TECHMinutes

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This Issue:

Our Top Tweets

@Ashton Here's another reason to backup your data. And verify the backups! https://t.co/Xs9Ri50Crx

@AshtonSolutions Email Malware is the New Schrödinger's Cat https://t.co/RPApmH4byI

@AshtonSolutions Disasters Come in All Sizes. How Much Downtime Can Your Business Afford? And Survive? http://bit.ly/2DIbMH6

@Ashton Coming soon to a sock drawer near you. And yes, those are indeed our corporate colors!

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The Importance of Proper Data Cabling

In this day and age, everybody needs data cabling in their offices, but many don't even think twice about its importance. A poorly designed or installed cabling infrastructure can lead to significant loss of data, dropped phone calls and inefficient employees. What kind of issues cause these problems? Cables that are kinked or bent too much, those that run parallel to electrical conduit or are draped over fluorescent light fixtures, runs that are too long and those that aren't certified, to name a few. (Curious? If you have an open ceiling in your office, look up and see what you see.) Additionally, cable runs that aren't properly labeled, those that use poor quality cable and/or hardware, or those installed by someone who doesn't know what they're doing will invariably lead to problems down the road. So what are we getting at, here?

If you notice issues with data transfer or phone call quality, it may well be the quality of your cabling infrastructure. If you're moving to a new office space, expanding your existing space, or tired of slow networks, now's the time to consider your needs, and realize the importance of good cabling.

Learn More Here! http://bit.ly/2pjZMJd

Your Guide to Tightening Up Network Security

Network security is one of the most important parts of running a business, but you might be surprised by how easy it is to fall prey to some of the more common threats out there. It's not enough to implement endpoint security or train your employees. Comprehensive network security is a considerable investment that requires not only the utmost care, but enterprise level solutions, backed up with the knowledge of security professionals.

We'll walk you through some of the ways you can tighten up your network security. Remember, the end goal here is to ensure that your business can not only survive a data breach, but prevent one entirely. As such, you need to take a multilayered approach to network security, including endpoint security, best practices, and patching and system updates.

Endpoint Security - Optimizing Network Security
Your business' technology needs to be properly secured if you hope to stay in business. For example, your company likely employs the use of multiple different types of technologies, including workstations and server units, to get work done and share information throughout the workday. Furthermore, your employees might bring mobile devices to the table, which adds even more endpoints to your business' infrastructure. All of these devices need to be secured; otherwise, you're risking your business' integrity.

A unified security solution like a Unified Threat Management (UTM) device can provide preventative solutions to keep threats from becoming major problems down the road. You can protect your network with a firewall, antivirus, spam blocker, and content filter, all to keep issues away from your data.

User Best Practices - Creating a Mindful Workforce
The next step toward protecting your infrastructure is to handle the user side of things. By this, we mean the end-user, your employees, or the ones actually using your business' technology solutions. It's one thing to implement powerful enterprise-level security solutions, but another entirely if an uninformed user lets threats in through a phishing email or

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"A computer once beat me at chess, but it was no match for me at kick boxing."
- Emo Philips

What Is the Real Value of IT for Small Business?

It's important that your business get as much value out of your technology as possible, but this is often easier said than done. There isn't an easy answer to how you can get the most out of your technology. Even if you implement a brand-new solution, who's to say that you don't actually need it or use it? Cutting costs is more important now than it has ever been, and for small businesses hoping to save on IT support, there's no time like the present to secure your business's future.

This all starts by making IT profitable for your organization. In other words, you don't want to waste assets on technology solutions. Instead, you want your technology to save you money, thus making it worth investing in. To find out if your technology is a waste or a benefit to your business, try asking yourself the following questions:

• What are some of the services you have that aren't being utilized properly? Are you wasting time and assets on software or hardware that aren't being utilized to their full extent?

• Do you replace hardware more frequently than you need to (or not often enough)? You could be risking hardware failure or general technology deficiency by not maintaining your technology.

• How much are you spending on technology that doesn't offer a return on investment? While it's one thing to pay for services that make your job easier, it's another entirely to waste them on unnecessary assets that are either a luxury or simply don't offer enough value to justify the expenditure.

To get started, ask yourself how your business's technology is affecting its bottom line. If you implement a new solution, what is it offering for your organization? Are the funds best being spent, or would they be better delegated elsewhere? For example, if you spend some money on automation technologies for basic tasks, you can eliminate the need for important personnel to waste time that would be better spent on more important tasks.

