Cortana Gets a Little Too Clingy After Latest Update

The idea of speaking to your device and having it perform tasks is hardly a new one. Siri and Google Now have long dominated this industry. Microsoft released Cortana in an attempt to enter the voice assistant race, but with Windows 10's anniversary update, more harm than good could...

Read the Rest Online!
http://dti.io/cortana

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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newsletter.directive.com

## 2016 Directive Employee and Client Appreciation Picnic

On Sunday the 18th, we hosted a picnic for our clients, employees, and their families. This year, we chose to send the summer out in style with a carnival celebration under the 'big top'. Despite the threat of rain, everyone enjoyed an afternoon of games, face painting, prize giveaways, and great photo booth - including props!

We also handed out employee superlative awards. After being voted on by their peers, few of our employees were recognized for their unique qualities. A few highlights of the award categories were: the Betty Crocker Award for Best Cook, Most Humorous, Mr. FixIT, and many more.

It was more than just fun and games! We also had a pie toss, the proceeds of which went toward the medical costs of one of our team members who is battling cancer. Our managers were great sports and lined to up to take a pie to the face for a cause that is very near to important to us!

A very special thanks to our clients who were able to stop by for the festivities. Many of us have been working together for several years, it was great to see so many of them outside of work.

Another round of thanks goes to the party planning committee! The event was definitely a great success! Here's to many more years of laughter and appreciation.

How Much Money Does Your Business Waste on Slow Computers?
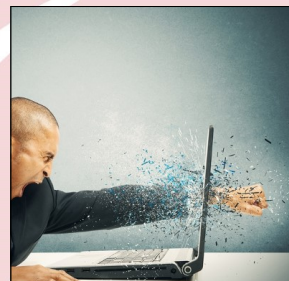
Have you ever been forced to use a slow computer out of necessity? This is a practice that tries more than just your patience; it can also put a drain on productivity, and in turn, your business's profits. Therefore, we'd like to ask you a very important question: can your business really afford to deal with technology that isn't performing as intended?

Oxford Economics and Nimble Storage suggest that the most productivity is lost due to what they call the App-Data Gap, which is defined as "the delay that occurs when someone interacts with a business application and the application's response time." Basically, it's just a fancy term for explaining how long it takes applications to load. The two companies asked 3,000 users around the world how slow computers affected their workflow, and the results shouldn't be surprising.

When asked if their technology held them back from achieving the maximum amount of work possible, a stunning two-thirds claimed that they were using subpar technology that failed to let them unlock their true potential. The result was particularly high for the United States, at 76 percent.

Also of note is that respondents claim that they lose, on average, 48 minutes every day from working with slow technology. That's about 10 percent of the average workday, and it

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"Ransomware is more about manipulating vulnerabilities in human psychology than the adversary's technological sophistication" -James Scott

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When IT Implementation Goes Wrong, Focus on End-Users First

Often times, people can get distracted by flashy new features, and with technology, this happens more than anywhere else. Since IT grows at such an abnormally fast rate, end-users can be left in the dust if you're not intentionally trying to keep them in the loop. In fact, it's highly recommended that you implement IT solutions for your business that are not just effective, but also user-friendly.

The reasoning for this is simple: your end-users are the ones who will be using the technology. Therefore, you need to consider how they will react to new solutions, and whether or not it will be something that they can understand how to use. The first step toward improving the way that your IT infrastructure functions is by implementing solutions that are user-friendly first, and great technology second.

In fact, when organizations implement new solutions to increase productivity, what they see is often the opposite. InfoWorld claims that this is due to two reasons: 1) Lack of training, and 2) A

reluctance to change habits or behaviors. If your business implements new solutions, like an updated office suite or a brand new operating system, it will have little effect on your productivity if your team doesn't know how to properly use it. In fact, they may just resist the change altogether.

> **"The first step toward improving the way that your IT infrastructure functions is by implementing solutions that are user-friendly first, and great technology second."**

More often than not, your end-users will only care about one thing: functionality. They don't care how technically sound a solution might be, so long as it's simple to use on their end. Therefore, if you hope to get the most out of your new IT solution, you need to ensure that your team is both educated on the benefits, as well as competent in its usage. This can help to cut down on resistance to the project, as well as make it easier to hit the ground running once the implementation has finished.

