

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.”

Joe Stoll, President
Technical Action Group (TAG)
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Inside this issue:

5 Time-Saving Techie Tips That Will Add An HOUR or More To Your Day

Shiny New Gadget of the Month

Important Security Alert About Anti-Virus & Anti-Spyware Programs!

Be Rid Of The 3pm Drowsies Once and For All

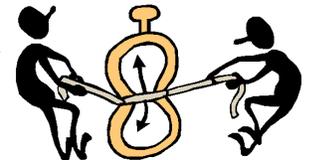
Don't Automatically Trust Every App!

Win A \$25 iTunes Gift Card

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How To Think Like a Geek (And Add An Extra Hour of Free Time To Your Day)



Who wants to find an extra hour of free time in their day, every day? Considering we're all stressed out because there's never enough time to get everything done, this is what I would call a "leading" question. So how can you do it? By looking at the seemingly innocent, time-sucking activities you are spending time on every day and either automating them or speeding them to completion using technology. Can it really be that simple? It can, but you need to understand one critical factor first...

The "Latte" Factor

Author David Bach coined this phrase in his book "The Automatic Millionaire." The latte factor is based on the simple idea that all you need to become wealthy is take a hard look at the small things you spend your money on every day and see whether you could redirect that spending into savings.

For example, a little \$2 purchase made every day on common things like coffee, bottled water, fast food, snacks, etc. REDIRECTED into an investment account earning 6% will become \$10,199.30 in 10 years. If that's true, why don't MORE people do it? Because saving \$2 a day seems so insignificant that people spend ALL their money on these things and then have nothing left over to invest.

5 Time-Saving Techie Tips That Will Add An Hour Or MORE To Your Day

So the question is, what are some small, time-saving technologies we can use to automate or speed up what we get done to save us that precious hour? Here are our 5 favorites:

1. **Use an aggressive spam filter.** Over 80% of the e-mails being sent daily are not-so-delicious spam. If you get dozens of these every day, this can easily add up to 5-10 minutes per day sifting, sorting through and deleting the spam from the e-mails you want. We recommend *McAfee E-mail Defense Service*. This service offers enterprise-grade filtering server and performance, without enterprise-level complexity and cost. It is a highly effective defence against a wide range of e-mail threats that works on the network perimeter to identify, 14 day quarantine, block and strip suspect e-mail messages before they can enter the messaging infrastructure, based on your preferences established in the intuitive, easy-to-use Control Console. The service includes Advanced Spam Blocking, Virus and Worm Scanning, Content and Attachment Filtering, Fraud Protection, E-mail Attack Protection, Outbound Message Filtering, Sophisticated Quarantine Management, Around-the-clock Monitoring and Protection, Mail spooling if the in-house mail server becomes unavailable. And it's dirt cheap per user—less than \$3 per month.

This reduction in Spam will save your staff time in having to handle Spam messages, reduce the risks associated to virus-infected e-mail (i.e. network infection) and save valuable bandwidth and resources to handle Spam Messages.

Shiny New Gadget of the Month:



Pico Solar Charger

Do you like to camp, hike, and spend time outdoors but can't live without your iPod or cell phone?

Pico Freeloader Solar Charger is a compact and lightweight solar powered charger that can give you 35 hours on mobile phone, 14 hours on iPod, or 1.5 hours on GPS, all on a single ten hour charge.

The crystalline solar cells will soak in the sun's rays by day, and when night falls, you can plug your phone or GPS in and charge it up in just a half hour! Now when you trek through the wilderness, you can do it with peace of mind knowing your vital devices will stay charged in case of emergency.

What's particularly nice about the Pico is that you can recharge its internal lithium ion via USB in the event of a cloudy day or in the middle of winter. Oh, did we mention it's only \$39?

I haven't been able to find a supplier in Canada yet, but I'm sure it's a matter of time.

