



“Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier, And More Profitably”

“As a business owner, I know you don’t have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That’s where we shine! Call us and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!”

- Matt Weaver, Echo Systems

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Bridgeville, PA

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“That’s mistletoe. We like to give every passenger a chance to kiss their luggage good-bye.”

It’s the end of yet another year, and this is a year that I learned an important lesson about sharing information and experiences amongst my clients, colleagues, and even competitors! This is a good story I found to illustrate why.....

“Growing Good Corn”

There once was an old farmer who grew award-winning corn. Every year he entered his corn into the state fair and won the blue ribbon.

One year, after winning yet another competition, a young newspaper reporter requested an interview with the famer to try and uncover the famer’s secrets to his prize-winning corn. Although he expected to be turned down, the farmer welcomed the interview. He asked the old famer several questions about his techniques and then discovered something interesting about how he grew it: the reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors!

“How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering their corn into the same competition with yours every year?” the reporter asked. “Why sir,” said the farmer, “didn't you know? I can’t afford not to! The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it around from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn as well. It’s one of my secrets to success.”

The moral of the story is simple: If we are to grow “good corn” in our businesses, we must be willing to help our fellow business owners grow “good corn” too. When times are tough, it affects us all. That’s why I’ve decided to offer a FREE “Network Tune Up” to any business in the Bridgeville area until January 31st.

At no charge, I’ll conduct a complete 27-point audit of your computer network to make sure your data is secure, protected from hackers and viruses and being backed up properly. We’ll also look for ways to cut costs and save you money on hardware, software and services.

While this may not make a huge difference in any one company’s success, it’s my way of helping neighbors “grow good corn.” To request this service, simply call or e-mail and ask for the “good corn” offer. There is

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Shiny New Gadget Of The Month

PC On A Stick Technology

When you apply the term “on a stick” to anything, it always sounds better. Think about it: corn dogs are on a stick, and who doesn’t love corn dogs!? Obviously I’m writing this before eating lunch, so I’ll get to the point: this is the coolest thing “on a stick” yet.

Road warriors know that packing light on business trips is a must; but one of the things you just can’t leave behind is your laptop – until now...

Thanks to new “PC On A Stick” technologies, you can carry your desktop around on a simple USB device. Simply plug this specially equipped USB device into any PC and you’re instantly working on what appears to be your own desktop. Unplug it, and all traces of your data vanish! Here are the top 3 options:

MojoPac: This is a free software option that enables you to “clone” or copy your desktop applications and files to a virtualized machine that will work with any USB device, be it a pen drive, iPod or external hard drive. However, it will only work with Windows XP computers and lacks encryption capabilities.

Ceedo Personal: This inexpensive software product will give you a near-perfect facsimile of your desktop on any USB device. At \$39, you’ll get Windows 7 compatibility and integration with secure TrueCrypt devices.

CheckPoint Abra: Out of the three mentioned here, this is the most secure. You’ll pay a bit more (\$140 to \$210) but it will give you security encrypted access to your cloned desktop.

zero cost or obligation; and if you know of someone who could use a little technical support during these tough economic times, please forward this on to them!

The Shocking State Of Data Security In Small Business: Are YOU Making These Terrible Mistakes?

According to a survey of 2,100 businesses conducted by Applied Research and commissioned by Symantec, the vast majority of businesses are frequent victims of cyber attacks, data loss and non-existent backup and recovery systems. Here are just a few of the shocking facts discovered:

- 74% of the businesses surveyed were affected by cyber attacks – including hackers, viruses, worms, etc. – in the past 12 months.
- 62% had lost at least one mobile device in the last 12 months, and 100% admitted they had no password protection on these devices.
- Less than 1/3 of the devices lost had a way to wipe these lost devices clean to prevent unauthorized access to confidential data.
- 42% of businesses have lost confidential data in the last 12 months and 40% reported a direct financial loss because of this.
- **47% of those surveyed said they STILL do NOT backup their data!**

To be perfectly blunt, this is just plain a bad idea on the part of businesses who allow these attacks to happen. Even worse, it’s a black eye on their PR if the confidential information is CLIENT data, such as credit card numbers, bank account information, medical records or other important identity information like social security numbers, birth dates, passwords, etc.

ALL businesses know of the threats to their computer network, be it viruses, hackers or internal employees; not taking some simple measures to protect against theft and loss of confidential data is completely foolish – not to mention expensive!

If you have any doubt whatsoever about whether you’re backing up your data properly, protecting mobile devices and maintaining up-to-date firewall, patches and security updates, NOW is the time to get this fixed! Call me for a free, no-obligation consultation, and I’ll be happy to review your current network security and backups to see if you truly ARE protected, or if you’re more likely to end up another statistic.

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The Lighter Side...

Heaven Knows Results

A minister dies and is in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy in sunglasses, a loud shirt and jeans. The guy ahead of him says, "I'm Joseph O'Neill, taxi-driver in Noo Yawk City." Saint Peter smiles and says, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom."

Next in line is a minister. He steps up to Saint Peter, stands erect and booms out, "I am Michael Snow, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last 43 years." Saint Peter consults his list. After a moment he says, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter."

