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### 3 Tips to Help You Make Better IT Decisions



Making solid business decisions can sometimes be confusing. Not that you try to make anything other

than good decisions, but a lot of business is, and has always been, trial and error; and, you may know this from experience, error happens to be a big part of it. Today, we thought we would discuss what goes into good technology decisions and how many times it comes down to the results.

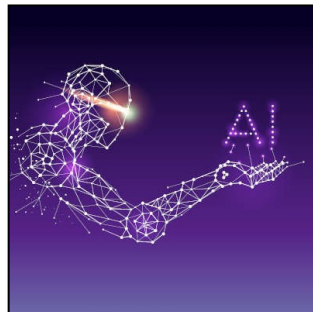
#### How to Make Good Technology Decisions

Making the right decisions in...



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## AI Can Help You Run Your Business Efficiently



Not everyone understands the ways that businesses can leverage artificial intelligence, among the most popular of emerging technologies, to improve the way they do business. This is because there is fundamental confusion about what exactly AI is capable of. This month, we thought we would take a brief look at AI and how it can be used by even the smallest business to build more efficient operations.

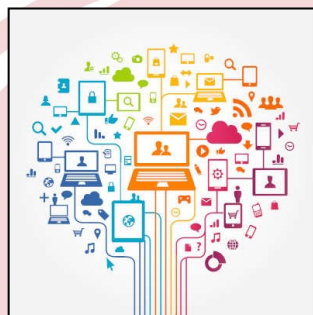
### Why Efficiency is Important

For businesses that have been rockin' and rollin' for some time, finding new ways to accomplish their goals isn't always a priority. Think about it, if you run a sandwich shop, and your staff pumps out sandwiches as ordered, it's a fair question to ask how any technology can work to make your business more efficient. People place orders, they pick up their food (or they get it delivered), rinse, repeat. What may surprise these business owners is that the act of making and delivering sandwiches is only a small percentage of your actual business. All the other parts of your business: supply chain/inventory; human resources; security; and all other facets can be improved to make your business more productive, and ultimately more profitable.

So building efficiency isn't all about the active productivity toward building your product or performing your service. It's also about ensuring that every part of your business is handled efficiently. This is where artificial intelligence comes in. Well, really automation, but what's better than automation that you have to constantly monitor and adjust?

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## 3 March IT Holidays You Should Know



If you look hard enough, there is a "novelty" holiday for just about every day of the year. While many are of the fun and goofy variety, like March 13 being National Earmuff Day and March 28 being National Something On a Stick Day, others are used to remind us of important ideals and practices. Let's take a few moments to shine a light on those days dedicated to important information technology concepts (even though we've technically missed National Technology Day, on January 6, Data Privacy Day, on January 28, and National Clean Out Your Computer Day, on February 8).

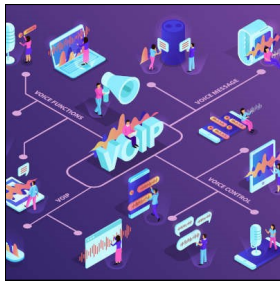
### The First Weekend in March — National Day of Unplugging (March 4th, 2021 to March 5th, 2021)

Okay, so while this may sound weird (especially coming from an IT service provider) it is important that you step away from your technology on occasion. Back in 2009, when smartphones were first coming into the fold, there was concern about how the prolonged use of such devices would impact people—particularly in terms of their mental health.

This concern led to the implementation of the National Day of Unplugging: a project that grew from a Jewish arts and culture nonprofit's small gatherings for technology-free Shabbat dinners to an international campaign to help slow down our normally fast-paced lives. Now, this movement in support of digital wellness is recognized around the globe, seeing significant participation each year.

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## VoIP Is the Ultimate Addition By Subtraction



With high-speed Internet practically being a necessity for today's business, it isn't a surprise that Voice over

Internet Protocol has taken off in popularity over the past couple of years. A business that utilizes VoIP for communications rather than a telephone provider can expect to benefit in many ways. These are just a few of them.

### Growing is Easier

Growing pains are very real and can be a problem for many small businesses. An organization could rapidly increase the size of its clientele in a relatively short period of time and grow quickly. In this scenario, adding resources can get tricky and expensive, but with hosted VoIP, it's as simple as adding new lines. Since the phones hook into a PC or thin client, or work through an individual's smartphone, you won't have to worry

about running telephone cable, eliminating the setup costs entirely.

