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Virtualizing Your IT Infrastructure Makes Everything Easier



By now you've heard of managed services: Technology-related services

that allow businesses to get the IT support they need without taking on the often large and unexpected expenses that usually accompany them. This allows a business the ability to budget a flat fee for their technology...



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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.

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Don't Let Underutilized Servers Hold Your Business Back

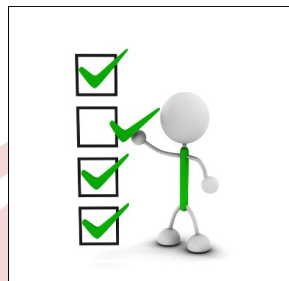


How messy is your server room? When was the last time you took note of how many machines you have, and what each of them are contributing to your business's goals? If either of these situations sound familiar, it might be time to take a closer look at your technology and examine how you can improve operations. One of the best ways you can do so is by eliminating unnecessary costs from unused and underutilized servers.

According to Processor magazine, a solid 30 percent of all powered-on servers aren't working to their maximum potential. In fact, support servers average only about a 12 to 18 percent utilization rate. This means that there are a ton of servers out there that are costing businesses money on unnecessary expenses. It's basically like wasted money, especially when you consider that many businesses use several dedicated servers for email, file hosting, and more. The reasoning behind this is that the servers can function independently from one-another, but the reality of the situation is that servers use a ton of energy; energy that's wasted if not taken advantage of properly.

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Prepare for Employee Turnover with a Foolproof Exit Checklist



One of the most dreaded situations in the modern office is the resignation of experienced talent. It's always sad to say goodbye to a colleague and friend... under the right circumstances. What would happen if an angry employee left your company and used their privileges to wreck havoc on your IT?

If you've taken proper precautions to ensure your former employees can't sabotage your network and steal your data, you're golden. However, this simply isn't the case with a lot of companies, mainly because they don't count on their former coworkers backstabbing them. This isn't the entire issue at hand. Even if a former employee doesn't intentionally take data from your business upon resignation, they could get hacked in the future, leaving sensitive data exposed. The best way to avoid employees walking off with corporate data is to take proper precautions, starting before they walk out your door.

Perform an Exit Interview

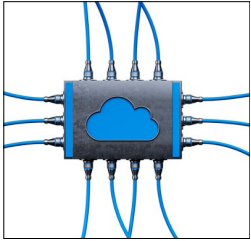
Besides getting the opportunity to discuss why they're leaving the company, conducting an exit interview is a good time to iron out details that shouldn't be left unchecked. This is a good time to talk about what accounts the exiting employee has access to, what devices they've borrowed from the company, important documents they might possess, and how to get in touch with them after they leave.

Take Back Any Company-Provided Devices

Once you've identified that your employee is indeed leaving the organization, you need to collect the devices they've borrowed from the company, like laptops, mobile devices, and storage devices like USBs or hard drives. This helps to ensure that you don't let corporate

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Why SMBs Need to Move Away from On-Premises Computing



Most small and medium-sized businesses aren't new to IT. For the past 15 years or so, SMBs have been

attempting to keep up with their larger competitors through the implementation of technology systems. They've instituted computing systems from servers to workstations to mobile devices, peripheral technologies like fax machines and copiers, "state of the art" networking technology, and all other sorts of tech, just trying to keep a leg up on their competition.

The problem for these businesses is that every cent they spend on managing physical technology won't necessarily produce much of a return on their substantial investments as they need to actively maintain the technology in order for it to work properly. This has left many companies hemorrhaging money by just trying to compete. If your business is still hosting all of its own IT infra-

structure, it may be time for you to consider moving your IT out of your office.

While hosting your own IT has its benefits, for the small or medium-sized business it may bring more expense than it's worth. In moving your IT infrastructure to the cloud or to a collocated data center, you may see a dramatic cost savings, or at the very least a shift in way your organization pays for its crucial IT systems. The cloud, in particular, offers many SMBs a very attractive value proposition: Receive a scalable IT infrastructure, hosted in a secure data center, with proactive maintenance, billed monthly as an operational cost.

For some SMBs it may not make sense to move your entire IT infrastructure to the cloud. In fact, some organizations, just like the idea that they are in complete control of their IT, or more specifically, their data. If your organization needs to adhere to often-complicated IT regulations, or if you just want the freedom to have control over your company's IT management, you still don't have to host your computing infrastructure

on your premises. By purchasing server space in a colocation facility, you can set up a private cloud platform that provides your business with all the benefits of cloud computing (like cost savings) without having to relinquish complete control over your crucial IT systems.

