Cathy's Message

Hello everyone, what a beautiful time of the year! I love Spring Flowers, the colors are just lovely.

Many of you have heard about my second book being published. It is scheduled to be released the beginning of May. I am very excited about the book and can't wait to see it in bookstores.

It is that time of year when we all have charities that we support. I am so excited that Szymanski Consulting is supporting Auto Racers for Kids, Kiwanis, Camp Cadet and Community Shelter Services. If you would like more information on any of these organizations or how you can help, please let me know.

Are you following us on Facebook? Please like our page at **www.facebook.com/szycom**

We hope you know how much we appreciate each and everyone of you. Take care and have the best day ever.

Cathy & David.

Security Strategy– do you audit it?

Security of a business's systems and networks should be important to many business owners and managers. In fact, an increasing number of companies are implementing security strategies. While these strategies do keep businesses secure, there is one critical element that could cause plans to fail, leading to an increased chance of a breach of security: The audit.

Auditing and the security strategy

Auditing your company's security is important, the only problem business owners run across is where and what they should be auditing. The easiest way to do this is to first look at the common elements of developing security strategies.

These elements are: assess, assign, audit. When you develop a plan, or work with an IT partner to develop one, you follow the three steps above, and it may be obvious at the end. In truth however, you should be auditing at each stage of the plan. That means you first need to know what goes on in each stage. *Continued on page 2...*

The Internet Of Things

In January, Google purchased home automation company Nest Labs, the maker of the Nest Thermostat, for $3.2 billion. This purchase was a huge sign that big companies (like Google) very strongly believe that we will soon live in a world where everything is connected online.

This new world has been coined "The Internet Of Things" and will soon be the reality of the world that we live in. Consider that high-quality sources estimate that by the year 2020, between 26 and 30 billion devices will be connected to the Internet and more than half of these devices will be everyday appliances such as thermostats, refrigerators, parking meters, trash cans and such.

SAP describes the "Internet Of Things" as everything from smartphone apps that control your home's lights and temperature from afar to real-time analytics that help ease traffic congestion and city parking woes.

Imagine a world where:

- You can find a parking spot and reserve it with your mobile wallet before you arrive.
- Traffic stoplights adjust to real-time conditions automatically to improve the flow of traffic.
- Municipalities detect trash levels in containers to optimize trash collection routes.
- Car insurance companies can track your actual miles driven and allow you to pay insurance only for the miles that you drive.

This is just the tip of the iceberg, and if Google's projections are true, you are going to see huge adoption of these devices coming fast.

"If people are coming to work excited...if they're making mistakes freely and fearlessly...if they're having fun...if they're concentrating on doing things rather than preparing reports and going to meetings— then somewhere you have leaders.
"Robert Townsend"

The Lighter Side:

- If you stand at the equator on the first day of spring, you will see the sun pass directly overhead. This only happens two times a year: the first day of spring and the first day of autumn.

- Baby birds are born with the ability to sing, but they must learn the specific songs of their species. They are thought to acquire these songs between 10 to 60 days of age and begin to sing them the next spring, when they have matured at about 300 days old.

- Spring fever is real! It commonly occurs when a sudden warm spell follows a long cold period. When the temperature rises, there's a dilation or expansion of the blood vessels so that blood can be carried to the body surface where heat can be lost quickly. This makes some people experience an energetic feeling.

- Spring cleaning often accompanies spring fever. And with the warmer weather, windows and doors can be open, which allows ventilation for dusting and the fumes of cleaning products. It has been suggested that spring cleaning dates back to the Persian New Year, when they practice "Khoneh Tekouni," which means "Shaking the house." Another possible origin can be traced to the ancient Jewish custom of cleansing the home in anticipation of Passover.

- Children tend to grow a bit faster in the spring than during any other time of year.

R.I.P. Windows XP
(October 25, 2001-April 8, 2014)

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to say farewell to a dear old friend, Windows XP. Born October 25, 2001, this operating system was a reliable computing friend through the dawn of the Internet revolution. She introduced us to "the blue screen of death," but overall lived a happy and productive life. XP outlived her troublesome brothers, Windows ME and Windows Vista, and is survived by Windows 7 and 8.