InfoWorld states: "You might stagger the rollouts so the disruption is spread out. Rolling out a series of smaller changes takes more time, but it also lets users get more comfortable with the changes, reducing the disruption to their work. It might even let some users get deep into new capabilities and share their excitement with colleagues, who won't be so overwhelmed with changes that they can't focus on the benefits."

The idea is to make your new IT solution not just a successful deployment for your IT department, but also for your users. This is what defines a successful solution deployment. After all, your end-users are the ones who will be using it, so if they get very little out of the solution, then why bother spending the time and resources implementing it?

If your organization is having difficulty implementing new IT, or training its team on how best to use your new technology, we can help. We want your business to succeed, and by helping you master your new technology solutions, we succeed ourselves. To learn more, give us a call at 607.433.2200.

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How Much Money Does Your Business Waste on Slow Computers?

can lead to significant losses in the long run. ITProPortal estimates that United States companies lose out on $7.5 billion annually due to lost worker productivity from slow technology. However, unlike having employees that simply waste time out of habit, providing them working technology is something that you have control over.

We'd like to make an educated guess about why so many companies endure slow computers. Perhaps it's because they are small businesses that either can't afford the comprehensive support and maintenance their systems need, or

their internal IT department doesn't have the time to perform maintenance when it's needed. In situations like these, outsourcing is often the best way to go, but how can you know for sure what tech support to go with?

Directive understands what it means to be using slow or underperforming technology solutions. You're not just keeping your employees from getting work done; you're limiting their potential, frustrating them, and making it harder for them to make your business money. Plus, slow computers could also be a sign of other issues that may not be immediately noticeable. Some online threats can eat

up your computing resources and make operations drag, while other issues could be the result of an imminent hardware failure. It's up to you to respond to these issues and ensure that your technology gets the attention it needs.

If your in-house team simply doesn't have the time or expertise required to perform maintenance on your technology, we have technicians standing by to help your team resolve technology problems and optimize your organization's operations.

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Is IT Innovation Driving, or Hindering, Your Business's Growth?

Technology can be a constant pain point for businesses of all kinds. Due to the ever-evolving nature of technology solutions, it's tempting to cave in and purchase the latest and greatest innovations in the industry. Yet, does your business have the time to do so, let alone the budet? Progress can be stymied by a lack of funds and personnel, but it doesn't have to be.

More often than not, businesses are stuck in two situations. Depending on the state of your IT environment, you either have plenty of time to implement new and innovative solutions, or you have, quite literally, no time to even consider new technology. Both situations come with side-effects that could negatively affect your organization's operations. For example, you might have time to implement new technology, but are you ignoring the day-to-day maintenance of your internal systems?

The latter can also be a major problem. If you're spending all of your time responding to emergencies, when can you implement new technologies that can potentially improve the functionality of your business? When you can't even handle the solutions you already have, what's the point in implementing new technologies? Unless you can find a way to strike a balance between the two, any efforts will be both fruitless and wasteful.

One of the best ways that your business can innovate without sacrificing functionality is by taking advantage of outsourced IT solutions from Directive. Whether you're in desperate need of a new workstation or server, or need to implement a solution on a large scale, like cloud computing or virtualization, our trusted technicians can help. If your team can't keep up with maintenance, we can take over this responsibility while they innovate and create new solutions for your organization.

Why You Should Be Skeptical of USB Devices

USB technology is widely-used and you'd be hard-pressed to find an organization that doesn't utilize USB devices in some way, shape, or form. However, these devices often harbor unexpected threats that could put the security of your entire infrastructure in jeopardy. All it takes is one infected device to compromise your network. Do you know where your USB devices have been?

Since USBs are prized for their portability, they can be used for a myriad of purposes. USB flash drives or hard disk drives can be used to transport files, both compactly or in bulk. Many keyboards and computer mouse devices operate with USB technology these days. That's not even mentioning the plethora of USB dongles that are used to connect other devices to your computer.

Now, imagine this scenario. An employee finds a USB drive on the ground and, curious to find out what's on it, plugs it into their company-issued workstation. They might do this to make sure that good technology isn't just left lying around, or maybe their curiosity just got the best of them. Either way, the files on the device could contain executable malware that can threaten your business. In many cases, the user might not even be aware that malware has been installed on the computer, and it can spread viruses, or install trojans that allow for remote access at a later date.