- 2. Replace Old PCs.** While it's hard to truly estimate how much total time is wasted waiting on an old, slow computer to process tasks, start up, etc., I can tell ya, it adds up. Let's say your old PC takes 10 seconds longer to process a task than a fresh, new one. Might not seem like a lot, but with users averaging 100-150 tasks a day conservatively are wasting 16-25 minutes a day. Add in the crashes and other problems old PCs cause and you're probably closer to 30-35 minutes a day.
- 3. Maintain Your Network.** Another tip that will save you a lot of time is patching, updating and optimizing your server and workstations. You'd be surprised how much slower even a new machine will start to run if not maintained properly.
- 4. Document management.** This is a HUGE time-saver if you are a paper-heavy office (like attorneys, doctors, contractors, etc.). But even if you aren't, scanning and storing paper documents so they can be searched on and located in seconds rather than minutes or hours is a HUGE time saver. Plus, it's a greener solution, improves document security, enables users to access critical documents remotely AND (if that's not enough) prevents important paper from loss or damage.
- 5. Implement SharePoint or Other Business Collaboration Software.** Be honest: how much time is wasted in your office because people are duplicating efforts, can't find information and documents they need or backtracking to FIX mistakes made? This, like time wasted on old PCs and downtime, may be hard to calculate, but I would conservatively guess that folks are wasting at least 30 minutes a day or MORE because of disorganization. That's why we recommend growing companies implement some type of collaboration software that will help organize projects and information, making it easier for everyone to get on the same page. Call Joe Stoll at 416-489-6312 for a demo of SharePoint.

SECURITY ALERT! Ads for Fake Anti-Virus & Anti-Spyware Programs Are Multiplying

Not long ago one of our clients was browsing the web when a warning popped up on his computer screen, alerting him that his PC had been infected with a virus. Although the alert looked real, he was skeptical and closed the alert by clicking on the "X" in the upper right hand corner of the notice.

Can you guess what happened next? His browser was hijacked, pop up ads started sprouting up everywhere, and he couldn't get any of his programs to work even though he rebooted his machine. Although this is an extreme example, the number of fake anti-virus software scams has increased tenfold in the first quarter of this year. Court records reveal one instance of why this has become a hot new trend with hackers: One company (Innovative Marketing) took in more than \$160 billion worldwide last year "selling" fake anti-virus programs.

Here's How They Nail You:

Online scammers simply create and place fake ads under the name of well-known anti-virus corporations without their permission, and without the knowledge of the site selling the ads. But instead of installing a legitimate anti-virus program, it installs a virus that either instantly infects the PC or creates a warning that then sells the user a fake clean-up program.

How To Avoid Getting Tricked

- Keep your computer updated with the latest anti-virus and anti-spyware software, and be sure to use a good firewall.
- Never open an email attachment unless you are POSITIVE about the source.
- Do not download freeware or shareware unless you know it's from a reputable source. Many freeware and shareware programs come bundled with spyware, adware, or fake anti-virus programs.

- Do NOT click on any pop-up that advertises anti-virus or anti-spyware software. If a virus alert appears on your screen, DON'T click on it, even to "close" it. Instead, hit control + alt + delete to bring up the Task Manager. From there, "end task" the "rogue" program from the list and call us immediately: 416-489-6312.

Easy Tips To Avoid the 3pm Drowsies

With most of us glued to our computer at least 8 hours a day, we've all had those days where our eyes are tired, dry, and irritated, causing an overall feeling of exhaustion. Here are some quick tips to resolve the most common of office health hazards – eye strain. How can eye discomfort be reduced?

Overhead lighting

- Use filters to diffuse overhead lighting.
- Dim overhead lights.
- Keep in mind that recommended level of light in offices 300 - 500 lux is not a must. It applies in the situation where there is no task lamp in use.

Windows and walls

- Cover windows with adjustable blinds.

Monitor

- Adjust the brightness and contrast according to your preference.
- Use a light colour for the background.
- Place the monitor parallel (not directly below) with overhead lights.
- Angle the monitor away from lights and windows.
- Make sure that the task lamp illuminates the document and not the monitor.
- Consider getting a new monitor. About 3 years ago, I begrudgingly admitted I needed glasses to work at the computer. Relief – no more headaches! Fast forward to 2 months ago when I purchased a new HP laptop with a WXGA BrightView monitor. Not only is this monitor beautiful to look at, but after a few weeks I found I didn't need my glasses! As of the time of this writing, I plan to look for a similar monitor for my desktop, if they are available yet.

Should anti-glare screens be used?

In general, anything between the operator and screen compromises the quality of the image. It is far better to control glare by proper lighting design and placement of the monitor than by use of an anti-glare screen. Many monitors currently available are already equipped with low reflective screens.

What can you do to reduce eye strain?