April 8, 2014, officially signifies the end of life for Windows XP. Launched in 2001, predating 9/11, Windows XP instantly became a huge hit, unable to be toppled later by Windows Vista (by most) and even Windows 7 and 8 (by many). The operating system was still being installed on some new computers as recently as 2010.

An Urgent Security Warning For Any Business Still Running Windows XP

If your organization is currently running Windows XP on one or more computers in your office (29% of all PC operating systems were Windows XP as of the beginning of this year), you need to be aware that you are exposing your computer network to a dangerous security threat that must be addressed immediately.

With the retirement of Windows XP as of April 8, no further security updates, patches or system updates will be released to protect you from viruses, malware, spyware, crashes or theft of personal information. That means your computer network could very soon be completely exposed to serious hacker attacks aimed at taking control of your network, stealing data, crashing your system and inflicting a host of other business-crippling problems you do NOT want to deal with. **If you have even one XP computer on your network, then you are at risk!**

If you still have any Windows XP PCs in your office, we need to replace these computers immediately! Please call our office at 814-455-6069 to schedule a appointment with one of our team members.

Welcome to the world

So many of you have contacted us to check in on Kevin's new addition. Everyone is healthy and vibrant.

We are pleased to announce a new addition to our little family. On February 21st, 2014 we welcomed Kellen James Reichel to the world. He was born weighing in at 7lbs, 7ozs and was 20 inches long. We believe that he will have blonde hair (but he doesn't have much yet) and blue eyes. Throughout all of this we have received many well-wishes, prayers, and gifts for Kellen from all of the kind and generous people in the Szymanski family. We would like to thank everyone so much for their kindness. We look forward to the warmer days when we can take him out and show him to the world, but in the meantime here is a photo of our new addition.
Thank You for all the support,
Kevin , Jessica, and Kellen Reichel

Security Strategy– do you audit it?

During the assessment phase you or your IT partner will need to look at the existing security you have in place. This includes every computer and server and also focuses on who has access to what, and what programs are being used. Doing an assessment should give you an overview of how secure your business currently is, along with any weak points that need to be improved.

The assignment phase looks at actually carrying out the changes you identified in the assessment phase. This could include adding improved security measures, deleting unused programs or even updating systems for improved security. The main goal in this phase is to ensure that your systems and networks are secure.

Auditing happens after the changes have been made and aims to ensure that your systems are actually secure and have been implemented properly. Throughout the process you will actually need to continually audit and adjust your strategy.

What exactly should be audited?

When conducting an audit, there are three factors you should focus on:

- **The state of your security -** Changing or introducing a security plan usually begins with an audit of sorts. In order to do this however, you need to know about how your security has changed in between audits. Tracking this state and how it changed in between audits allows you to more efficiently audit how your system is working now and to also implement changes easier. If you don't know how the state of your security has changed in between audits, you could risk implementing ineffective security measures or leaving older solutions open to risk.

- **The changes made -** Auditing the state of your security is important, but you should also be auditing the changes made to your systems. For example, if a new program is installed, or a new firewall is implemented, you will need to audit how well it is working before you can deem your security plan to be fully implemented. Basically, you are looking for any changes made to your system that could influence security while you are implementing a new system. If by auditing at this point, you find that security has been compromised, you will need to go back to the first step and assess why before moving forward.

- **Who has access to what -** There is a good chance that every system you have will not need to be accessed by every employee. It would be a good idea that once a security solution is in place, that you audit who has access to what systems and how often they use them. This stage of the process needs to be proactive and constantly carried out. If you find that access changes or system access needs change, it would be a good idea to adapt your the security strategy; starting with the first stage.

If you are looking for help developing a security strategy for your business, contact us today to see how our managed solutions can help.

DR Plans Are Vital For Your Business

Small to medium businesses continue to struggle when developing a comprehensive disaster recovery plan. DRPs or Disaster Recovery Plans, can spell the difference between your business's outright destruction when unforeseen calamities occur or a careful and systematic recovery to normal operations with little loss to operations or profits.

When creating a disaster recovery plan for your business, there are certain key elements that you need to consider.