In fact, there's been a recent report from May 2016 of a $10 USB device that's capable of logging keystrokes on wireless Microsoft keyboards and transmitting the signals over a wireless frequency. Whitehat hacker Samy Kamkar built it out of a USB phone charger, which is so commonplace these days that nobody would think twice about seeing it plugged into the wall of your office. The threat of these types of devices is so significant that the FBI saw fit to issue a statement warning professionals of their dangers. While no attacks have been found in the wild, it's still best to take the warning to heart and apply it to your own cyber security practices.

The root of the problem--the theft of data before it reaches its destination--extends well beyond Microsoft wireless keyboards, too. Any wireless device that sends signals that aren't encrypted could potentially be intercepted by hackers using similar techniques. This method can be used to harvest data that could lead to the theft of personally identifiable information, login credentials, or financial credentials. It's not unlike a hacker intercepting data over an unsecured wireless Internet connection.

Is your business prepared to handle these outside-the-box threats? All it takes is one mistake to expose your company's data to those who would do it harm. In instances like this, you should make a policy that any and all devices your employees want to use should first go through your organization's security protocol. This will help ensure that the devices are not threats to your critical infrastructure. Emphasize that your organization should only be using encrypted data storage devices whenever possible, and you can't go wrong.

For more information about how to keep your business safe, contact us at 607.433.2200.

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Is IT Innovation Driving, or Hindering, Your Business's Growth?

(Continued from page 3)

Better yet, you can rest assured knowing that you're getting top-of-the-line technology assistance for your organization's systems. More often than not, businesses have to cut corners in order to make ends meet with their technology maintenance, which could include allowing end-users to service their own workstations. This is a hazardous practice, as having inexperienced users performing in-depth maintenance could be both time-consuming and risky.

You can save time and money by allowing an outsourced team of technology professionals to work with your critical systems. Not only will you see a return on your investment in the form of better-functioning technology, but you'll also be able to rest easy, knowing that your systems are being maintained by qualified professionals who want to see you succeed.

If your business would rather implement its own solutions, that's fine too. We can sit on the sidelines and handle maintenance for you so that you don't fall behind. Regardless of what the internal status of your IT is, we are sure to have a service that's a perfect fit for your business. If your employees are given an Android device to use for work, or if they bring in their own as a part of BYOD, you...

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Employee Highlight: Kristen Velasco

Kristen Velasco grew up in nearby Milford, NY, and earned her associate's degrees in both Computer Information Systems and Travel and Resort Marketing from the State University of New York's Cobleskill campus. Nowadays, she sees to the company bookkeeping and keeping our workforce organized (and in line, if necessary) as our Finance and Human Resources Manager here at Directive. Take our word for it, she does an absolutely excellent job.

When she isn't keeping employees in line, Kristen loves spending as much time outside as possible, stating that "being outdoors rocks!" Her other interests include coaching basketball and softball, exercising her talent of übercoolness and--while this might not technically be an interest of her's--she admits to habitual "excessive" housecleaning. Kristen also will skim Facebook to stay up-to-date on current events, doing so with the knowledge that EVERYTHING on the Internet is true, of course.

Outside of work, she has her hands full with a regular menagerie, caring for two labs, one rabbit, a cat, a horse, and--most difficult of all--two kids. Kristen's long-term goals include trying to snorkel and visiting the eateries featured on Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives. For the time being, she enjoys interacting with the various characters and personalities she works among in the office--much happier now that she no longer works from the kitchen, as she once had to do before the office was expanded.

Thank you for all that you do, Kristen! The team looks forward to working alongside you in the future, and is happy to have done so thus far!
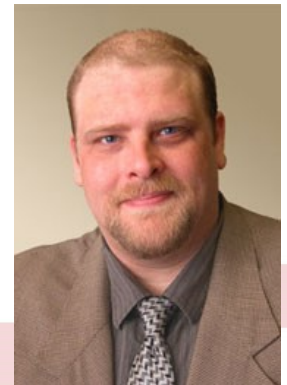
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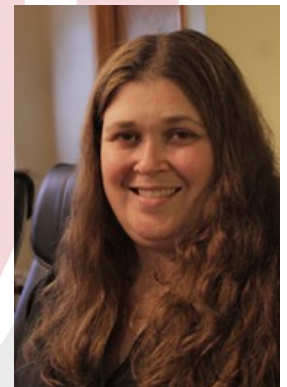
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HOW ARE YOU SCARY? WHAT'S SCARIER THAN A SERVER BEING ON FIRE?