The professional IT consultants at Directive can assess your situation and find a solution that works for your needs. We have a complete technical understanding of cloud computing systems, and how they fit into a SMB's IT strategy. Our technicians can also assist your company in the proliferation of new computing systems to provide your organization with powerful functions such as communications (like VoIP and email), productivity application deployment, and even cloud-based security solutions.

It's hard to ignore the benefits that moving all or some of your company's...



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data slip through the cracks. Collecting these devices ensures that you're the one in control of your data, which mitigates the chance of the data being compromised, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

Promptly Change Email Passwords and Remote Access Accounts

For obvious reasons, you need to revoke access to their email accounts. This helps to prevent them from accessing information that they shouldn't have access to following their departure from your company.

Change All Relevant Passwords

You never know just how many passwords an employee might walk out of your company with, especially if they're

saved in their personal mobile device's browser cache or they use a password manager. This is why it's important to make sure that all passwords are changed. If an employee were to get hacked, or decide that they don't agree with their dismissal from your organization, it could put your data at risk of being compromised.

Wipe Mobile Devices

If your network can dish out security policies to mobile devices that gain access to company email, you will want to make sure you remotely wipe your accounts. This is something you would have needed to set up prior, but it prevents the user from walking away with their email in their pocket. Even if your former employee isn't a threat, if the device is lost or stolen it could come back to bite you.

Warn Your IT

As always, you need to keep IT in the loop so they can keep an eye out for any suspicious activity concerning the former employee. In fact, your IT team should be entirely involved in the exit process to ensure that no stones are left unturned.

Overall, most of these steps are fairly obvious, but some businesses fail to follow through with them for a number of reasons. Some don't have the resources, while others might simply forget one or two key steps when letting an employee go. Whatever your reason, Directive can assist your team by providing the handiwork necessary to ensure your data is as secure as possible following...



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The Benefits

There are many benefits to consolidating your server infrastructure. Performing a close analysis of your organization's server infrastructure is imperative to cutting unnecessary costs and optimizing your bottom line. Here are some of the great ways your company can benefit from elimination of underutilized or unused servers.

Dramatic decrease in energy costs. With less machines online at all times, you can save money on operational costs, maintenance, and energy. Servers eat up a ton of electricity, so it's natural that you do whatever you can to limit how much you use. Furthermore, maintenance is significantly less expensive if you only have one machine that needs updating, rather than four.

Simplified computing infrastructure.

Instead of having all of your technology spread across multiple pieces of hardware, you only need a minimal number of machines operating at all times. This makes it much easier to maintain and manage all of your mission-critical technology from one central location.

More physical space for activities and other technology. Regardless of how many servers you're able to eliminate, you'll be saving valuable space that can be used for other, more productive things. For instance, you can use the freed space for storage. You'll finally be able to get rid of that fax machine that's been collecting dust on your desk.

If you're unsure how many of your servers are underutilized, or if you need help identifying where you can shave off

some IT costs, Directive can perform an obligation-free IT network assessment, where we take into account all aspects of your infrastructure; servers included. Furthermore, we can help your organization cut down on costs by taking advantage of virtual servers. When you virtualize a server, you're eliminating the costs of running an additional physical machine, allowing one piece of hardware to perform the tasks of many. This lets you reap the benefits of multiple servers while only worrying about handling one of them. For more information on how we can help your organization transcend the limitations of hardware and optimize operations, give us a call at 607.433.2200.



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5 Signs Your Hard Drive is About to Fail



We all know the fleeting moment of fear as a computer slows to a grinding halt, taking forever to per-

form the most basic of tasks. At the same time, we also know the relief of when you find out there's nothing wrong with your PC. Still, what if that relief never comes? What if you're dealing with one of the most dangerous computer issues of all: a hard drive crash?

The risks of a hard drive crash are similar to any other type of hardware failure. If your drive is used for storing data, it can lead to data loss. If you're not using a quality backup and disaster recovery solution, you can bet that it'll be difficult, if not impossible, to restore your infrastructure to its former glory.

