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Happy New year

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Are your Employees your Biggest Data Loss Risk?

Take a look, a good hard look, at your employees. They are working diligently, right? You see good communication,

organization, and dare we say motivation emanating from each member of your well-armed team. Or maybe you don't and the company is working on improving that - we understand. We also understand that while an employee might be a rockstar at their job, they could still pose a risk to IT.



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About Directive

We are a technology consulting firm specializing in technology implementation and management for businesses. We're known for providing big-business, Enterprise-Level IT services to small and medium-sized businesses.

Visit us **online** at:newsletter.directive.com

May the New year
bring you Happiness,
Peace, and Prosperity!

Everyone at Directive would like to wish you and yours a happy holidays and a fantastic new year!

Let's all spread some fun holiday cheer and get ready to face all of the opportunities and challenges of 2012 head-on!

A Cool Server is a Happy Server

When computer equipment overheats it increases the chances of a crash. Heat (or inadequate heat removal) can even cause long term damage on expensive hardware. You may have noticed that your server room/network closet is a little warmer than the rest of your business. All computer equipment produces heat, and servers are known to pump out a lot of it. Let's talk about ways to keep your important technology cool to prevent crashes and other issues.

Space

Spacing is important. You'll want to make sure any air vents on your equipment have plenty of room to breathe. Give them several inches of open space. A lot of configurations have vents on the front and back (air gets sucked into the front and expelled out the back), although many servers have vents on one side as well. If you have multiple servers, you'll want them facing the same direction so the air flows the same way.

Temperature

Obviously in order to keep things cool you'll need to keep the temperature low. If you are running multiple servers in an enclosed space you'll want to set up air conditioning to pump cool air into the server room. While feeding cool air from the building's A/C unit is a start, you'll want a specific cooling device for the server room for when you aren't running the A/C. There are specific cooling units designed for server rooms that are energy efficient and tools for the precise needs of computer equipment. This is not exactly a small investment but then again, we're talking about the longevity and stability of your core IT infrastructure. Be sure to keep the doors closed and seal up the room to ensure you aren't trying to cool the outside.

Rack It Up

Rack mounts are ideal for organizing your server room as you grow and expand. A single rack can host multiple devices from servers to phone systems to your networking equip-

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QR Codes in a Nutshell

You've probably seen these funny barcode-like symbols popping up and wondered if they mean anything. These days they are all over the place - on websites, in magazines, and even in television ads. What are these mysterious glyphs? Should we be concerned? And of course the question on all of our minds, how can I use them to market my business?

QR Codes are essentially barcodes that store a whole lot more data. They were originally used to track parts for the auto industry, but these days you can find them everywhere - they have a great commercial value. A tiny QR code can hold a lot more data than a traditional barcode because it stores it on two dimensions, horizontally and vertically. Barcodes pretty much just translate to a few digits where QR codes can display letters, numbers and other characters. They can then be scanned by mobile smartphones equipped with cameras to decode the information. Much of the

time, QR codes will point to a URL, but they can contain text, phone numbers, SMS messages, WiFi logins, and a whole lot more.



With the explosion of mobile browsing and even mobile ecommerce, utilizing QR codes to share data between traditional media such as newsletter, brochures and print ads can help drive more digital traffic. Think of QR codes as a pseudo-social media: not everybody is going to jump on board immediately, but as big popular brands embrace QR codes (and they most definitely are) users will start to catch on and pull out their mo-

bile device more often to see what is behind the code.

QR codes can open up a lot of creative opportunities for marketing efforts. Since QR codes are simple monochrome images they can be put on everything from business cards to t-shirts to chocolate. Remember, the creativity can't stop there; when someone scans the QR code you'll want to send them somewhere worth going to - that might not be your homepage, but a special landing page specific to the piece of media they scanned.

Looking to learn more about QR codes, or get help implementing them for your business? Give us a call at 607.433.2200.



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Bullet-Proof Your Business Continuity Plan with this Checklist



It's always important to be prepared for emergencies, and for a small business these days even a minor disaster can

have long term ramifications with serious consequences. Whether the disaster is short lived, like a power outage or hardware failure in your server, or a more serious event like a flood or fire, you want to be able to get back in business as quickly as possible. Here are some steps Upstate New York businesses should take to prepare and add to their disaster plans.

Centralize your Data

This is a very common one that most businesses should already have down, but it is worth mentioning. Company

data can't be stored on workstations - keep it on a server. Keep that server in check with regular maintenance and security updates. When your data is spread out throughout all of the computers in the office, it makes it nearly impossible to track down important files in a pinch, as well as recovering data in the event of a disaster. Centralizing your data to a server will prevent messy situations like that while providing countless benefits to the company.

Backup Data

Company data needs to be backed up regularly. At the very least, everything needs to be backed up daily, but remember, restoring from a backup means you could lose an entire days work. A good backup solution will run backups a few times an hour. Small businesses shouldn't wait to get a reliable backup solution, a major loss of company data is enough

to drive many small businesses bankrupt.

Test your Backup

If you've already got a backup system in place, be sure to test it regularly and make sure all of the proper data is being backed up. Data can get corrupted, and backup systems aren't immune to this. If your backup isn't complete and free of errors, what good will it do you?

Store Backed Up Data Offsite

Your backup solution won't do you any good if all of your data is sitting in your server room during a flood. Take your complete backup snapshot offsite. The best (and most fool-proof) way to do this is to encrypt the data and send them to a secure data center. Don't hassle with removable storage like thumb drives, external hard drives, and tape that can

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A Cool Server is a Happy Server

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ment. They save precious space, promote airflow, and can have built in cooling. Plus having a well-kept rack instead of a row of servers and other devices looks very professional. Depending on your cooling solution you may want to use blanking panels to cover up the unused spaces on the rack to make airflow more efficient. I know that sounds counter productive, but it helps control and target where the air goes.

