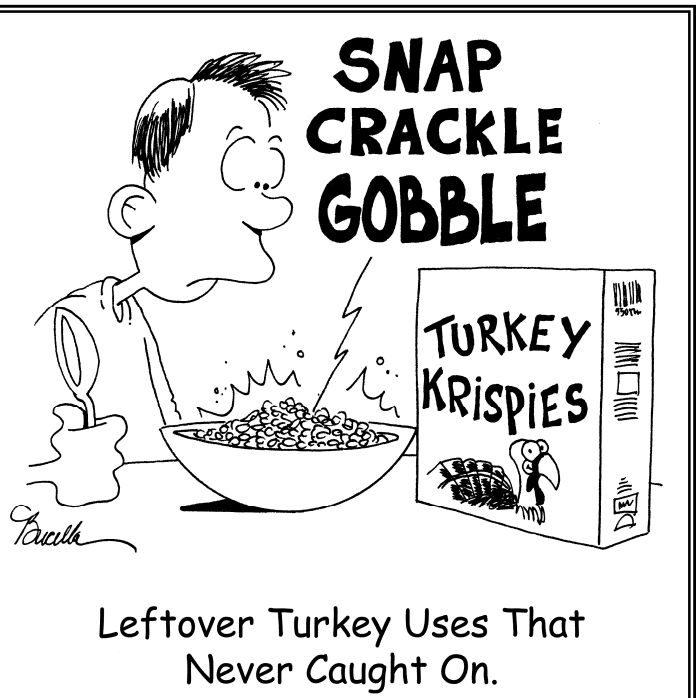
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November 2008

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Inquiring Minds...

Online photo-sharing options It is easy getting into the spirit of snapping photos with your digital camera when you're surrounded by relatives for the holiday's, but finding a practical way to share them with your family and friends can be quite a hassle. If you have previously searched for a solution, I am sure you have found the endless offerings from websites that allow you to upload your photos to online albums and other sharing tools.

Actually, in the last five years, there has been quite a surge in photo sharing and printing sites available which has driven down pricing and helped companies expand their feature sets accommodating demands from consumers. So, here's the latest — in the TopTenRE-VIEWS, Photo Sharing Services Reviews for 2008, dotPhoto.com took the gold, Webshots.com won silver and Fotki.com nailed the bronze.

The constant march of technology does leave many people with the nagging feeling that they are missing out if they don't buy at least every two years. At the same time, today's PCs are built to last longer than ever. Indeed, there are tradeoffs in deciding how long to own the same computer. PCs constantly are being upgraded to offer more speed and power at reduced cost.

But there will be a point when you absolutely need a new one, because your current one is ready for its after-life (hopefully safely in the hands of a recycler). Here are three signs that it's time to spring for a new PC.

Your computer plays music at startup. Beethoven's "Fur Elise" and Disney's "It's a Small, Small World" are pleasant tunes. If you hear either of these melodies when you turn on your computer, you're likely to want to relax or sing along. (After all, a computer that has developed a taste for punk rock

music would be hard to handle.) Or you may suspect you have a virus. Wrong on both counts. The computer is telling you that the microprocessor or microprocessor fan is failing, or has already gone south. Or it may be telling you that power supply voltages are drifting out of tolerance, or that the supply cannot meet demand.

The music is a feature built into the Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) of some motherboards. It is a gentle reminder that you have a serious problem. It's probably not a problem if you hear a couple notes at boot-up. But if you regularly hear a tune, you need to take care of it.

Reprinted courtesy of Microsoft Corporation & Kim Komando.

What can you do? Take a deep breath and call us. We will respond immediately, assess the problem, determine your options and present them to you in plain English with a full estimate of your costs.

We would love to hear from you!

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