ThinkTech
You have enough to think about

tech-ade

Turn your technology lemons into lemonade
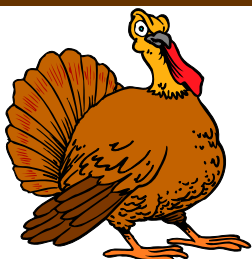
6 Reasons To Choose Hosted Solutions Over Traditional IT

If you want to save your organization a good amount of money on hardware, software and support, you ought to be looking at the various hosted IT solutions that are available.

A hosted solution is simply a business application – be it a CRM system like Salesforce or Microsoft's Exchange – that is stored (or hosted) on a server outside of your office and is accessed via the web. This is also called "cloud computing." While some folks are still a bit skeptical of putting their entire computer network in the "cloud," that fear is starting to subside with the incredible cost savings and ever-increasing security and reliability of hosted applications.

How Hosted Solutions Save You Money And Solve Many IT-Related Problems

1. Cost Savings. With a hosted solution, you get the instant advantage of having very sophisticated software running on top-of-the-line, fully supported hardware without having to pay for it out of pocket. Since the resources are shared, you only pay a small fraction of the overall costs. Plus, upgrades and on-going maintenance are included, saving you even more.

**2. You're Not Stuck With Any One

Solution. Another advantage of a hosted solution is that there is no long-term commitment. If you don't like a particular CRM or application, you can (usually) cancel the contract and move on to something else. Compare that against building your own in-house solution which costs a LOT more money and is much harder to walk away from because of the investment.

3. Your Costs Go Up Or Down Based On Users. Since most hosted solution fees are based on the number of users who have access, you can quickly scale up or down.

4. Less Hassle. Since your provider is providing these services like a utility, THEY are responsible for all the upgrades, maintenance, security, etc.

5. Faster Implementation. Building your own infrastructure is not only expensive, but also time consuming. With hosted applications, you simply turn the service "on," making it much easier (and faster) to get started.

6. Easy Access From Anywhere. If you or your employees travel a lot or work from remote or home offices, going to a hosted solution makes even more sense because users can work from anyplace they happen to be connected to the Internet.

What About The Downsides?

(continued from page 1)

Some folks are still a bit too squeamish to put their entire network and data into a hosted solution, usually because of concerns over security or the fear of not being able to access their data if the Internet goes down. While these are valid concerns, they can easily be addressed by choosing a reputable company with a long-standing history of good service (think SalesForce or Rackspace) and by getting a backup Internet connection (something we recommend to all clients).

If you really want to know if your business can benefit from hosted solutions, give us a call. Even if you're not ready to go 100% to the cloud, you can often get certain pieces of your network hosted to save money and provide easier access to those who travel .

Call Us Today!
508-992-2541

How Add 20% More Customers With FaceBook: A FREE Online Strategy That Brought This Business Owner 20% More Business

Karen DeSousa, second generation owner of Advance Air & Heat Co. in East Freetown, MA has found a new way to promote her family business. And she's seeing great results. In just about 12 months, Karen has seen a 20% increase in number of customers and also seen faster, more efficient communication between her and her employees. So what is she doing to get these results? She's on FaceBook.

Every day or so, Karen dutifully posts a message or two on her FaceBook page to keep it active. She includes useful industry information, and posts new product or service information as well. "We use it like a newsletter," says Karen. "It's a great way to interact with our customers and our employees to keep them informed about the latest product lines or about where the company is going."

And if history is any indicator, Advance Air is definitely going places. Because of its ability to service larger, more sophisticated heating and air conditioning systems (systems that do fancy stuff like monitoring energy usage, automatically turning systems on or off at certain times, and a myriad of other "control" measures) the company has created a niche.

Many of Karen's followers on FaceBook fit right in this niche such as property managers or maintenance managers. "I consider it my mission to bring them the best of what's new in the industry. The information we tend to post is about managing your building, making your property more marketable, and reducing operating costs," says DeSousa.

In addition to FaceBook, DeSousa has also tried LinkedIn and also recently started a blog on her main website, www.advanceair.net. As for a downside, DeSousa says FaceBook does have some limitations for businesses, such as no ability to directly request a "friend" unless you do so under your personal account.

For more information on this and other ways to grow your business using online strategies, email Pam at pam@thinktechonline.com

## Shiny New Gadget Of The Month

The Magic Wand Scanner

The Magic Wand from VuPoint is a scanner you can carry around in your pocket!

At only 10 inches long and 7.5 ounces, this scanner can easily fit into any computer bag or purse. And its super easy one-button operation means you've got a powerful way to scan pictures, images or documents up to 8.5 inches wide in a matter of minutes. Just fire it up and glide it across the surface of the image, text or pattern you want, and you've got a reasonably high-resolution image, no additional lighting required. (Great for copying a recipe or article from a magazine in any waiting room without having to tear the page out!)