Replace CRTs With LCDs

You might have a monitor or two in your server room for accessing the servers physically, and it's pretty likely it is an old hand-me-down. CRT monitors produce a lot of heat and use a lot of electricity. Swapping them out for small, energy efficient LCD monitors can save you a ton of space and make it easier to keep the room cool.

How Safe is Your Email



Email is (and has been) a prime method of communication for businesses of all sizes. With email comes a

whole slew of issues that are essentially synonymous with the technology; spam, information overload, phishing, and information privacy.

Even Upstate New York small businesses that only do business locally are at risk of these issues. Personal email accounts are equally at risk. Employing proper precautions and practices whenever communicating via email is very important to prevent the risk of security compromises, monetary loss, and even legality issues.

Manage Your Cables

Ever since the first home computers, cables have been an eyesore. For businesses however, it can be a nightmare. Power cables, peripherals, phone, and a seemingly endless supply of networking cable can cause a huge unorganized mess in your server room. Keep cables organized and tucked away to prevent tangling, dust collection, and increase airflow.

Keep It Clean

Dust plays a huge factor in heat dissipation. For electronics, dust is sort of like a big, thick down blanket. You'll want to keep the server room clean and check air vents on your equipment regularly. If things don't look good, you'll want to have the dust cleaned out of the inside of your equipment. Also keeping your server room uncluttered increases airflow, so keep things neat and tidy.

Spam Inundation

If you've been using email for a while either professionally or personally you have almost certainly gotten email from people you don't know. Most of these emails are blatantly unwanted while others can look 'almost' legit, as if a real person is trying to contact you. Often (and unfortunately) spammers can get your email address when you put it online or use it to register for accounts on sites on the internet. The good news is standard spam protection is getting better these days, and more advanced spam protection is cost effective for businesses that need the extra layer of protection. Spam can cause a lot of harm for a business network if it isn't kept under control - spam can bog down email servers and eat up network bandwidth and plus it drastically slows down employee productivity because they need to sift through it all just to find

Virtualize Your Servers

If you can condense the number of servers you have running at once, the process of keeping them cool becomes exponentially easier. It saves power, hardware costs, management costs, and cooling costs. Be sure to ask us about Virtualization for your servers!

Does your server room feel hot and stuffy? Is it time to clean up and future-proof your server room? Give Directive a call at 607-433-2200 to talk about ways to improve your core IT infrastructure and keep your expensive equipment running longer to prevent downtime and unexpected support calls!



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their real email. If you and your staff are getting more than a few spam emails a day, contact us at 607.433.2200 and ask about our anti-spam solutions.

Don't Open Attachments from Unsolicited Emails

This has been a golden rule for general email usage for a very long time. If you received an email from a stranger and there is an attachment, don't touch it. If you receive an email from a contact and there is an attachment, but anything is suspicious, don't touch it. This goes the same for links - if the email was unexpected and just seems fishy, it is possible your contact's email may have been compromised. Use your judgment on this, but remember it isn't your contact trying to trick you, they are merely



Read the rest Online!

<http://bit.ly/AkFOJw>

Bullet-Proof Your Business Continuity Plan with this Checklist

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easily get lost, stolen, or damaged. Data storage is pretty affordable these days and if your entire IT infrastructure gets destroyed you can retrieve all of your data and get back up and running with at least rudimentary resources.

Consider Phone Flexibility

Some phone service providers will offer the ability to switch and forward the company numbers over to another location pretty quickly so contact between you and your customers goes uninterrupted. Other options, such as VoIP solutions, can allow staff to work from anywhere and use the company phone system through any standard internet connection or internet connected PC or laptop. Of course, this requires that your phone system is up and running, but the added benefits of mobility and flexibility can do a lot for a small business during normal operations as well.

Test UPS Batteries

You'll want to ensure that your mission critical devices can shut down properly in the event of power outages. Don't overload a UPS with more than it should be able to handle either. Servers, backup

devices, and other mission critical equipment should have its own UPS. Workstations and lesser devices can be ignored unless you have it in your budget.

"...you want to be able to get back in business as quickly as possible."

Document Software Keys
In the event a system needs to be rebuilt or restored, you'll need your product and license keys for all of the software used. This includes operating systems, applications, and any other registration key of any type. This data should be well documented, extremely clear, and a part of your company data that gets backed up and archived offsite.

Document Warranties

Same as above, track hardware and software warranties for all devices. Printers, workstations, servers, monitors, UPS systems, phones, and any other electronic device typically has some sort of warranty. Keep these up to date, especially for the more valuable, expensive devices. Sometimes, standard warranties will cover certain types of damage.

Educate and Alert

Your staff needs to know what to do in the event of a disaster, especially a major one. Review the plan with employees, and also consider how you will reach out to the public and/or your clients in the event of a major emergency. Create a list of tasks such as updating the website, kicking out messages on Facebook and Twitter, mass emailing, and other methods to let clients know that there may be a delay in service. One thing is for certain though - taking all of the above precautions will get your business back on its feet quickly at least with rudimentary capabilities. If your employees can continue to perform in the wake of a major disaster clients will notice and be impressed.

Looking to ensure that these tasks can get checked off for your company? Contact Directive at 607.433.2200 to talk about data backup services, phone systems, offsite backup, IT security, and other safeguards to ensure your business stays up and running with minimal downtime.



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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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