Frequent Computer Crashes

If there's anything you've learned from

reading our newsletter, it should be that computer crashes are never a good sign of anything. Ever. The reason it crashes is because it's incapable of locating or accessing important files that are crucial to the operation of the system, and it's a clear sign that something is not right with your machine.

Disappearing Data

Another sign that your hard drive is failing is that data isn't where it's supposed to be. You'll probably notice this when you try to access a mission-critical application, but the software can't load because a file is missing or some other complication. Unless someone is behind the scenes messing with the location of data, your hard drive is probably just about done.

Out-of-the-Ordinary Noises

You know there's something wrong when you hear strange grinding noises coming from your hard drive, but really, if anything at all sounds out of the ordinary, you probably have a big problem on your hands. If you start hearing nois-

es coming from your hard drive that aren't normal, you should shut down your PC and contact a professional for further consultation. These typically sound like a clicking noise coming from inside your PC. The last thing you want is your hard drive crashing on you while you're in the middle of an important project.

Your Computer Doesn't Recognize the Drive

If your PC doesn't acknowledge the hard drive, it's a clear sign that there's something wrong. You can test whether this is an issue with the hard drive by testing it in another PC, but you should do so only if there's a professional on-hand to guide you through the process.

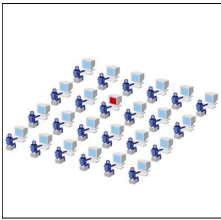
Painfully Slow Processing Speed

If it takes your PC ages to open a basic folder or file, this means that it's...



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4 Ways to Troubleshoot Network Performance Issues



Are you experiencing performance issues

with your computer network? Does it seem like it's not running as effectively as it used to? Given the nature of technology, eventually, you'll have to replace all of your computer hardware. But before you do, give your network a boost by trying these four IT maintenance best practices.

Update Your Software

As a general rule, it's recommended that all of your software is up-to-date. From a performance standpoint alone, running the latest software generally improves efficiency because it takes into account and fixes all known bugs that slow things down.

Additionally, up-to-date software addresses known security risks, like the latest viruses and other online threats. Many of these computer viruses have the ability to slow down your system. Therefore, having a good security solution will protect your network's data, as well as improve performance. We know that it can be difficult to stay

on top of updating to the latest versions of software, which is why we offer to do this for you remotely with our managed IT service.

Corrective Maintenance

Sometimes, your computer network experiences a hardware issue that's so severe it will cause your system to slow down to a crawl, or even become entirely disabled. For unfortunate times like this, corrective maintenance is in order. Having to perform major fixes to your system is never fun, and it can actually be quite expensive. However, when breakdowns happen, addressing and fixing the issue is the only way to get back on track.

Corrective maintenances can be costly and burdensome, which is why we prefer to take a proactive approach to IT maintenance. With Directive's managed IT service, we remotely take care of small issues with your system, before they turn into big problems. This approach minimizes IT repair bills, which will save you money in the long run.

Server Virtualization

Often times, the network problems point right back to a

troublesome server unit. If the server unit giving you grief is an older model, and you happen to have another server unit that's newer and underutilized, then server virtualization is an answer to your server woes. Essentially, this method allows you to consolidate the applications on your old unit to your new one. This allows you to get rid of your older unit entirely, which will save you significant maintenance and utility costs. Although, be warned that server over-consolidation with excessive virtual machines on a physical server can lead to deteriorating performance and system instability. This is why it's always a good idea to have IT professionals perform such an important procedure, like the pros at Directive.

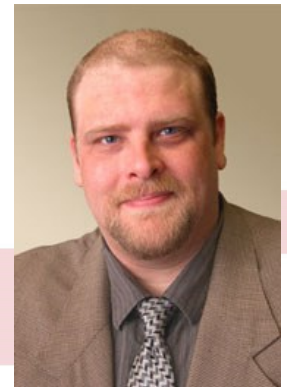
A Hardware Refresh

It may be the case that a hardware refresh is in order to get your network performing like it needs to. By replacing key computing components, you may be able to extend the life of your equipment, as well as give it a performance boost. Common components to seek...

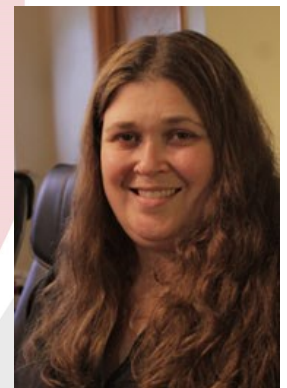


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We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is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



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