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The Internet of Things is Changing the Way Businesses View Online Threats



When you think of the Internet of Things, does your mind immediately wander into

the realm of connected devices that change the way we interact with each other? Or, does it consider the security issues that can potentially become a threat to your entire network and...



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When it's Hot Outside, Your Servers Are Burning Up Inside



If you host your own servers in-house, or in an off-site data center, you know all about the frustrations of keeping your hardware up to date and healthy. This also includes keeping your servers from overheating. These mission-critical pieces of hardware are known to produce incredulous amounts of heat, and keeping them cool only gets more challenging during hot, sticky summer months.

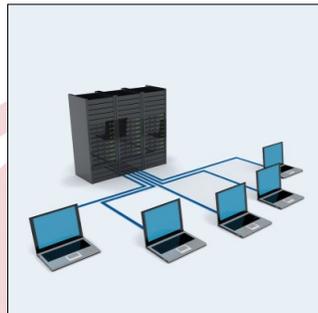
When a server overheats, it can have unexpected (or, well, obvious) results. Too much heat can fry your server's hardware, effectively disabling it and possibly ruining it for good. This is obviously not a good thing, and it can happen when you least expect it. Therefore, it's important that you always have a way in which to keep it cool and under control.

Here are three cooling factors you should consider when hosting your own server in-house:

- **Keep your servers in a temperature-controlled climate.** Basically, you should store your servers somewhere where you can easily control the temperature. There are

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Improve Business Operations with Virtual Desktops



Anything that makes your business more mobile is a good thing, right? This is one of the main goals of virtualization services. These separate the software from the hardware it's installed on, allowing it to be isolated and installed on a virtual machine where it can be accessed as an individual instance. Many businesses are finding success in their workplace by taking advantage of desktop virtualization services.

According to Processor magazine, "virtualized desktop infrastructure (VDI) technologies give IT administrators more control over their infrastructure and in turn help IT teams deliver operating systems and applications to end users in new ways." This means that virtualization has the ability to help your business simplify its infrastructure and make it more efficient. In other words, a virtualized desktop system can help your business push above and beyond its current expectations.

There are several benefits that your business can reap from a virtualized desktop infrastructure:

- **Consolidate your infrastructure:** Limiting the amount of physical hardware your business needs to run can be one of the best benefits that virtualization offers. Rather than running many different workstations, you have the ability to switch to thin clients. These devices are much more energy-efficient and don't require the heavy-duty hardware that an ordinary workstation would. The IT administrator has the ability to allo-

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Passwords May Be "Ineffective," But They're Still Necessary



It seems like we can't go on the Internet without reading about some sort of data breach. Sometimes they're

caused by poor security measures, like lack of data encryption or two-factor authentication; other times, it's because of lackluster password security. Despite the antiquity of the username and password, they're staples in the modern office. Thus, it's important that they're as secure as possible at all times.

Passwords might have their flaws, but they're necessary if you want to maximize your business's security from online threats. It's not just your organization's future at stake; it's also yours as an individual, not to mention your employees and anyone associated with your company. Here are three ways you can improve the security of your passwords in the workplace.

Educate Your Staff About Best Practices

According to Processor magazine, "In establishing a pragmatic password policy, the first step is balancing risk, compliance, and usability needs, followed by education and enforcement." This means that it's the responsibility of you,

the business owner, to make sure that everyone is exercising precaution and following strict security standards for their passwords. The usernames aren't so important, so long as they aren't "admin," or other similar common denotations.

Passwords should include many different types of characters, including symbols, numbers, lower-case, and upper-case letters. You should avoid using whole words whenever possible, and strive to make them as difficult to replicate as you can; and whatever you do, do NOT use your Social Security number or birthday. Taking these preventative measures will decrease the chances of hackers accessing accounts without permission.