At $99, this is a great gift idea for the busy executive on the go; but is it a perfect solution for all scans? No; the control screen is so small that you will have to do most of the image management on a PC screen after loading up the images, and the optical character recognition in some text translations can be rough.

That said, it does put a business-class image capture tool in the palm of your hand that no Smartphone camera can come close to.

What To Do When Someone Posts Negative (Untrue!) Comments About Your Company Online
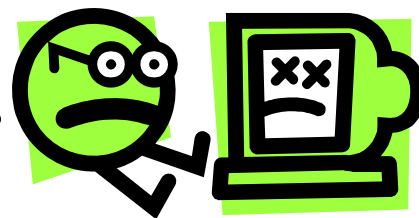
The popularity of user review sites such as Yelp, CitySearch or Google Local Search can be an excellent way for businesses to get some positive PR. But what do you do when a user posts a NEGATIVE comment about you or your business that isn't true?

Unfortunately, people love gossip, especially when it's negative. And since users will often take the word of an anonymous poster over the word of the company being discussed, it's important to keep a close eye on negative comments posted about your company online and address them. (Side Tip: We recommend setting up a Google Alert with your company name to monitor this.)

The best way to deal with a negative comment or complaint is head on; ignoring it is akin to an admission of guilt and will leave visitors assuming the worst. However, your rebuttal shouldn't be nasty or vindictive. Instead, politely address the complaint by giving your side of the story and/or correcting erroneous information.

For example, if a user posts that the customer service stinks at your company, you could reply back that providing top-level service is very important to your company and that you are willing to make good on the problem. You might even offer the person to contact you for a refund, a do-over or other solution to the problem. That way you appear to be a transparent organization that cares about customer feedback.

Another approach would be to ask your happy customers to counter the comment with their own positive comments. Often that will bolster your image and push the negative comment down the line. If the information is an outright lie, be polite but firm. Point out that you don't have any record of the transaction (or other facts surrounding the situation) but would be eager to investigate this further if the user would contact you. In some cases of outright slander or unfounded vicious attacks, you might be able to contact the web site and ask for the post to be removed. Just remember this: it isn't slander if it's true or if it's the opinion of a legitimate customer who is expressing their opinion about your product or service.

If a diplomatic approach doesn't work (and provided the comment is harmful enough) you may want to take legal action to get the post removed. Many social media web sites are becoming more sensitive to this issue and are willing to take down content that is defamatory, slanderous or abusive in nature.

Meet Our New Client Of The Month!

Every month I choose one very special company to be my Client Of The Month. It's my way of acknowledging clients and thanking those who support me and my business with referrals and repeat business.

This month's Client Of The Month is **Purity Services, Inc.** Congratulations! You have won a $50 Gift Certificate to your favorite restaurant. *You might be my next Client Of The Month…watch for your name and picture here!*

Dan Denault
Purity Services, Inc.

Services We Offer:

- IT Consulting Services
- Network Design & Repair
- Disaster Recovery & Backup Solutions
- Virus/Spyware Protection & Removal
- Network Security
- PC and Server Maintenance & Support
- E-mail & Internet Solutions
- Helpdesk Support
- Managed Spam Filtering
- Storage Solutions
- Network Monitoring to Prevent Problems

How To Prevent Employees From Wasting Time Online

Do you have any idea how many hours your employees spend online checking eBay listings, cruising social networks, looking for vacation deals, Googling old flames or (even worse) ogling porn or gambling? A survey by America Online and Salary.com concluded that employers spend nearly $760 billion a year paying employees to goof off on the Web. And with the ever-increasing popularity of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites, the urge to goof off instead of working increases daily.

Where Do You Draw The Line?

While a certain degree of personal online usage may be perfectly okay, the goal here is to stop employees who waste HOURS online and/or to prevent employees from accessing damaging online content such as pornography or gambling web sites, as well as preventing them from downloading illegal software, inviting viruses into your network or spamming out racist or off-color jokes using your company e-mail – all of which can create bigger problems legally and financially.

Two Simple Fixes

So what's a business owner to do? First, make sure you have a good AUP or acceptable use policy in place that outlines what employees can and cannot do online or with company e-mail and resources. If you have one, make sure it's updated to include the use of social media sites and rules on sharing confidential company information. Next, we recommend installing good content filtering software that will "police" the network for you 24/7/365.

For more information on our content filtering solution call our office today! (508)992-2541

I'd Love To Hear From YOU!

Is there an article you would like to comment on? Is there a topic you want me to research? Have a funny story or a resource you want to share with the other subscribers? Send it to me! We are always looking for new and useful content to add to Tech-ade.

508-992-2541

jessica@thinktechonline.com

"Sorry, we just filled our 'Financial Analyst' position, but we do have an opening in 'Sacrificial Lambs.'"