

# Bits & Bytes

Insider Tips On How To Use Technology To Make Your Business  
Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably



***“As a business owner , I know you don’t have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That’s where we shine! Call us and put an end to your IT problems forever.”***

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## How One Small Business Incurred a \$73,000 Phone Bill Without Making the Calls Learn How to Prevent This From Happening to You!

A short time ago one of my technicians was speaking with a client who one Monday morning came in to the office to find they weren't able to place long distance calls. After speaking with their long distance provider, they were told their long distance service was suspended because of suspicious long distance activities that occurred over the weekend.

After further discussions with their provider they learned that \$73,000 (yep, you read that right—\$73K) of long distance calls were made overseas over the weekend from their offices. Naturally, they didn't make the calls as their staff were not in. In any event it's probably not humanly possible for 1 or 2 people to incur that much in long distance charges over a weekend. Based on the calling activities it was determined that their voicemail system was hacked from an external location. To add insult to injury, after learning this, they also found out that they were responsible to pay for these charges, even though they didn't incur them.

The client then contacted the local company that supports their phone system. After explaining the situation the client was told that this type of a hack attempt was well known to them, they knew exactly what to do to close the loopholes to prevent this from ever happening. When our client asked why they weren't alerted about this situation since it was known to them, the provider responded by saying "do you know how many clients we have? We wouldn't have had the time to let everyone know about this."

When I heard this story, I was disgusted and shocked that ethically, my client's phone support company wouldn't have at the very least sent an e-mail or a letter to all of their clients. I can't imagine how my client felt getting that response from their provider. Needless to say the client was frustrated and disappointed and questioned whether to continue the relationship.

### How Voicemail Fraud Works

Many businesses and phone companies around the world have fallen victim to this fraud. Fraudsters most often call a business after hours, and then deploy a variety of manual and automated techniques to try and guess the passwords used to protect access to voicemail equipment. If these passwords have not been changed from their default settings, or if passwords are used that are easy to guess (i.e. 1111 or 1234), it is fairly easy for these criminals to gain access to voicemail equipment. Once inside, long distance calls are initiated, resulting in unexpected charges, often in the tens of thousands of dollars.

### Take Steps To Protect Yourself

Today's sophisticated voicemail system comes with safeguards to prevent this kind of exploitation. However like locks on your car or on your house, they have to be used properly in order to be effective. Here is what you can do to increase protection for your business:

## 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 \$99USD, (on Amazon.com) 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.

- Ensure that your employees change the manufacturers' default password immediately upon being assigned a voicemail box, and that they are reminded to change the password frequently thereafter.
- Program your voicemail system to require passwords with a minimum of 6 characters (8 is preferred – the more complex the password, the more difficult it is to guess).
- Train your employees not to use easily-guessed passwords such as their phone numbers, the number of their phone extension, or very simple number combinations.
- When assigning a phone to a new employee, never made the temporary password the employee's telephone number.
- Program your voicemail system to force users to change their password at least every 90 days.
- There is a feature called "through-dialing" that allows you to make long distance calls from within your mailbox when you are at an off-site location. Validate if the through-dialing feature is needed and if not, ask your equipment support provider to disable it. If you decide to keep through-dialing enabled, then it is important that you generate and monitor through-dialing reports to ensure your mailboxes are not being abused.
- Remove all unassigned mailboxes.

While these precautions are of a general nature and might not protect every aspect of an individual telephone system, they will go a long way to reducing your vulnerability to this type of fraud. We encourage you to contact your telephone equipment support provider to discuss your particular configuration in greater detail.

According to Bell you are responsible for paying for all calls originating from, and charged calls accepted at, your telephone regardless of who made or accepted them.

In Ontario there is a class-action suit against Bell that's pending regarding all of these charges. It is the Plaintiffs' position that if Bell is capable of identifying fraudulent activity, they should be able to shut down the activity more quickly before thousands of dollars are incurred.

If you don't currently have a telephone equipment support provider to help you with the above, feel free to contact our office and we can provide you with referrals. Don't worry, we know the name of the provider of our scammed client so we won't send you there!

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## Say Goodbye To Your Trusted Old Friend Windows XP For Good

### ...And Something You Need To Be Aware of Before You Get Windows 7

A lot of our clients (ourselves included) have grown quite attached to Windows XP since its release 9 years ago and love it for its overall stability and reputation as a workhorse of an operating system. When it was originally released in October, 2001 it was revolutionary for its security and general performance.

Like many good things of long duration, they come to an end. And so it is with XP that has officially been retired as of this month to make way for its successor Windows 7.

Since Windows 7's launch in July 2009 all new PCs and laptops came with Windows 7; however fans of XP were still able to exercise the downgrade to XP that was made available on all new Windows 7 computers. As of this month, all major vendors (Dell, HP, etc) have stopped making this XP downgrade available.

Don't fret XP fans, we have been using Windows 7 in our office since its launch 15 months ago and we are raving fans. Additionally, many of our clients who have adopted it are extremely happy. Overall, Windows 7 is a faster and more stable operating system than XP. It also has a lot of features to make your workday more efficient and is a major workhorse for those computer users who demand a lot from their computer.

### But...

As robust as Windows 7 is, unfortunately their 3rd party vendors (printers, scanners) are still catching up to make Windows 7 drivers available. This means that some changes need to happen in your network to support Windows 7. This is nothing new when it comes to releasing new operating systems - we saw the same issues when XP came out.

What does all this mean for your business? Keep in mind that all new computers you purchase will be Windows 7 and you cannot downgrade to XP. For this reason if it's your first Windows 7 PC on the network, realize that extra time is needed for your computer support provider to determine compatibility issues with software applications you use and peripheral devices and scanners. Depending on how complex your technology needs are in your business, your computer support provider will need additional time to deploy Windows 7 to integrate it with everything else in your network.

