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Powerhouse Gym Keeps Their Computers in Tip Top Shape With Tech Experts' Monitoring & Off-site Backup Service

Richard and Sharon Orndorf opened Powerhouse Gym in the Monroe Shopping Center in 1997. Since then, the business has steadily grown, now occupying the former Baisley grocery store.

The Orndorf's purchased and renovated the building to provide their members with more than 15,000 square feet of state of the art muscle building, cardio equipment and free weights. The gym offers personal trainers for circuit training, weight lifting, and counseling. A fruit and juice bar offers quick, healthy treats for gym clients.

Tech Experts recently worked with Powerhouse to upgrade their company's network, servers and workstations, and we asked Sharon to talk about the experience.

"Our business is totally reliant on computer technology," explained Sharon. "We utilize our computer system for point of sale and complete client profiles for billing and history purposes. If our system is down we are at a total shutdown of operations."

Powerhouse upgraded their server to an IBM xSeries 3200 machine, running Microsoft Windows Small



Powerhouse owner Sharon Orndorf helps a member with the check in process. The Gym uses Lenovo ThinkCentre workstations and an IBM xSeries server for the membership management system.

Business Server. Their proprietary member management software relies on Microsoft SQL server for its database. The new workstations are Lenovo ThinkCentre desktop computers, all optimized for speed and reliability.

Sharon continued: "One of the advantages to working with Tech Experts is that the company is available 24/7. Their remote monitoring and off-site backup service helps eliminate computer problems before they escalate into something major."

Tech Experts monitors Powerhouse's server 24 hours per day, 7 days per

week, and is immediately notified if there is a problem with the Gym's server or network. Tickets are automatically generated and problems resolved, many times before Powerhouse's staff is even aware there was an issue. This let's Richard and Sharon concentrate on running their business, instead of worrying about their computers and network.

"Working with Technology Experts definitely has contributed to the success of our business," Sharon explained. "We rely on the expertise of Tech Experts to keep us in the forefront of our business in this competitive market."

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**Sharon Orndorf,
Powerhouse Gym**

Powerhouse Gym
975 S. Monroe Street
Monroe, MI 48161
(734) 241-6130

Hours of operation:
Monday - Thursday 5am-9:30pm
Friday 5am-8pm
Saturday & Sunday 9am-5pm

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We Can Beat The Recession!

As we all watch our revenues and expenses during this tight economic time it is inevitable that you will have to forecast worst case scenarios in your business and create plans to adjust if worst case becomes reality.

I am still very optimistic that smartly managed businesses can continue to grow at a healthy rate in 2009. I just believe in contingency planning as well.

I think the most important thing is to involve your people in the decision making process. It may take some quick and dirty education about the P&L and how the company runs but ultimately your group will come up with some creative answers you may not think about.

Toward that end, we've created a special website:

www.WeCanBeatTheRecession.com

Log on and share with me the creative ideas you have employed or have heard about other using to control costs, boost margins or increase sales during these times.

And more importantly, what ideas your vendors, customers and employees come up with.

There is too much doom and gloom on the nightly news. Let's face it, good news doesn't sell newspapers or airtime - so we're creating some of our own good news on the web.

Visit our special website:

www.WeCanBeatTheRecession.com

or e-mail me at:

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7 Tips For Working Securely From Wireless Hotspots



Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

Wireless hotspots are changing the way people work.

These wireless networks provide high speed Internet access in public locations—as well as at home—and require nothing more than a notebook PC with a wireless card.

From coffee shops to restaurants, airports to hotel lobbies, hotspots are ubiquitous. They range from paid services, such as T-Mobile or Boingo, to free connections at your local restaurant or library.

But they all have one thing in common: These are all open networks that are vulnerable to security breaches. And that means it's up to you to protect the data on your PC. Here are a few tips to make working in public locations more secure.

Encrypt your files.

You can protect your files by encrypting them, which requires a password to open or modify them. Because you must perform this procedure on one file at a time, consider password-protecting only the files that you plan to use while working in a public place.