Integrate Two-Factor Authentication

Two-factor authentication is growing in popularity, and it's easy to see why. These measures add an extra layer of security to your online accounts, which require an external credential in order to crack. This could be your mobile device, or it could be a set of credentials emailed to you or sent via SMS. Regardless, this adds another step to a hacker's process which often requires them to have physical access to your mobile device, which could discourage them. Directive can help your business set up a

two-factor authentication system that can help your business achieve optimal security.

On the Server-Side, Use Strong Network Security Practices

We all remember how technology super-giant Sony got hacked a few months back. Sony foolishly labeled the folder which held their passwords, "passwords." This meant that, once hackers got into their infrastructure, they knew exactly where to look to steal passwords from the lax company. This isn't something you want to experience firsthand, as the fallout from the Sony hack so painfully showed us.

Instead, you should prioritize making sure that hackers can't get into your network in the first place. A Unified Threat Management (UTM) solution is capable of such a feat. Armed with a firewall, antivirus, spam blocking, and content filtering solution, you'll have little to fear from both internal and external threats. Still, it never hurts to be prepared for the worst.

Always take precaution when dealing with passwords, especially if they...



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Improve Business Operations with Virtual Desktops

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- cate resources equivalent to the needs of an individual machine, allowing for more versatility and control than an ordinary PC.
- **Virtual desktops can be used remotely:** Another great capability of virtual desktops is that they can be used remotely, as well as within the office, provided their devices have been approved. This lets them gain access to the same desktop and applications they would have if they were in the office. This is especially helpful if you have workers across

the country, or on business trips.

- **Simple integration and upgrade procedures:** While the configuration of a virtual desktop solution can be tricky to implement in the beginning, these complications are nothing compared to the ease of upgrading later on. Instead of applying patches and updates to multiple different machines, the network administrator can dispatch updates to multiple virtual machines at once.

Setting up a virtualized desktop infrastructure doesn't have to be painful.

Contacting a managed IT service provider is your best shot at making sure that virtualization happens smoothly. By outsourcing this responsibility to Directive, we can make sure that your virtual machines are kept up to date and functioning properly. Just give us a call at 607.433.2200 to learn more.



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When it's Hot Outside, Your Servers Are Burning Up Inside

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cooling racks specifically designed for such a task, but many SMBs simply resort to closets with air-conditioning. However, if your server room consists of a closet with fans blowing directly on your hardware, you might want to consider a cooler solution.

- **Take care of your cooling equipment.** If your cooling machines fail, it's the same as allowing your servers to overheat. Therefore, the upkeep of your cooling system is of the utmost importance. Is the overall atmosphere damp? Is dust accumulating on your fan blades? Set up routine maintenance procedures and stick to them to avoid surprises, like a failing cooling system.

- **Be sure to allocate enough assets from your budget.** Air-conditioning can be a costly expense. Even having fans running constantly can add a hefty addition to your electric bill. Therefore, you need to properly assess just how much you have available to allocate toward proper server cooling units.

You might also consider revamping your backup policy to one which constantly takes snapshots of your data. This way, despite your best efforts, if the server does overheat, you have a backup plan that can handle these unexpected problems. Our Backup and Disaster Recovery (BDR) solution is perfect for a time like this. It can take the place of your server in a pinch if it were to somehow become

inoperable, and allows for a quick and efficient restore once you arrange for a replacement.

As a managed service provider, Directive knows how to provide quality technology management services to small and medium-sized business owners like yourself. One of our services is server hosting and management. This lifts the burden of maintaining your server hardware from your shoulders, and places it on ours. As capable technology experts, you'll have little to worry about in terms of proper upkeep and maintenance. Give us a call at 607.433.2200 to learn more.



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Why Using a VPN is the Most Secure Way of Accessing Corporate Data



As a business owner, you're constantly moving around. At the same time, you're expected to keep

in touch with your base of operations, respond to employee and client inquiries, and many more mission-critical tasks that require the use of remote technology solutions. Unfortunately, public WiFi hotspots are known to be cesspools of online filth, where a secure connection is nothing but a dream. One way to correct this issue is with a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

What is a VPN?

