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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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Give Your Business the Advantage of Managed IT Services

Businesses thrive on technology, and constantly use it to push their initiatives forward. However, the latest solutions and business technology can often be complex, and it usually requires the attention of skilled professionals in order to guarantee its optimal efficiency. The only problem is that small and medium-sized businesses often don't have funds to hire in-house IT technicians for their technology maintenance needs. Managed service providers offer a unique benefit for these budget-minded organizations.

We want to make the lives of small and medium-sized businesses easier by managing their IT. This includes the complete and total management of any technological assets that your company employs, including workstations, servers, cloud infrastructures, your network security, data backup and disaster recovery, and so much more. All of these technology solutions are found in, more or less, every major enterprise, but smaller businesses often don't understand the importance of these solutions, or simply don't have the assets available to spend on integrating them. Managed service providers endeavor to bring the best technology to every organization at a reasonable price.

In the Wireless Age, Your Wired Network Might Be Outdated

Business owners are taking great strides toward freeing themselves from the confines of the office environment once and for all. This means integrating wireless technology into every aspect of the way you handle operations. However, there are still some uses for wired technology that wireless cannot facilitate.

Should your business go completely wireless? Not necessarily; there are some advantages and disadvantages to going wireless, and you should be aware of all of them before rebuilding your infrastructure to facilitate only one of these.

The Case for Wireless
The primary benefit of wireless technology is the lack of wires that might restrict movement of both infrastructure components, and your workers. In this case, you don't have to run cables all over the office to add new workstations or access points. This eliminates the need for some sort of cable management system, and it essentially makes your network scalable and much easier to manage.

This isn't to say that wireless technology is perfect. Your wireless connection could be disrupted by something as commonplace as a microwave or other household appliances. Furthermore, it becomes even more necessary that your organization secures any and all access points for the network using some sort of encryption or password protocol. Anyone within range of your WiFi signal can be considered a threat, so it's important that you take a firm stance on wireless security, especially with Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and the Internet of Things (IoT) gaining traction in the work environment.

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"Just as war is too important to leave it to the generals, science and technology are too important to leave in the hands of the experts." - Sheldon Rampton

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What's the Benefit of Using Solid State Drives vs. Hard Disk Drives?

When it comes to storing data locally on your organization's workstations, you have a couple of options. There are solid state drives and hard disk drives, but the average user isn't tech-savvy enough to understand the difference between the two. Regardless of what kinds of devices you use for your business, you should be aware of how they work and what you can expect from them.

You might be surprised by how different solid state drives (SSD) and hard disk drives (HDD) are. Here's a quick run-down of how they both work, and what the primary differences for the business owner are.

Hard Disk Drives
First, we'll discuss how the hard drive works. It's called a hard disk drive because there's literally a disk inside the drive spinning while it functions. These disk drives are generally found inside computers, but can be purchased externally and plugged in via a USB port for extra data storage options. Unfortunately, due to the machinery operating within the hard disk drive, they often run into operational failure that solid state drives avoid. Because of the mechanical element, they are much more prone to shocks, bumps, and drops.

Solid State Drive
The solid state drive, in comparison to the hard disk drive, is much faster due to its tendency to function without requiring the reading or writing of data. It also doesn't have the rapidly spinning hardware that the hard disk drive must endure. Furthermore, solid state drives utilize the power of flash memory to provide superior data transfer rates and reliability, while offering a greater physical integrity than the typical hard disk drive.

The Difference
The greatest difference between SSDs and HDDs is easily the amount of data stored on both of them. Hard disk drives can generally hold more information than an equally-priced solid state drive while the SSD has a significant lead in efficiency. SSDs use less power, work at higher speeds, and are much less likely to experience untimely, hardware failure, making them a more reliable choice all around.