The ability to focus on objects at various distances decreases with age (presbyopia). Commonly, by their forties people cannot clearly see objects at close range with the naked eye. This is a gradual change, and has to be regarded as an important component in designing visual environments, particularly when the job involves computer work. Uncorrected vision may be an additional source of eye discomfort. It may have further consequences resulting in aches and pains because of awkward postures or positions adopted to "see better".

- Check your vision every one or two years, as recommended by your eye specialist.
- Provide your eye examiner with information about your job.
- Consider using task-specific computer glasses. Depending on the amount of time you work at a keyboard, the kind of vision correction needed, and your personal preferences, your eye specialist may recommend bifocals, trifocals or even a separate pair of glasses for computer work.

Focusing your eyes on objects at the same distance and angle for prolonged periods of time can contribute to eye strain.

- Every few minutes look away from the screen for a few seconds.
- Look around.
- Focus your vision on distant objects.

Should You Really Trust Every App You Install On Your Phone?

Nope — some of them are plundering your personal information and beaming it to potential bad guys. (Do hackers ever sleep?) Two researchers revealed that they'd researched one seemingly benign wallpaper app and found that it was sending phone numbers and subscriber information (like names and addresses) to a remote computer.

The app in question came from Jackey Wallpaper, and it was uploaded to the Android Market, where users can download it and use it to decorate their phones that run the Google Android operating system. It includes branded wallpapers from My Little Pony to Star Wars.

Essentially, these apps collect your phone number, subscriber identification, and even your voicemail phone number as long as they are programmed automatically into your phone. It sends the data to a web site, www.imnet.us. That site is evidently owned by someone in Shenzhen, China. The app has been downloaded anywhere from 1.1 million to 4.6 million times.

"Apps that seem good but are really stealing your personal information are a big risk at a time when mobile apps are exploding on smartphones," said John Hering, chief executive, and Kevin MaHaffey, chief technology officer at Lookout, in their talk at the Black Hat security conference in Las Vegas. "Even good apps can be modified to turn bad after a lot of people download it."

Our Employees Are Happier and More Productive...

“Before hiring TAG, we had multiple problems... our servers were running out of memory, they were slow and sometimes freezing. We had problems with our virus software and a myriad of other problems with laptops and desktops that our previous support company weren't able to fix in an adequate timeframe or with the right attitude.

Thankfully, we found TAG. We now have more productive uptime with our computers, our employees are happier and more productive, and my life is easier because I can rely more on my IT company now and I have faith in TAG to deliver on all of our needs. They're a great fit for us and I would absolutely recommend them”

Daniel Kolber,
Vice-President
Asset Management
Retrocom Mid-Market
REIT

Please Welcome TAG's New Client!

I'm thrilled to welcome a new client into our company!

Road to Travel
www.RoadToTravel.com

Travel and sightsee at your own pace with a private guide and driver, and with the freedom to choose what you see and when. Create the vacation that fits you best in Italy, Egypt, or Jordan. Road to Travel's popular itineraries accommodate every budget.

Road to Travel (RTT) needed a computer support company they could work more closely with to develop a technology strategy to better support their current business and future growth plans. Specifically, RTT needed recommendations that would improve the stability, speed and accessibility for staff accessing their custom database application internally and from Italy, while keeping the application secure from intruders, and keeping the integrity of the application. Frequency and reliability of their backup system was also of concern to RTT. TAG worked closely with RTT management to gather details of their specific needs and concerns so our recommendations would be in complete alignment with what they needed. Upon completion of implementation of our recommendations, RTT will see dramatic improvement in overall network speed, access to data and stability within their network.

Through TAG's Professional Care Plan, RTT has peace of mind knowing that their entire network is 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 their network drastically reduce changes of virus infections and their data is kept safe from intruders. Budgeting for IT costs becomes simplified with this plan that includes unlimited remote computer support for one affordable monthly fee.

Would You Like a \$25 iTunes Card?

Congratulations to Sue Russwurm for being the first to correctly answer September's Trivia Challenge "What was the name of the singing cowboy in the musical "Oklahoma" and winning at \$25 iTunes card!

The correct answer was a) Curley

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

Which rocker had a top 10 hit in 1983 with "Pink Houses"?

- a) Michael Jackson b) Don Henley c) John Mellencamp d) Lionel Richie

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

GOOD LUCK!