Another common example is the use of break-fix strategies. Businesses are throwing money away trying to keep their technology in proper working order. Break-fix model for IT support puts

up the facade of value by providing support in the moment you need it most. While this does get your business back in action, you still have to pay exorbitant fees for new hardware and downtime. You're not preventing the incident outright, which is where most of the waste comes from. Instead of wasting time, assets, and resources on downtime caused by reacting to technology troubles, try taking a preventative approach instead.

The best way to find more value in your technological investments is to work with a managed service provider like Ashton Technology Solutions. Basically, you can cut out the costs of hiring multiple IT technicians by outsourcing the work to us. This eliminates the costs of managing an IT department, adding new technicians to payroll, and most important of all, the upkeep of your systems. Instead, for a single monthly payment, you can invest in an outsourced IT department that can handle any and all responsibilities of an in-house team, plus some. Here are some of the services that we can offer your organization...

Read the Rest Online!
http://bit.ly/2Hdwu3Z

Your Guide to Tightening Up Network Security

clicking on the wrong link. Therefore, you want to take measures to ensure your employees are trained, or at least relatively competent, with security best practices.

You should always express the importance of security awareness training to your staff, as well as password best practices. Doing so allows you to minimize risk, but more importantly, covers your bases so that you know you've done everything in your power to secure your organization. By regularly testing your employees on network security and enforcing security-minded policies, you can significantly reduce the risk of your employees being the cause of security threats.

**Patching and System Updates -
Maintaining Your Infrastructure**
It doesn't matter how many devices your business owns and uses for operations. Regardless of how many systems are utilized, you will need to patch every system for any potential vulnerabilities. Over time, you might notice in the news that software solutions your business utilizes will become vulnerable to new and emerging threats. In cases like this, you will need to implement patches and security updates to any affected systems. If you don't, you're putting your business at unnecessary risk.

Automating patching and system updates will allow your company to focus on more important things, like operations, instead of worrying about how

long it will take to update your software and operating systems. In fact, most of these patches and updates can be applied remotely, eliminating the need for an on-site visit.

If your business is concerned about network security, you should consider working with a managed service provider to both augment and reinforce your current network security practices. Ashton Technology Solutions can equip your network with all of the above tools so that you can ensure there is minimal risk associated with security troubles. Reach out to us at 216-397-4080.

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Small Businesses Need Comprehensive Communications

Does your business suffer from chronic miscommunication? Chances are that your business is not the only one. Small businesses often lack the ability to invest in solutions designed to cut down on communication problems in the workplace. To help your company's workforce improve communication and collaboration, we're going to discuss some of the many ways that you can implement technology to eliminate miscommunication in the workplace.

Here are some of the most important tips that we can offer, in no particular order.

Implement an Intranet
For those who might not be tech-savvy, one of the most difficult parts of

communication comes from not knowing how to properly navigate around your own network. This could mean finding specific files, or moving about your organization's cloud-based file storage system. An intranet can help not just these employees, but all of them, by providing a central hub where any critical assets that your business depends on can be seen at a moment's notice. This clears up any confusion regarding where your employees need to go to access links to software or important information.

Take Advantage of Communication Solutions
If your organization has yet to implement a unified communications solution, it's in your best interest to do so as soon as possible. A unified communications solution includes an email solution that's used across your entire business' infrastructure, a phone system that provides each of your employees with an

extension where they can easily be reached (this is often a Voice over IP solution), and an instant messaging or video chat system that can be used to get in touch with employees who might not be in the immediate area. Basically, you want to provide your employees with ample opportunities to reach out to others in your business for assistance with any projects.

Make Important Information Easily Accessible
Have you ever browsed the Internet for information about a particular solution, only to find a whole lot of nothing? In most cases, the services that your organization uses will have detailed online documentation and frequently asked questions that will help you figure out what you need to know; yet, your...

Read the Rest Online!
http://bit.ly/2HdGjPf

Backup and Recovery is Essential for Today's Business

How confident are you that your business could survive a worst-case scenario? Organizations should always be ready to go in case they are struck by overwhelming odds, be it a hacking attack or a natural disaster. How would your business respond to a disaster scenario? Do you have a business continuity plan put in place so that you can guarantee your organization survives to see the light of another day?