## How To Prevent Your Employees From Wasting Time Online

Do you have any idea how many hours your employees spend online cruising social networks and Craig's List, looking for vacation deals, Googling old flames, looking at employment sites or (even worse) ogling porn or gambling? A survey by America Online and Salary.com concluded that American employers spend nearly \$760 billion a year paying employees to goof off on the Web. You can figure Canadians are wast about 20 - 25% of that amount as we are the most internet-savvy nation in the world. 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.

Not only does unauthorized Internet usage by employees sap productivity, but it also contributes to network congestion and slowdowns, and could be putting your business at risk for Web-based threats like spyware, viruses and phishing attacks that are rapidly increasing in number, complexity and effectiveness, putting businesses that rely on the Internet at risk.

### 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. Content filtering:

- Blocks access to inappropriate websites
- Blocks malicious web threats (spyware, viruses)
- Provides visibility to web usage through detailed reports
- Enforces different Internet usage policies for different groups of users
- Protects users on the entire network, including remote users.

For a minimal monthly fee, we can install a tool on any computer (the user won't know it's there) and it will track what websites they are surfing, and for how long. We can provide you with an easy-to-interpret report showing you their surfing history. If you don't want to be Big Brother about it, we can simply put a block on inappropriate websites based on certain keywords (i.e. adult, gambling, entertainment) for any number of your staff.

## Are Digital Devices Dumbing Us Down?

Cell phones, which have become full-fledged computers with high-speed Internet connections, let people relieve the tedium of exercising, the grocery store line, stoplights or lulls in the dinner conversation. Now, instead of having a moment of downtime, every waking second can be filled with text messages, e-mail, Internet connectivity and games. But is this constant digital connection harming us?

According to scientists, the answer is a resounding "yes." One of the unanticipated side effects of not giving your brain a break from the constant "noise" of PCs, cell phones, iPods, iPhones, BlackBerry and other digital devices is brain fatigue. People who keep their minds busy with constant digital input are not allowing their brains much-needed downtime.

One study conducted by the University of Michigan showed that a person was more effective at learning, retaining and processing information after a walk in nature versus a walk in a high-strung, noisy urban environment because the constant stimulation fatigues the brain, making it more difficult to be effective. One neurologist was quoted as saying, "People think they are refreshing themselves when they are actually fatiguing their brains."

So the next time you have a minute waiting in line or at a stop light, resist the urge to pick up your cell phone and text someone and just relax!

## Thanks for the Kind Words...

*"I highly recommend Joseph Stoll and his company Technical Action Group.*

*They've helped us keep our network, website and peripherals running for the last seven years.*

*Often they solve our issue in a brief telephone conversation.*

*Joe and his representatives are honest, personable and always respond quickly to get us up and running again."*

Laura Upcott,  
Director of Communications Stafflink

### A Funny (True) Story...

A police officer found a perfect hiding place for watching for speeding motorists. One day, the officer was amazed when everyone was under the speed limit, so he went to investigate and found the problem...

A 10 year old boy was standing on the side of the road with a huge hand painted sign which said "Radar Trap Ahead." A little more investigative work led the officer to discovering the boy's accomplice, another boy about 100 yards beyond the radar trap with a similar sign that read "Tips" and a bucket at his feet full of change.

## Please Welcome TAG's New Client!

I'm thrilled to welcome a new client into our company!  
Special Thank You to Rev. Craig Burton of Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada—Eastern Ontario District for the referral!

**Malvern Christian Assembly**  
**www.mcassembly.com**

Malvern Christian Assembly ('MCA') is a diverse, spirit-filled Christian community where people from 45 different nations gather each Sunday to praise and worship. As well, MCA offers such programs as after school clubs, grief support, kids clubs, bible studies, and prayer meetings as well as other spiritually-based activities for its community.

MCA was referred to TAG during a transition phase when MCA's internal technical support resource was going to leave the organization. In an effort to achieve a smooth transition between support providers, the leadership team was looking for external professional assistance to review their current network configuration and make recommendations to resolve several ongoing issues within their technology.

Technical Action Group undertook a detailed network review and made various recommendations that would provide MCA with a better backup solution and network performance enhancements that would provide them with a more stable, faster, and better performing network.

TAG is currently in the process of implementing several of our recommendations as well as providing services under its Professional Care Plan which consists of MCA's entire network being monitored 24/7 so potential issues can be addressed before they become downtime. As well, TAG's weekly and monthly proactive maintenance activities on MCA's network drastically reduces chances of virus infections and their data is kept safe from intruders. Budgeting for IT costs becomes simplified with the Professional Care Plan that includes unlimited remote computer support for one flat monthly fee.

## Would You Like a \$25 Cineplex Card?

Congratulations to Sandy Henderson of Creaghan McConnell for being the first to correctly answer October's Trivia Challenge "Which rocker had a top ten hit in 1983 with "Pink Houses"?" and winning at \$25 iTunes card!

The correct answer was c) John Mellencamp

**Be the first to submit the correct answer to this month's trivia question and you'll receive a \$25 Cineplex gift card!**

**What superhero's alter ego worked for newspaper publisher J. Jonah Jameson?**

A) Green Lantern, b) Superman, c) Spiderman d) Daredevil

Send Your Answer Today to:  
SStoll@TechnicalActionGroup.com  
Type: 'November Trivia Question' in the Subject line.  
\*\*\*Only the winner will be contacted.\*\*\*

**GOOD LUCK!**