It's Time To Get Your Business Ready For 2013!

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

Thankfully, black Friday and cyber Monday are over. As we settle in for the rest of the holiday rush and start looking toward 2013, it can be easy to get overwhelmed and miss out on some important, year-end activities.

Here are a few reminders to help you stay on top of your IT needs and systems in the new year.

Set Goals

Now is the time to get your team together and set achievable goals for 2013. Discuss issues and successes that happened in the last year and how you are going to use this information to make things run smoother in the coming year.

It makes sense to have your IT consultant participate in these meetings - we have insight into what's coming up in the networking, cloud and server spaces, as well as practical expertise on getting the most from your IT investment.

Promote open communication so your team members can voice their ideas, concerns, suggestions, and feedback. This way, everyone will be part of the goal-setting process and know their responsibilities for the year ahead.

Update your website

Is your site ready for the New Year? This means that you need to update the copyright dates to 2013 on the appropriate content, install current updates to your software applications, check terms and privacy conditions, and more.

These are little things that are easy to forget, but they can mean a huge difference in the message you send to customers and advertisers. Plus, they can help protect your legal rights too.

Communicate

As the business owner, it's important to keep your entire organization aware of upcoming plans and changes.

Inform all staff members what is going on with technology, your plans for the upcoming year and what they can do to help.

Keeping everyone in the loop avoids unnecessary issues from escalating into major problems. Share information to improve processes and increase working relationships throughout the entire organization.

Are you ready for 2013?

It's a busy time of year for everyone, but don't let that get in the way of your IT and business planning for 2013.

Set achievable goals with your team, and review all of the key issues from the past year. Make updates to your Website so that you protect your information legally and present current messaging to your customers.

And be sure to communicate your plans with everyone in your organization. This way, you'll save time and money, as well as avoid confusion. Starting the year with a firm plan will put your business on the road to success in 2013.

happy holidays

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

New High Tech Toys For Christmas

by Frank Wright,
Service Manager

It's that time of year again! The weather is getting cold, kids are getting excited for Santa and you're planning what to get everyone.

If someone's got a new computer in their future, chances are they would just be taking it right out of the box and getting down to business. So, what's wrong with this? Well, nothing, unless you want your computer to be protected for years to come and to run better for a longer period of time.

Computers purchased at big box stores come loaded with tons of bloatware that significantly slows down computers when compared to a system with a fresh installation of Windows on it.

We are not saying it's necessary to have Windows reinstalled on a new computer by any means, what we are saying is that it is in the best interest of the user to have the computer optimized before its initial use.

When we look at your newly purchased computer, we clean it up and basically strip it down to its bare necessities. What this does for you is it allows your computer to run smoother and faster than it would if you just started using it right from the store.

Another advantage of this is that while everyone wants the fastest computer possible, not everyone can afford it.

By having your computer professionally optimized you can increase the speed/performance of your computer significantly, making it feel like a more expensive, faster machine.

One of the biggest misconceptions computer manufacturers try to pass off on consumers is that their computers come with antivirus installed.

Usually all that's included is a trial version that expires after a couple of months. This leaves your computer open to infections that can cause serious security implications. If you do online banking, use your credit card online, etc. you do not want this to happen to you!

We always remove the trial antivirus software on new computers and install an antivirus that does not expire for you.

Also at your request, if you want a commercial (not free) antivirus we can offer that as well through our new Monroe Computer Club.

Monroe Computer Club is our newest offering to computer users. For a number of years now we have been offering this service to our business clients and have had great success with it, so we wanted to make it available for home users as well.

Let's face it, if everyone could afford to have their own IT guy on hand all the time constantly watching their computer and making sure it ran great all the time they would! Now you can!

We offer the Monroe Computer Club in several tiers with add-on modules such as hardware protection and offsite backup.

With a membership to the Monroe Computer Club your computer gets a checkup here in our shop to make sure it is in tip top shape and virus free. Once the computer checks out, we install one of our agents on the computer.

The agents run 24/7 allowing us to monitor your computers resources, hardware, services, etc. ensuring that minor problems are caught before they become major, expensive issues.

Depending on the tier of plan you go with we also offer unlimited remote support at your request so you don't even need to bring your computer into our shop to have it worked on!

If you think you may be interested in the Monroe Computer Club, or just would like more information or questions answered give us a call and let us know.

What about the price? Well, for the cost of a good purchased antivirus and one visit to your computer tech a year you've more than paid for this service already but hexperienced the inconvenience of having computer problems.

Save yourself the time and headaches, give us a call today and we can discuss the plans in more detail with you! Don't just give a good gift for Christmas, give a great one that will last for years!

Happy Holidays from Tech Experts!