### Pay What You Want for Services You Need

One of the best parts of hosted VoIP is that you can directly choose how you want to use the solution. Many



businesses get in the position where they are paying money for services that are either underutilized or unused altogether. This is wasteful and can get expensive. Rather than pay for services you don't need, you should instead opt

for a service that only requires an Internet connection to function. You can choose which features are right for your situation and pay per line. This means that the VoIP solution ends up costing a fraction of what you'd pay with a traditional telephone service.

### Additional Features

Telephone communications are generally limited to your standard features offered by the provider, like call forwarding, conference calling, and others that might have proven fruitful in years past. VoIP offers more dynamic options, like video conferencing, instant messaging, and other helpful tools that help you get the most out of your communications.

VoIP can help you revolutionize your business' communications. Pick up the phone now and call Directive at 607.433.2200 to learn more about how hosted VoIP can work for you...



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## AI Can Help You Run Your Business Efficiently

*(Continued from page 1)*

Automation that adjusts on its own. Let's look at a few ways AI is transforming business processes to help companies build efficiency.

### Improving Customer Service

Your customers appreciate efficiency. Whether that means attentiveness at the counter, an easy-to-use website, or simply support that doesn't take them in circles, having efficient processes can make a huge difference for your business. Today, businesses can leverage tools with built-in AI that not only assess the quality of service a customer gets, it can help a business by automating costly support that is on par with any that humans can provide. Not only that, it can do it through a number of separate mediums so that regardless of where a customer needs support, the

software can get the information the customer needs without a lot of hand wringing.

### Enhancing Product Development

AI is revolutionizing many businesses' product development processes. Today, there are tools available that can help businesses build better products and services simply by providing the parameters that go into it. This not only saves countless man hours coming up with ideas that never come to fruition, it provides options for administrative teams to work through to get products and services to market faster.

### Rethinking Sales and Marketing Processes

There are many management platforms for a business to choose from, but today's most dynamic uses AI to alter the

way sales and marketing teams use data. Some platforms go as far as being able to predict which current customers are ripe for an upsell, which prospects will be more lucrative partners, and even which companies could be in a position to look to your competitors. It gives sales teams the tools to know which companies they should engage and how to engage them.

### Employee Recruitment

One of the more interesting ways AI is working for companies is in human resources. There are AI-fueled platforms that use the technology to assess potential hires and find companies the...



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## 3 March IT Holidays You Should Know

(Continued from page 1)

We've always been big supporters of a healthy work-life balance, so we can completely understand how important it is to go low-tech every once in a while, especially while you're away from the office and at home.

### March 16th — National Freedom of Information Day

First enacted in 1966, the Freedom of Information Act established for the first time that American citizens had the right to access records belonging to federal agencies. The day that celebrates this right, March 16th, is also the birthday of James Madison, the fourth president of the United States.

Madison, often referred to as the Father of the US Constitution, famously advocated for an open and accessible

government. As a result, the day of his birth is a fitting time to acknowledge the right that the act established. Since then, many advocacy groups like the National Freedom of Information Coalition have risen to continue ensuring that laws are in place to further secure these rights.

### March 31st — World Backup Day

Finally, we come to World Backup Day.

We have stated time and time again that a properly configured business backup is a critical—essential—consideration that every business needs to account for. How much does your business rely on the data it has stored? If you're like every other business, the answer is a lot... so what would happen if you were to lose it?

Keeping a backup can help save a business from such an outcome and the consequences that come with it. With data disasters potentially coming from so many sources, you can't assume that it "just won't happen" to your business. A backup (especially one involved in a larger backup and disaster recovery strategy) is just another copy of the data you need to operate. Best practices dictate that these backups are stored in multiple places, both onsite and offsite in the cloud, to ensure that they are always available.

World Backup Day is simply a day intended to promote the implementation of such a measure, and as such...



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## Threats Can Come From Inside Your Business, Too



With so many companies having to deal with security problems coming in from the Internet, they may think

that securing against an attack coming in from the outside is where all their attention should go. This can be an oversight that could have dire consequences for your business. This month, we tell you why you need a security strategy that protects your data and infrastructure from all manners of threats—inside or outside your network.