Basics of a Disaster Recovery Plan

In building an effective disaster recovery plan, you should include thorough documentation that lays out the details of the ins and outs of the plan. You need to know that there is no right type of DRP, nor is there a single template that fits all. But there are three basic aspects to a disaster recovery plan: Preventive measures, detective measures, and corrective measures.

In addition, before building your disaster recovery plan, make sure that it can provide an answer to these basic questions:

> What is the objective and the purpose of making one?
>
> Who are the assigned team responsible when certain events occur?
>
> What is the framework and the procedure to be followed?

Plan for the worst case scenario

Since you're planning for an unforeseen event, you might as well make sure that you have plan for the worst case scenario. That way, you'll never be overwhelmed and you're as prepared as you can be for any situation.

Having different tiers of backup plans is also advisable. It gives you a better assurance that when bad comes to worst, you have a system in place to make sure that these disasters are handled correctly, regardless of the disaster's severity.

Data issues

One of the objectives of disaster recovery plan is to protect the collection of data. Almost half of the total population of business organizations experiences data loss from both physical and virtual environments. This is often due to corruption of the file system, broken internal virtual disks, and hardware failures. Thus, there is a real need for established data recovery plans such as back-up features offered by many IT solution vendors.

Test-drive

Before deploying your disaster recovery plan, you need to have a sort of a test-drive to check if it works. Aside from making it work, you also need to know if it's going to be effective. Through testing, any shortcomings can be identified and will garner corresponding resolutions to improve on your plan. Although the real score of its effectiveness can only be identified once a disaster occurs, at least you will have an idea of how your business and the recovery plan can operate during a disaster.

Building an effective disaster recovery plan is a must for your business. This might not directly lead to a positive impact on productivity but it will surely save you in the events that can possibly crush your business. Anticipating and adjusting for the things that might happen is one of the keys to a company's success.

Setting up an effective DRP can be quite an intricate process since there are several elements that you need to consider. Should you want to learn more, give us a call and we'll have our associates help you develop and test a plan that works best for your business.

Let's Talk Printers

Multi Function Printers (MFP)

Multi Function Printers are also commonly known as all-in-one printers. With this type of device, your printing, scanning, faxing and photocopying needs are covered! These printers usually come in a variety of sizes with many being small enough to fit onto a small desk.

Aside from the multi function features that MFPs have, these are the common benefits that business owners can gain from this type of printer.

- They take up less room.

- They are usually lower in cost. Though it may seem expensive compared to the other types of printers, if you consider buying a fax machine, scanner, photocopier and a printer, you'll find that buying an MFP is actually a lot more affordable.

Inkjet Printers

Inkjets print documents by spraying ink onto paper, and can usually produce prints with a resolution of 300dpi (dots per inch) with some actually able to print documents as high as 600dpi. This makes them ideal for printing smaller images and reports.

What most business owners like about inkjet printers is the fact that they are usually affordable, making them an ideal device for businesses that just want printers. Since most offices (if not all) have computers, you'll most likely see inkjet printers in the majority of offices. Here are some more benefits that people like about inkjet printers.

- Fast printing speeds.

- Can produce really high quality print.

- Easy to use.

- They can produce vivid colors.

Laser Printers

If there's one very notable feature that you'll love about laser printers, it would be the printer's capability of producing very high quality documents. In fact, laser printers can produce copies with a resolution of 600 dpi - 1200 dpi.

One of the main differences that laser printers have is the fact that they use toner (colored or black powder) instead of the inks that are used in most other printers.

Laser printers offer users many enticing benefits including:

- Very high resolution.

- Fast results.

- High volume printing.

- No smears at all.

What type of printer should my business get?

If you are looking for a new printer, it can be a little confusing as to which you should get. If you don't have a scanner or fax machine, it would be a good idea to look into a Multi Function Printer. Looking to print smaller or shorter documents or only occasionally? An Inkjet would probably be a better choice. If you need to print on a regular basis, or print in mass quantities a laser printer could be the best choice.

With all the types of printers available in the market, choosing a specific printer to use in your office can be quite confusing. If you need help in choosing which printer to go for, then give us a call and we'll give you our expert advice on the matter.
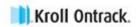
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