Windows 8 Offers Users Enhanced Security Features

by Jeremy Miller,
Technician

Windows has been known as a trustworthy computing platform, a lot of which is due to the ability to secure your operating system without infringing upon availability.

Microsoft has once again improved security across all versions of Windows 8. Just as in earlier releases, this version of Windows improves user and network security.

All versions of Windows will have many new security features such as:

UEFI Secure Boot support which is a large hardware step toward mitigating malware, specifically rootkits and bootkits. Rootkits and bootkits are low-level malware that run as your operating system starts up.

Organizations that deploy Windows 8 will want this feature enabled and prevent users from disabling this feature.

Smart Screen Filter which has already made its debut in Internet Explorer. Microsoft has decided to implement it into the operating system itself.

Smart Screen Filtering has been proven to be the best at blocking socially-engineered malware, which are phishing and pharming attacks such as bad links or redirects to bad or look-a-like sites.

This can aide in the prevention of drive-by downloads as well, which is where you unknowingly download malware by visiting websites.

Integrated anti-malware and Windows Defender is included in all Windows 8 versions. Windows defender will incorporate anti-virus

from Microsoft Security Essentials with improved performance and a smaller footprint.

This can all be implemented alongside your current anti-virus provider's anti-virus and should be implemented as soon as you obtain your computer, this way you are starting from a known-good environment.

Picture Passwords have been added to all versions of Windows 8 as well. Picture Password is a touch-based secure login. You select a picture and then create a gesture-sequence on top of the picture. These can simplify the login process while making it more difficult to hack.

Windows Reader is something completely new to Windows 8. Windows will now be able to read PDF documents without having to install 3rd party software. This can mitigate the popular PDF vulnerabilities. The more software you have installed the more vulnerable you become.

Address Space Layout Randomization was introduced in Windows Vista and has been improved upon since. This can aide in the prevention of the "buffer overflow" attacks that are gaining popularity.

They have added integrity checks, and an Enhanced protected mode "Sandbox"

Windows 8 Professional has additional security features to the one listed below such as: Bitlocker and Bitlocker Togo, which are not new but have been improved upon. The same goes for Group Policy Objects.

Windows 8 Enterprise has additional security features such as: Applocker which was introduced in Windows 7 and gives the user the ability to white-list or blacklist applications.

Direct access is an alternative to VPN's, and finally "Windows to Go", which allows people to image your computers with a Windows 8 corporate image.

It can be put on a USB and loaded onto any 64-bit PC and can include all of the management features.

If you need assistance or help with any of the new features of Windows 8 please contact us for assistance.

We can even setup your new computers for first-time use and transfer any data from your old computer to your new Windows 8 computer.

What Your Company Can Do To Cook Up New Ideas

Most companies recognize that innovation and creativity are vital to their survival, but they don't know how to plan projects that will bring the quantum leaps they're looking for.

Design specialist Heather M. A. Fraser, in her book Design Works (Rotman-UTP Publishing), describes three essentials every business needs to generate productive innovation:

Empathy

To create products or improve services, you need to understand what your customers (or even your employees) want.

They won't always tell you; sometimes they don't know themselves. That means you've got to develop your knowledge from the inside out.

Learn everything you can about their business needs, their personal goals, their failures, and their successes, regardless of whether any of those data seem to apply to your areas of expertise at first.

What you collect can lead your organization's imagination in unexpected directions. Before the introduction of the iPod, for example, few people realized they wanted "a thousand songs in their pocket."

Visualization

Take what you've learned and add it to what your organization can do.

Brainstorm as many ideas as you can, in practical terms but without limiting yourself to what's easy or what you've done before. Combine ideas and concepts that don't obviously go together, and look for ways to maximize your strengths—always with an eye on what your customers really want.

Strategy

This is where innovation can bog down unless you're careful to select ideas that fit with your overall business objectives and strategy. Some companies pursue too many promising ideas at once, never perfecting any of them. Others design a great new product that doesn't apply to their market and that they don't know how to sell.

Be creative, but be rigorous in your analysis of what the market needs and what you're capable of delivering. Then get to work.

Healthy Aging Tips From WebMD

A recent poll of centenarians, grouped with people who are over 65, conducted by WebMD found that there were a number of tips that they believed were very important to aging in a healthy manner and maintaining a youthful outlook on life.

One of those tips is to maintain strong relationships with family and friends, and another is to keep learning new things throughout your life and ensure that your mind stays active in the process.

Centenarians also believe that it is important to maintain a sense of humor and laugh a lot as well as to look forward to each and every new day with a sense of optimism and purpose.

Exercising, keeping moving and staying active were also viewed as vital, as were making healthy nutritional choices in terms of food consumption, keeping up with the latest news and current events, and maintaining a sense of independence.

"Welcome to the rat race."