Choose more secure connections.

It's not always possible to choose your connection type—but when you can, opt for wireless networks that require a network security key.

The information sent over these networks is encrypted, which can help protect your computer from unauthorized access.

The security features of different networks appear along with the network name as your PC discovers them.

Make sure your firewall is activated.

A firewall helps protect your mobile PC by preventing unauthorized users from gaining access to your computer through the Internet or a network. It acts as a barrier that checks all incoming information, and then either blocks the information or allows it to come through. All Windows operating systems come with a firewall.

Monitor your access points.

Chances are, there are multiple wireless networks anywhere you're trying to connect. These connections are all access points, because they link into the wired system that gives you Internet access. So how do you make sure you're connecting to the right one? Simple—by configuring your PC to let you approve access points before you connect.

Disable file and printer sharing.

File and printer sharing is a feature that enables other computers on a network to access resources on your computer. When using your mobile PC in a hotspot, it's best to disable file and printer sharing

because when enabled, it leaves your computer vulnerable to hackers. Remember, though, to turn this feature back on when you return to the office.

Make your folders private.

When the folders on your mobile PC are private, it's more difficult for hackers to access your files.

Consider completely removing sensitive data from your PC.

If you're working with extremely sensitive data, it might be worth taking it off your notebook



PC altogether. Instead, keep it behind the corporate firewall and use your company's VPN to access it when necessary. This way, you have multiple safeguards in place.

A few simple precautions can help make working in public places more secure. And by selecting the best connections and adjusting settings, you can enjoy productive and safe work sessions no matter where you are.



It's Always A Good Idea To Investigate Computer Noises



Robert Saylor is a senior network technician and hardware specialist with Tech Experts.

In this article I would like to talk about one of the more scary aspects of computers and computer repairs, “Things

that go bump in the night.”

As I was lying in bed the other night I heard a noise, and I wasn't sure where it was coming from. As I got up to investigate, the sound suddenly stopped. When I laid back down the sound started up again, this time I was able to track the sound down.

It was a low level moan coming from my computer. Thinking I could deal with it later, I shut the computer off and went back to bed.

The next day I returned home from work and was just settling down on the couch when my wife informed me there was “something desperately wrong with our computer.” She said she went to turn it on

and it is making a loud noise now. She said she just turned it right off. Sure enough, I turned it on and the cooling fan on the power supply was moaning away. I let it run for a few minutes and the noise seemed to diminish.

But, I knew it needed to be fixed: Not only do we need access to the internet for email and other things, the wife cannot live without her recipe websites.

I shut the computer down and I opened the case and found that the CPU fan was in dire need of a good cleaning. I cleaned it up and got all the dust bunnies out of it and lo and behold noises are gone.

I am sure nearly all of us have experienced noises from our computers. Some noises are normal. Although a computer is mostly solid state electronics, there are a few components that move, and as any computer engineer can tell you, if it is a “moving part” it will eventually fail.

Along with the cooling fan in the power supply, computers have cooling fans on the processor, and case mounted auxiliary cooling fans that

provide additional cooling. All of these fans can and do occasionally fail. Cleaning does not always fix them and they have to be replaced.

The next component the moves and is subject to wear and tear is the hard drive. As I've explained in previous articles, this is where your important data and files are stored. As the disks inside the drive spins at a very high rate of speed they can eventually wear out and hit what is called the seek head. Once this happens damage to the disk's surface can result in a loss of data.

We call hard drives with this condition “serious clickers” due to the fact a clicking noise is very audible during the process of the seek head moving across the disks.

If your computer is making any funny noises, make sure not to delay getting it fixed, serious problems can result from failure to address and repair noisy fans and clicking hard drives. Tech Experts has a staff of trained certified professional technicians to help isolate and eliminate these “noises in the night.” Give us a call at (734) 457-5000.

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Important Security Alert To Anyone Using Instant Messaging

According to the Radicati Group, 85% of businesses—both large and small—are using instant messaging (IM) as a communication tool.