A business continuity plan consists of much more than just data backup and disaster recovery, though. It includes having a plan to keep mission-critical staff and personnel safe in the event of a disaster, as well as ways to stay in touch with your staff and get back in business as soon as possible following the disaster. If your business fails to eliminate downtime, keep key personnel safe, and restore crucial data, any random threat

to your business continuity could put your future in jeopardy.

We're going to discuss one of the most important parts of business continuity in detail: data backup and disaster recovery. With a BDR solution, you'll be one step closer to keeping your business running following a crippling incident.

How Much Data is Being Backed Up?
If you ever need to ask the question of how much data is being backed up by your organization, you're likely not backing up enough of it. You should be backing up all of your data, or as much is feasibly possible, so that you ever have to question whether or not a hardware failure robbed you of the most important data your business holds. Even losing something as simple as contacts can be a considerable annoyance, as you will then have to waste time collecting them all over again.

Traditional tape backup takes complete backups of your data, but it only does so on a limited basis. Ashton Technology

Solutions's BDR solution can back up data more frequently, and only updates backups when files have been changed, making it a much more convenient and less straining solution for the average small business.

How Often is Data Being Backed Up?
Your data will only be so helpful if backups are only taken every so often. For example, tape backup only takes one big backup at the end of the day due to how it works. Since the process is rather intensive, it must happen after hours, lest it threaten your organization with downtime. This leads to a conundrum--take backups more often, or lose out on productivity due to your infrastructure being slowed or brought down by intensive, frequent backups.

A cloud-based BDR solution allows your company to take much more frequent backups without sacrificing uptime...

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http://bit.ly/2HaFI0B

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Digital Signatures are More Efficient and Secure

Your signature has a lot of power, particularly in the business world. Because of this, it's curious to see how so many companies are moving over to the more digital alternative. In order to fully take advantage of digital signatures for your organization, you need comprehensive security measures that can reinforce the authenticity of your signatures.

This movement to digital signature software is further augmented by electronic document storage. Hoping to reduce the amount of paper waste and printing costs, businesses have started to keep digital documents rather than physical file storage, which naturally makes digital signature software much more valuable as a whole. Going paperless allows organizations to ditch the bulky filing cabinets and allow for easy file searching.

Until digital signature took off, users would have to electronically "sign" documents by printing them out, signing them, and then either scanning them or mailing them to where they needed to go. Thanks to PDF editing software, it's easier to move in the direction of digital signatures than ever before.

Understanding Digital Signatures

Official documents require a signature, which means that there will always be value for digital signing software. Digital signing solutions allow companies to sign documents even while working remotely, which creates more opportunity and provides more convenience as a whole. You can forget the original methodology of scanning, sending, printing, and so on. Forging signatures is much more tempting when getting the official signature is difficult, which can potentially help...

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At Ashton Technology Solutions, we don't think of ourselves as computer guys, geeks or techies. Instead, we're problem solvers in the business of helping clients leverage technology for lasting business results. We just happen to have some serious technical skills as well. Of course we can talk geek with the best of them, but that's just the starting point for what we do, not the heart of it.

While we do take pride in delivering the most technically elegant solutions, at Ashton, we get the biggest satisfaction from integrating into our clients' processes, helping them look ahead, avoid trouble, and find better and more cost-effective methods of operating. In other words, we become partners in their growth. Ultimately, we earn our real enjoyment by watching our clients grow and prosper right along with us.

Surfing the Web, Securely

The Internet is often taken for granted, in both a professional and a personal capacity. You'd be hard-pressed to get anything done without it nowadays. This doesn't mean it's always safe to do so, however. There are many threats that lurk in the darkness of the Internet, and if you're not careful, you could find yourself on the receiving end of them. We've put together some tips that can help you keep both yourself and your business safe while browsing the web.

Sacrificing Security for the Sake of Convenience
The majority of threats found online can be avoided easily enough--particularly by developing some pro-security habits and practices. That being said, it's easier to develop bad habits than good ones, as everyone is surely aware of. This only makes it harder to keep yourself safe from online threats.

One great example of this is the password. While it might seem counterintuitive to have more than one password, it becomes a security issue if you use the same password for multiple accounts. This is because a single password is all a criminal would need to hijack multiple online accounts. Therefore, the best way to take advantage of your passwords is to use a unique password for each account, which includes a random string of letters, numbers, and symbols...

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SCRATCH... ...SCRATCH...

NO NO, THIS COUNTS.