### Sabotage

Scammers don't have to come from outside your network. Quite frequently threats come from the people you trust to carry out your vision. Unfortunately, any organization that deals with data is going to have to anticipate this as a possibility. You will need to put measures in place that limit data access to people who actually need the data. Employees

should only have as many permissions as they need to effectively do their jobs, and nothing more.

### Unsecured Applications

If yours is like many other businesses, software is a crucial part of your business. Unfortunately, if they aren't properly updated, they can be a major security risk. If a software is left unpatched, it can create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers. This can have major consequences for your operational stability. Tools like cloud computing and virtual private networks can provide more security and flexibility, but if you insist on hosting your own servers, you will need to have a patch management platform in place to ensure that you are doing what you can to protect your business.

### Unrestrained Access

Today, many businesses have employees that need remote access to network-hosted resources. This demands that...



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## Cybersecurity Tips

### Ransomware – Before, During and After

With ransomware now a daily threat to nearly anyone with an email account, it is important to know just how an attack is crafted, delivered, and what it can mean if it happens to you.

Find out more about ransomware! We cover everything that happens before, during, and after a ransomware attack, as well as the actions you should and shouldn't take in the event of an attack.

<https://dti.io/rnsmwrebda>

### Get our Cybersecurity Tips to your inbox weekly!

Each week we send an email with **FREE** cybersecurity tips to help you to avoid a data breach. These tips can be used to educate yourself and your employees on security best practices.

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## Marketing Ideas & Tips for Your SMB

### How Can I Use SEO to Help My Business' Website Rank Better?



Is your business website not generating as many leads as you hoped? Chances are your SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is focused on what keywords are and not what they do. Keywords are a starting point for SEO, not the end, and certainly not the only factor in making SEO work for your business. Here are four tips to help you better understand how to use SEO as part of your business Marketing Plan.

#### No One Can Guarantee a #1 Ranking on Google

Let's get this out of the way. If any marketer or SEO specialist promises your business will be on page one of Google in 30 days or less, they aren't being honest with you. First of all, there is no way to predict, push, or pay to get your site to rank. There is no secret magic bullet that will make all the difference either.

On their SEO for beginners page, Google reiterates this fact: **No one can guarantee a #1 ranking on Google.** Period. Full stop. Now, are there steps, tactics, and strategies you can use to increase your chances of rising in rank

to page one? Absolutely, they take time, patience, and a plan.

#### How to Increase Rank

First and foremost, the most basic way to increase your ranking on Google is by creating content that is of value to your audience. Your business content should inform, inspire, and provide answers to your audience's questions.

The value of SEO is that it allows you to recognize and take advantage of trends in search terms (keywords) and use them to 'market' your services online. While SEO can certainly be nuanced at times, here are four basic factors to consider when developing an SEO plan for your business.

#### Understanding the Four Basic Factors of SEO

**1. Keywords:** While keywords play a role in SEO, they are not the magic bullet they once were or able to drive traffic just because they are on a page or menu. Keywords are no longer stand-alone. Modern keywords provide a glimpse into what services potential customers are looking for, giving you opportunities for marketing to address those needs. Keywords identify 'pain points'

and provide you with an opportunity to show you have a solution for it, via the content you create. If you haven't examined your website's SEO in some time, it may be time to update how you use keywords.

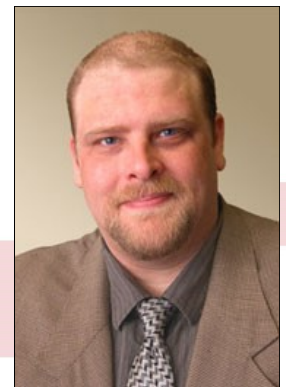
Some tips to utilize keywords include:

- Using focused keywords in your metadata (titles, meta-descriptions). Your meta-description, for example, should accurately describe what the page is about while being interesting enough to encourage searchers to click and learn more information about the service. Keep in mind that meta descriptions are NOT used as a ranking signal.
- Include your keyword in your heading (H1). Search engines view H1 tags as something that is very important to pay attention to, making it a natural place to put your 'defining' keyword.
- Place your keyword or phrase early in the content, this way you reach people who may not read your blog to completion, allowing...



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We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is our success, and as you grow, we grow.



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