However, one of the largest differences between SSDs and HDDs is the immense difference in value per byte of data. According to PCmag.com:

At one-sixth the storage capacity and three times the price of a hard drive, there is a huge discrepancy in cost per byte between the two storage media. However, in 2014, 500GB at USD $349.99 was considerably less expensive for an SSD than just a few years prior.

While it's significantly more expensive to run with solid state drives for your technology, you need to consider all of the benefits before deciding which kind of...

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Give Your Business the Advantage of Managed IT Services

(Continued from page 1)
While there are countless benefits that come from taking advantage of managed service offerings, there are two that really stand out: 1) Proficient, hands-off technology management, and 2) Cost-effective technology solutions.

Outsourced IT is Better IT
Outsourcing responsibilities to an external party might not seem like a good idea right off the bat, but when you think about it, it makes more sense to outsource than it does to hire a full in-house team. If you don't have a dedicated in-house IT staff, you're likely taking on some responsibility for ensuring your technology functions properly. If not, your technology isn't being given the maintenance it needs to continue operating at maximum efficiency.

It's much more efficient for your company's workload to outsource the responsibility to Directive. Our skilled technicians are more than capable of performing the required maintenance on your business technology. More importantly, though, your team will be able to take back any time spent on maintaining technology, and instead use it for better purposes, like introducing new initiatives that are designed to increase profits.

Outsourced IT is Cost-Effective
You don't need us to tell you that the latest technology solutions are expensive by nature. Enterprises invest in the latest technology to give themselves a competitive edge, but the average small or medium-sized business doesn't have the capital lying around to spend in one go. Rather, they have limited IT budgets, which can complicate matters in the event of a hardware failure or other unexpected expense. If your business has to invest too much capital into unexpected technology problems, it's a recipe for disaster.

One of the biggest goals of managed service providers is to offer affordable services that are in-line with your business's specific needs. By taking advantage of monthly rates, rather than up-front costs for expensive technology, you can turn your IT's capital expenses into operational costs, thereby eliminating the cost associated with taking advantage of the latest technology solutions.

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In the Wireless Age, Your Wired Network Might Be Outdated

(Continued from page 1)

The Benefits of Wired

While wireless technology is capable of making your business more mobile and flexible, a wired infrastructure is known to increase security and reliability. Since any devices being added to your network must be physically plugged into or connected to your network, you don't have to worry as much about the odd hacker randomly plugging into your network. Furthermore, a wired network connection isn't as affected by elements in the environment, like walls, floors, and so on, like a wireless connection would be.

As previously mentioned, wired technology makes for a more complex infrastructure, which makes it much more difficult to add new users and new equipment without carefully considering the cabling procedure. Furthermore, you're tied down to the location, which means that you'll need a wireless connection anyway if you want to fully leverage your business's technology.

Regardless of what kind of infrastructure you decide on, Directive can help you optimize it to suit the needs of your business. You need to carefully consider how many devices, and for what purposes, will be connecting to your infrastructure. We can help your business maintain or expand your current infrastructure in ways which you can't even dream of. To learn more, give us a call at 607.433.2200.

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How Sloppy Security Practices Put Companies at Risk

In today's online business environment, security is nothing to scoff at. Yet, there are many businesses that don't play by the rules when it comes to monitoring account security on a shared network. This puts both themselves, and their businesses, in danger.

According to a recent study by Dimensional Research, a grand total of 83 percent of respondents found difficulty with managing administrative passwords and accounts. This number is huge, especially considering how important administrative accounts and passwords are to maintaining the integrity of any business's critical systems. This can only mean one thing; businesses have the systems and practices put into place, but they're not being enforced as strongly as they should be.

Here are some other statistics to take a look at:

- 37 percent of all administrator passwords on mission-critical hardware and software aren't consistently changed.
- 37 percent of respondents claim that they use shared credentials with other administrators.

