"Insider Tips from Connectability to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably"

IT Insight

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Inside This Issue…

Signs You Need New Tech

As a technology company, we are hyper aware of the trade-off between cost and value. When evaluating new products and services for our customers we look at short-term, installation, and maintenance costs, but also the long-term cost savings, productivity enhancements, and the compatibility with your current infrastructure.

IT upgrades are very valuable when made strategically. What we find when visiting prospects and new customers is that they are often focused on the short-term cost, not the long-term benefits.

In an article from the *Business News Daily* the President of the online accounting software company *Xero* said "Using the latest technology to better run your company is what gives many business owners a competitive edge while giving them more time back with their families,". Obviously we all want to spend more time with our loved ones and less time dealing with technology headaches.

One such headache is the lifecycle of laptops. In my experience (and the experience of many, many internet bloggers) a business laptop or desktop's lifespan is about **three years**. After three years the cost of maintaining a laptop becomes more expensive than simply buying a new one.

We've had this experience many times with customers who refused to upgrade to a new computer citing cost concerns. We are good at what we do, but we aren't magicians. If a computer is too old and slow all we can do is work on it for several hours, reset it, reload the operating system, and get it in decent working order. In the meantime the client has spent several hundred dollars and experienced hours of downtime to extend the life of an old machine that likely won't last long.

For me, the best indicator for deciding if it's time to buy new equipment is if employee productivity has dropped as a result of the equipment provided to them. If an employee spends a significant portion of their day waiting for files to load due to a computer issue, the day's loss of productivity is probably going to outweigh the $1,000 or so to buy a new laptop.

This goes for other equipment in your office including routers, switches, firewalls, and servers. If you consistently spend time worrying about, or dealing with IT issues, it's time for an upgrade.

You can prolong the life of your technology, but remember, these only extend the life slightly. When technology begins to slow down, to get significant improvements you'll need to upgrade. If your computer is relatively new and it's started to slow down you can improve performance by:

1) **Freeing up memory wherever possible.** We all download apps they take up lots of space and reduce performance. Periodically removing apps and freeing space will speed up your computer.
2) **Reimaging your computer.** Reimaging is simply deleting and reinstalling the apps on your computer, but it will greatly increase performance.
3) **Reinstall or upgrade your operating system.** This can be done once a year, but takes time and can be done improperly if completed by the wrong person.
4) **Invest in new batteries.** Batteries lose their ability to keep a charge over time so this will improve longevity, especially in laptops.

Get 25% More in October

IT is something that's never a problem - until it is. Small things often go wrong on a daily basis, but sometimes they aren't dealt with until they become a huge problem because of limited budgets.

That's why we're offering our Time & Expenses customers a discount on our hourly rates. For every 2 hours of support services you buy during October, we'll throw in an extra half hour for free!

A lot of businesses don't contact an IT provider until things get serious. Unfortunately, this generally results in a higher support bill, days or hours of downtime, and reduced productivity in the interim. Your IT infrastructure requires constant support, so leaving it unattended for weeks or months at a time has consequences.

It's also important to note that every IT issue that reduces employee efficiency will directly hurt your bottom line. So if a small issue has persisted for some time it's probably impacted your profitability.

Our goal is to make sure our clients are looked after and getting the support they need even if they don't have the budget for a Managed Services plan.

For our occasional customers this is your chance. If you have an IT issue, an overdue project, or would like some help evaluating a software package or a piece of hardware the best time to call is now.

Like any business we have limited resources so we can't make this offer forever. This offer will be valid until October 31st to the first 15 businesses who reach out to us.

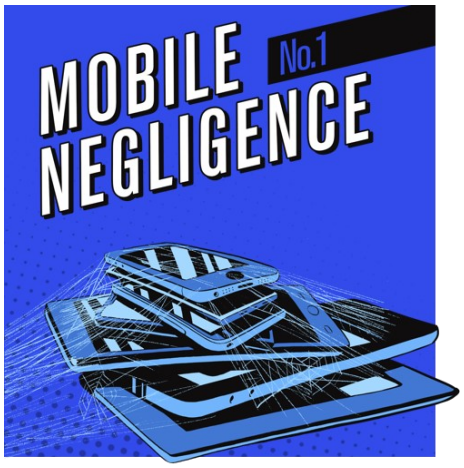
The 7 Deadly I.T. Sins

#5: Mobile Negligence

Although mobile devices have a lot to offer businesses, they also represent a potentially huge security risk. Because many organizations allow employees to use their own devices, there is a heightened potential of loss and theft. Even if you only allow employees to use their devices in the office, it doesn't mean they won't accidentally "bring work home".