To put it simply, a VPN is a network that only authorized personnel can access. This helps keep the transfer of data private, meaning that VPNs are especially useful for connecting to confidential enterprise data. This is generally done through encryption hardware or software, which entails encoding and decoding information as it's sent or received.

How Does It Work?

VPNs basically keep your data safe while it's being sent and received from your corporate infrastructure, but how does this work? Gizmodo describes the process which a VPN tends to use in more detail:

"Because VPNs use a combination of dedicated connections and encryption protocols to generate virtual P2P connections, even if snoopers did manage to siphon off some of the transmitted data, they'd be unable to access it on account of the encryption. What's more, VPNs allow individuals to spoof their physical location—the user's actual IP address is replaced by VPN provider—allowing them to bypass content filters."

In essence, the most secure way to access any information online is through a VPN. Not only is your data hidden from view, but even your physical location is obfuscated from any prying eyes.

Why Should You Use a VPN?

The reasoning is clear. When you're out and about, or working remotely from an

airport, train station - anywhere, really - you can't afford to use sketchy WiFi signals that may be teeming with hackers, waiting to jump your data while it's in transit. Putting your data at risk is the same as putting the future of your business at risk.

You don't have time to worry about corrupt WiFi networks when work needs to get done. Additionally, integrating a corporate VPN solution can be challenging if you're unfamiliar with the territory. The skilled, professional IT technicians at Directive have the knowledge required to equip your organization with powerful, flexible VPN solutions designed to help you keep a secure connection to your company's data infrastructure while you're on the go. Give us a call at 607.433.2200 to learn more.



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The Best Workers are Looking for a Flexible Work



One of the biggest challenges of running a business is attracting and retaining quality workers. To accomplish this, you're going to need more than an old-fashioned "help wanted" ad. These days, you will need to offer what quality employees are looking for--a flexible workplace environment.

More companies are making the work experience more flexible for their employees. This is seen in ways like, allowing employees to create a work schedule that's most suited to their needs, and being flexible with where work is done; whether it be at home, or even at different locations around the office so that workers aren't tied to their desk. These accommodations may sound like big, and even risky, changes to the traditionally-minded business owner, but they're changes worth making.

Why You Should Bother Accommodating Workers

Sure, you could just do business-as-normal and not take any extra measures to accom-

modate your employees by providing a more flexible workplace experience. Although, keep in mind that, if you don't, you'll greatly hinder your company's ability to attract and retain quality workers. Essentially, if your business doesn't provide dynamic workers with what they're looking for, then they'll flock to another company that does, i.e. your competition.

You know how disastrous it would be if your competition gobbled up the job market's top talent. A situation like this would mean that your business would be forced to hire their leftovers. And on the flip side, a competitor offering a more flexible work package will look mighty tempting to a trained member of your staff whenever they become frustrated with your organization's inflexible policies.

The Need for Workplace Flexibility

Regarding this issue of attracting and retaining quality workers, Cornell University did a study. The research makes a compelling case for workplace flexibility:

- 44 percent of HR and labor management claim

that attracting the right people for the job is the most difficult part of the hiring process.

- The second greatest difficulty for HR and labor management (17 percent), is offering competitive employee benefits.
- 50 percent of business owners plan to hire new staff within the next year.
- This statistic has increased by 8 percent since 2012.

The Benefits of Workplace Flexibility

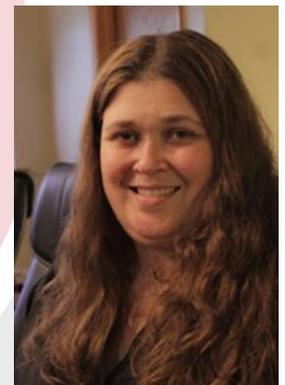
While it can be difficult for a company that has a strict view of procedures and scheduling to shift gears and implement a more flexible working environment, the Cornell study goes on to show that the benefits of doing so are worth it.

- 64 percent of small business owners report that an overall increase in their business's mobility and flexibility, along with the option to work remotely, improved their hiring processes and increased their ability to retain employees.

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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