"Just a minute!" says the minister, a bit shocked. "That man ahead of me was a taxi-driver - and he was given a silken robe and golden staff! How can this be?" Saint Peter says, "Up here, we work by results. *While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed.*"

The Tardy Bagpiper

A bagpiper was asked to play a graveside service for a man who had no family or friends. He got lost and finally arrived at the funeral site an hour late.

Rushing in, he spotted a backhoe and a crew of men eating lunch, but the hearse was nowhere in sight. Feeling guilty, he assured the workers that this was the proper thing to do and gathered them around as he poured his heart and soul into his performance. Many of the workers began to weep. When done, the bagpipe player overheard one of the workers say, "Man, I never seen nothin' like that before and I've been puttin' in septic tanks for 20 years!"

SEO Poisoning On The Rise

Many of you have heard me state that YOU, the computer user, are the first and last line of defense protecting your computer. While we can mitigate the risk with antivirus, anti-spyware, and firewalls, the fact of the matter is that you are the one in control of the computer, so always proceed with caution, and when in doubt whether or not you're doing the right thing, call or email me!



One of the latest tricks hackers are now using is called "search engine optimization" to promote malware infected websites for popular search terms. This new threat is called "SEO Poisoning." In fact, at any given moment, three of the top ten search results contain at least one malicious URL within the top 70 results! Here's how it works...

Hackers use well-known search engine optimization tactics to create web sites that will rank in the top results for popular keywords. For example, the BP oil spill and World Cup keywords were riddled with these infected sites. When you click on them, you are presented with pop ups, "free software" downloads, fake virus warnings and other ads. If you click on anything, you could be infected with a virus or malware. If your computer is fully patched and you are protected, the odds are GREATLY reduced, but can still occur if you say YES or INSTALL - you are the one in control in this scenario. However if you're not fully patched and protected by proper firewalls and antivirus (my Managed Service clients are) the infection can be instantaneous and silent. Remember, few things in life are actually free, much less from an Internet site.

What makes this so dangerous is that most of us have come to trust search engine results and click on the links of web sites without question of security. Plus, hackers have learned that the more "normal" their web sites look, the easier it is to get users to trust them. To protect yourself, make sure you have up-to-date anti virus software installed, and if you are on a business network, a proper firewall in place. These are all services Echo Systems offers, but as I stated, YOU are the final line of defense. Surf smartly. If you're ever unsure about a site, ASK! Info@EchoSystems.US

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Dirty Money? Here's What You Can Do With It... (Seriously!)

Here's a job that belongs on the popular TV show "Dirty Jobs" with Mike Rowe: The US Treasury's job of replacing and cleaning up dirty money.

You probably didn't even know this service existed unless you have lost a lot of cash, usually through fire, flood, exposure to chemicals, rodent or insect infestation or deterioration from being buried. But each year, the Treasury exchanges unusable currency for new money. It fields about 30,000 claims and exchanges about \$30 million every year for some very relieved people.

In one case, a farmer dropped his wallet in a field and a cow ate it. He slaughtered the cow and sent its stomach to the Mutilated Currency Division. Though identifying the money was not a pleasant task, the farmer got his \$600 back in the form of a check. In another case, a dog ate a lady's money, and it ultimately came out the other end in pieces. Identifying the pieces was smelly detective work, but she got her money back, too.

Cash buried in a dry climate can petrify, making it difficult to pry apart to determine denominations. Money buried in wet climates can turn into a mass resembling oatmeal. The Treasury has tactics to identify the bills and will redeem them. Sometimes the sender has to swear an affidavit in support of their claim.

Unified Threat Management: The "Swiss Army Knife" Of Security

With all the talk about security in this issue, I want to talk a little bit about UTM, or "Unified Threat Management." In non geek-speak, UTM simply means an all-in-one solution or device to protect you and your network from anti-virus, spam, and other threats on the Internet.

UTM appliances are devices that sit at the perimeter of your network, inspecting all of the data between your network and the Internet, and deciding what is OK to pass, and what traffic to block. These devices are able to provide spam filtering, web content filtering, and network virus protection all in one user-friendly device. They also provide network administrators and business owners with statistics on network usage, and can be configured to monitor where time is spent "surfing" if desired. UTM devices can be customized to the level of allowing employees to sites, or denying them, depending on the nature of your business and your "Acceptable Use Policy" which is an agreement you should have with employees about what they can, and cannot do on your business systems.

One thing I'd like to point out is that some network administrators will argue that this is the only type of protection your network needs—which I disagree with. I, and many others, firmly believe in multiple layers of protection. I'm an "Eat my own dog food" kind of guy, and have protection at the perimeter of my network, as well as a *different kind* of protection on the servers and computers themselves. Since different vendors are often able to protect against different threats, this raises the odds of catching viruses and malware! Think about modern cars—they have seatbelts, but they now have airbags as well. Multiple layers of protection.

For Echo System's "Managed Service" clients, this is all taken care of for you. At the perimeter of your network either a Calyptix or Untangle firewall is installed for web filtering, network scanning, and spam-filtering. On the desktops and servers, Eset's Nod32 AntiVirus and AntiSpyware is used and monitored remotely. This way Echo Systems is able to keep an eye on the threats on your network at all times, and able to deal with threats before they become disasters!

Not a Managed Service client and curious, send me an email!
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