- 31 percent claimed that they were unable to consistently identify individuals responsible for administrator activity.
- 75 percent claim to have a default password changing process, but only 26 percent admit to changing passwords frequently.
- 12 percent of respondents claim that they only change passwords in the event of a potential security issue.
- 4 percent never change their admin passwords.

So, why is this the case? Why do businesses have trouble guaranteeing their account security? In some cases, they could be taking the wrong approach to security best practices. There have been horror stories of organizations using antiquated software to track who logs into accounts, like sign-in charts or even Microsoft Excel. Such methods are generally prone to user error and are frowned upon in today's tech-centric environment.

The solution to this predicament isn't a simple approach. It's a two-pronged offensive that requires the enforcement of proper username and password protection, and the monitoring of access logs by your business. For your passwords, no two users should have the same credentials at any given time. Everyone should have their own unique

access credentials that follow password best practices. Users should make passwords long and complex, with both upper and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols. Using an enterprise-level password manager can make remembering these long passwords much easier.

Another great way to ensure that your organization's employees stay accountable is through monitoring and maintaining access logs that dictate when and how users access your network. This is important for several reasons. For one, it makes sure that only authorized users are accessing the network. Second, you know that something is wrong if someone from the other side of the world accesses your network.

By keeping a close watch on your access logs, you can effectively maintain maximum security while ensuring that your employees are held accountable for their actions while on the private network.

For more information about security best practices, give us a call at 607.433.2200.

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The Internet of Things Will Only Continue to Grow More Popular For Businesses

In the near future, there will be many new devices connecting to the Internet. Some will be useful, while others will be… not so much. Either way, the fact remains that, according to IDC, the Global Internet of Things (IoT) spending is expected to reach around $1.3 trillion by 2020. That's a pretty huge number, and we'll tell you why your organization needs to keep the IoT in mind when putting thought into your technology strategy.

The Internet of Things is a loose term referring to a group of devices that are capable of connecting to the Internet. This can include your own devices, like your workstation, laptop, or smartphone, but its primary function is to group together all of the minor devices that are generally considered consumer devices; tech that wouldn't normally have access to the Internet.

Gartner's IT glossary defines the Internet of Things as:

[...] the network of physical objects that contain embedded technology to communicate and sense or interact with their internal states or the external environment.

In other words, these devices will be communicating with each other to help make life easier for their owners. The IoT has made a significant advancement in the business environment, and it's not slowing down anytime soon. Gartner predicts that by the end of 2016, there will be over 6.4 billion devices connected to the Internet, and nearly 5.5 million new devices being added every day.

What kind of devices are falling under the IoT category? Everything from Smart Watches, digital cameras, fitness trackers, household appliances, security cameras, home and building automation, and even automobiles are starting to become more and more connected.

This impressive growth is a testament to how useful the IoT is for industries like manufacturing and transportation, but many of these devices will be consumer-based, and perhaps even in the possession of your employees.

With Internet of Things devices in your office, security is an immediate concern. You don't want these Internet-connected devices accessing confidential data on your network, and because of their growing popularity, it becomes much more difficult to manage them. Furthermore, since these devices are connected to the Internet, you'll have to worry about these devices being infected with viruses, malware, and other nasty threats. You don't want them spreading the infection to your infrastructure, so it's important that you don't allow just any device to connect to your network.

To this end, your organization needs to have a comprehensive plan to handle IoT devices in the workplace, with no exceptions. Before allowing unknown devices to connect to your wireless network, be sure to have employees register their devices. Otherwise, you could be staring a data loss disaster right in the face, and be unaware of it.
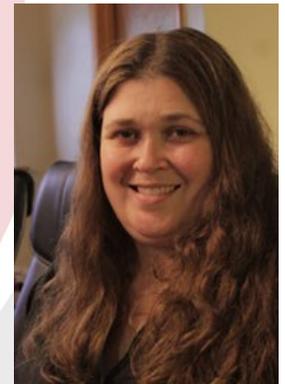
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We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is our success, and as you grow, we grow.

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