Hackers are increasingly targeting mobile devices to steal data (emails, contacts, corporate data, financial information) and send premium rate SMS messages, using up your bandwidth in the process. Android devices are most vulnerable to threats - last year Sophos Labs saw an 1800% increase in Android malware. While there is less iOS malware these devices are still vulnerable to attack, especially jailbroken devices.

To protect yourself from these external threats implement these 7 security measures ASAP:



1. **Implement a mobile device policy.** This is especially important if employees use their own personal devices to access company email and data. If the employee leaves or is fired, can you erase this data from their device? If it's lost or stolen can you remotely wipe it? By having a strong, well thought out device policy you can reduce the number of potential threats, and ensure everyone in your organization is aware of how they are expected to treat their devices.
2. **Enforce the use of secure passwords**. Passwords should be at least 8 characters and contain lowercase and uppercase letters, symbols and at least one number. Requiring a password on a cell phone will go a long way in preventing a stolen device from being compromised.
3. **Require all mobile devices be encrypted.** This is the most effective way to ensure data security. To read a file you'd need to access a secret key or password that unlocks (decrypts) the data.
4. **Implement remote wipe software for lost or stolen devices.** If you find out a laptop or cell phone is lost or stolen, "kill" or wipe software will allow you to disable the device and erase any and all sensitive data remotely.
5. **Backup remote devices.** If you implement remote wipe capabilities you should also be backing up your devices to keep everything you're erasing. Make sure you're backing up all MOBILE devices, including laptops, so you can quickly restore the data.
6. **Don't allow employees to download unauthorized software or files.** One of the fastest ways cybercriminals access networks is by getting unsuspecting users to download malicious software by embedding it within downloadable files, games or other "innocent" – looking apps.
7. **Keep security software up-to-date**. Thousands of new threats are created daily so it's critical you stay updated on ALL your mobile devices. As an employer you can remotely monitor and manage employees devices to ensure they're being updated, backed up and secured.

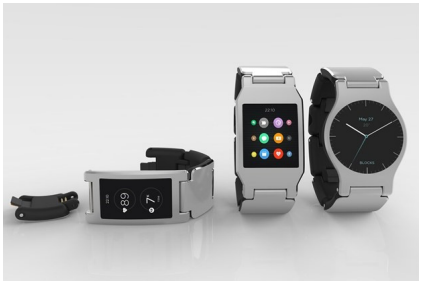
Gadget of the Month: Blocks Modular Smartwatch

This month we're profiling the Blocks Modular Smartwatch. Essentially, it's a smartwatch that allows you to add and remove modules based on your needs. It creates a device that is not only customizable for individual users, but also customizable based on specific activities.

For example, you may need different features for travel than going for a run. You may want to use a sim card link when travelling so you don't need to bring your cellphone with you everywhere you go. For running you may want the Kinetic charger to charge the device with your movement, or the blood O_2 sensor.

Blocks also aims to reduce waste. Instead of throwing out old technology you simply upgrade the pieces, reducing total waste. Google has been working on a project called Ara for years that has a similar premise, but instead of wearable tech it's focused on smartphones.

If you are looking at the MOTO360 or the Apple Smartwatch this device may be something to consider. Although it is not "better" per se than these other devices it does have a broader range of application options. It can monitor body temperature, perspiration, haptic feedback, altitude, heart rate, and if you are a heavy user you can even add an extra battery.



Our Success = Your Success

Every month we feature a client success story to highlight our activities at a client's business. Usually, these stories revolve around an issue that a customer has experienced in the past month, its effect on their business, and how we addressed it.

But after reviewing our time logs for the past month we found something interesting: this month we didn't have **a single** client who experienced a major disruption! That's the power of Managed Services.

Connectability has been a "Break/Fix" (or Time and Expenses) IT provider for much of its existence. But we've focused on transitioning away from this "reactive" support model to a more "proactive" approach. Managed Services (MS) allows us to keep environments more stable, while at the same time smoothing cash flow.

When analyzing billings over the years we came to a startling conclusion: companies who use our services on a Break/Fix basis and request support only periodically had **HIGHER** support costs than those on MS plans.

Costs were higher because issues arise, fester, and eventually develop into **serious problems** that require lots of time to repair, and often result in downtime. On MS plans, issues are dealt with **before** they become serious.