Unfortunately, hackers are rapidly developing ways to use IM to spread viruses and gain access to computers and networks. Instant-messaging security vendors have reported an exceptionally high spike in attacks in recent months.

IM attacks work similar to e-mail viruses; the sender tries to get the user to click on a link that takes them to a website where they'll be infected with a virus, or it tries to get the user to

download a file. Many of these attacks appear to be from legitimate sources or people on a “buddy” list.

Just recently, researchers discovered a threat on AOL's instant messenger system, but tens of thousands of computers had already been infected. Hackers then used a program to upload movies to the victim's hard drive and use their computer as a vehicle for sharing it with others.

These attacks are also getting more complex. Savvy IM users will often reply to an IM and ask their buddy if the link or file sent was safe. However, hackers have now developed an intelligent bot that will actually automatically

respond to the message confirming the file or link is safe.

Just like viruses, worms, and other security threats, businesses need to put measures in place to protect themselves from these new threats. The first step is educating your employees about these threats through your employee's acceptable user policy. However, since there is always a chance someone will click on a link or download a file, education is not enough.

If you currently use IM, we urge you to contact our office about installing the proper software and security measures to make sure you don't fall victim to these growing attacks.

Need help? Call the Tech Experts 24 hour computer emergency hotline at (734) 240-0200.



Expert Advice On Choosing A New Computer

Contact Information

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Corey Bogedain is a network technician and web developer with Tech Experts.

Picking out a new computer can be challenging. Questions you might want to ask yourself include: What is

my budget, what do I need to use it for, and where do I plan to use it?

After you answer those questions, you need to think of more specific questions like should I get a laptop or desktop, how fast does it need to be, and how much memory or drive space do I need? All these will help get you an idea of what you are going to look for.

When looking for a computer the form factor is one of the biggest decisions. What I mean by that is the size of the computer, whether you want it to be a portable computer or a desktop computer.

The two most common sizes are a regular tower case (the kind that usually sits on the floor) or a laptop. Deciding on one of those will help eliminate half of the choices right away.

Next, ask yourself if your needs will pretty much stay the same, or is there a chance of needing upgrades as your needs and computer use change?

You'll probably not be able to predict when you'll need to upgrade your computer, but it's something to keep in mind. Laptops are generally more expensive than tower computers, and can't be upgraded as easily.

Most laptops can only have ram and hard drive upgrades. Tower computers have pretty much unlimited upgrade potential. From a new motherboard to just a simple RAM upgrade.

Be careful, though: Some major computer manufacturers like Dell make it so that you can only upgrade your computer with manufacturer parts - limiting choices and making upgrades much more expensive than on standard computers.

When reviewing the specs for your new computer, consider the kind of work you do and how fast you need to get it done. Two of the biggest factors to consider are hard drive space and the physical RAM.

Think of hard drive space like a file cabinet - this is where the computer stores all of your programs, files, pictures, music and so on. You can think of RAM memory as the computer's working memory - where it does all of the different calculations you ask it to do.

If you do a lot of tasks that have very large files like video editing or pictures you would want to make sure you have a bigger hard drive so that don't run out of space right away. Hard drive space is very

inexpensive - less than \$1/gigabyte - so it makes sense to buy as large a hard drive as is practical.

For the speed on the computer you need to look at the CPU type and speed, and the RAM.

CPU type will typically be single or dual core - without getting too technical, you'll probably want to go with dual core, which makes the computer (in general) able to process twice as much information at the same time. The faster the speed, usually measured in gigahertz, the faster the computer can process information.

RAM is also a determining factor in the processing speed of the computer - the more RAM, the more the computer can process without accessing the hard drive. I recommend at least 2gb, and preferably 4gb.

These are just a few things to keep in mind when buying a new computer. We're very proud to offer IBM and Lenovo laptop and dektop computers at Tech Experts, so if you're in the market for a new machine, give me a call!