All MS plans include security software applications that **ALL** companies need including AntiVirus, AntiMalware, remote monitoring and management, remote access, a firewall license, and cloud backup. This ensures that security patches are always up to date, your network isn't vulnerable to spyware, or ransomware, your systems are constantly monitored and updated, and finally, files are backed up regularly to **protect you** from a major disaster.

Remember: an IT support contract is a lot like **insurance.** Sure you may not need it **RIGHT** now, but when you need it you'll very glad you had it. And since all organizations face regular technology problems, it will likely be **CHEAPER** than getting occasional support at your IT provider's regular hourly rates.

Choosing an IT provider can be **risky,** especially when you're signing a contract, that's why we offer **guarantees**. If you're not satisfied after 60 days we'll refund the money you've spent on services. We also offer a 120 day cancellation option if you're still not sure after 60 days. That's how confident we are that you'll love our services!

Connectability's Referral Program Help us help you!

As many of you know, we get most of our customers through referrals and we're always looking for ways to grow our business.

To entice you to spread the word to friends, family, and business contacts we'd like to offer **$100** for making an introduction with a bona fide business prospect. If they sign up you'll get **$1,000** as a thank-you for putting us in touch! Simply by helping us you can reduce your IT costs!

For details about what constitutes a business prospect please go to our website at **www.connectability.com/referrals**

October Joke of the Month:

Consultants

A man walks into a Silicon Valley pet store looking to buy a monkey.

The store owner points towards three identical looking monkeys in politically-correct, animal-friendly natural mini-habitats.

"The one on the left costs $500," says the store owner.

"Why so much?" asks the customer.

"Because it can program in C," answers the store owner.

The customer inquires about the next monkey and is told, "That one costs $1500, because it knows Visual C++ and Object-Relational technology."

The startled man then asks about the third monkey. "That one costs $3000," answers the store owner.

"3000 dollars!!" exclaims the man. "What can that one do?"

To which the owner replies, "To be honest, I've never seen it do a single thing, but it calls itself a Consultant."

The Age of Virtual Assistants

In 1979 Steve Jobs visited Xerox PARC, a legendary R&D lab in California's famous Palo Alto tech centre. There he saw a demo of what became the "Graphical User Interface" or GUI. GUI is how all computers work today. You use icons, drop-downs and "windows" to create, destroy and mess around online.

What Mr. Jobs didn't see on his visit to Xerox was the "Conversational User Interface" or CUI. The scientists behind the CUI believed that we should be able to work with our computers by vocalizing commands in ordinary human language.

At the time they recognized that to introduce this product they would require faster, more distributed processing and smarter, more efficient computers. They had developed a prototype, but to industrialize it would cost far too much. Nowadays, nearly every major tech company—from Amazon to Intel to Microsoft to Google—is chasing the sort of CUI developed by Xerox decades ago.

Although voice interfaces are not new, they've been pretty simple to this point. Siri can do basic searches, but isn't capable of anything complex, and when pushed it will send you to a Google search.

A company named Soundhound has developed an app called Hound that they've kept secret for 10 years. Ask Hound something as complex as: "What is the population and capital for Japan and China, their areas in square miles and square kilometers? And also tell me how many people live in India, and what is the area code for Germany, France, and Italy?" Hound will analyze the input and give a correct answer to EVERY question.

This doesn't mean the GUI interface will disappear. Far from it. If you use your computer to design, write, or create, you'll likely continue to use your computer this way. What it really means is that younger and older generations, and the disabled community will have a better way to communicate with their technology.

Many tech executives believe that the GUI has gone as far as it can and is becoming increasingly overloaded. Average business users nowadays may have 5 Word docs, 2 Excel spreadsheets, and 20 tabs open, all at the same time. That's where the CUI comes into play. It acts as a liaison between apps that generally don't "talk". This smooths communication and completes tasks without requiring a lot of manual entry.

Apple has Siri, Microsoft has Cortana, and Google has Google Voice, so it's only a matter of time until these technologies can handle ordinary human language easily. But remember, like any assistant, these virtual assistants need to learn your habits to become seamless. The digital assistant revolution may be closer than it appears!

Connectability To The Rescue

Have you ever had a computer problem that just made no sense? A real head-scratcher? One of our clients just had that experience. The mouse on their late-model Macbook Pro stopped working. Or so they thought.

But when they took the laptop to the Apple Store, it worked fine. So back they went to their office, only to discover it didn't work any more.

Enter Connectability. Believe it or not, we diagnosed it as a problem with the customer's Bell wireless modem that was created after a recent Apple update. As soon as we disconnected the wireless, the problem went away.

If your computer has gremlins, give us a call. We'll root them out, once and for all!