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Steps To Secure Your Social Media Strategy

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

Keeping your internal network secure is one of the top jobs of IT consultants like Tech Experts. You don't want confidential company or client data to show up on the web.

But what happens when you start marketing your company on social media sites? How do you keep your company secure?

In general, cyber criminals aren't stupid. They troll sites like Facebook and Twitter, looking to take advantage of useful information employees naively post.

A policy that educates your employees on the "Do's and dont's" of social media posting can save your company an enourmous amount of aggravation.

Here are a few steps to include in a social media policy to ensure social media is conducted in a secure manner. It's important to have a solid policy if you want to ensure that your network and data remain safe from potential social media threats.

Watch where you click

Almost all social media postings contain links to other content. This is the sweet spot hackers are targeting. They place innocuous links to virus and spyware programs, or even worse, hijacked accounts of your friends and business associates.

You should tell employees involved in your social media efforts not to click on any suspicious links. If they receive links from friends that seem uncharacteristic, it's a good idea to not click on them.

Update privacy settings

Social media sites constantly update and change security settings on their networks, leading to unexpected exposure of information you might not want indexed on the web. It's a good idea to ensure that all of your profile information is private, and that you regularly review your privacy settings.

Don't share personal information

This might seem obvious to you, but there are still unsuspecting users out there who share too much of their personal information on social sites. Remember, social media is all about being social. Pretty much everything you share can be viewed by others. The last thing you want is an identity thief accessing your contact information and other personal data.

Log in using HTTPS

HTTPS is a web protocol that ensures the data sent between your computer and a web site is secure and encrypted. Many social sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus support HTTPS, and you should ensure that you use it.

To use HTTPS, you simply put an S at the end of the usual http address in the URL bar of your browser. I.e., https://facebook.com will open a more secure version of Facebook. By using HTTPS you can eliminate Man-in-the-Middle attacks and other similar types of phishing.

They key thing to remember: If you don't know them, they aren't your friend. You'll be miles ahead if you treat social media interactions like you do real life interactions. You wouldn't offer a stranger your cell phone number or home address until you knew them well. The same precautions apply to your social media accounts.

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

Common Network Problems Resolved

by Frank Wright,
Service Manager

It's amazing how easily network problems can turn into a huge headache for businesses and home users. If you don't have guidance when purchasing equipment, or don't know how to properly maintain and troubleshoot issues, you could be down for hours or days.

While network problems and questions are very common, there really are simple solutions to them. This month we'll take a look at the most common network related questions and problems and how we generally resolve them.

The first question we regularly hear, most often from home users, is "How do I know what kind of equipment to purchase?"

That isn't that hard of a question. Generally, with network equipment, it comes down to the old saying "You get what you pay for."

When you buy networking equipment, whether it's a switch to expand the number of available connections on your network, or a router, don't buy the lowest priced one you can find.

There's a reason one piece of equipment is more expensive than another. Generally, the price difference means drastic differences in the speed of the unit, number of available ports, range, and in some cases security features.

So, when buying network equipment, don't scrimp - you'll end up with a slow network lacking in features.

Even when you have good equipment in place you can still run into network problems.

The most common issue on a network tends to be a malfunctioning device.

It is normally much less expensive to try replacing a device as a first step to resolving a problem than it would be to have a tech go around and test every device on the network.

For example, if your network is having issues with slower than normal connections, high latency, etc. it is entirely possible that your switch or router has begun to fail.

With consumer grade network equipment, routers and switches can fail as much as once per year depending on the quality of the device and how well you've protected it from power surges.

If you've replaced your router and/or switch, and you continue to have high latency and strange issues, the next step is to check your network cables.

The cables you've been moving around over the years and putting stress on may have faults that are causing problems.

At this point, a tech would need to go through and test the cabling to make sure there are no issues with them.

A cable that is either wired improperly or is starting to fail can cause problems that will affect a network in many ways.

Sometimes, depending on the severity of the fault, it can cause intermittent failures resulting in spotty connections. If a cable fails altogether it can prevent a user from being able to connect to the network entirely.

Once all of the cabling issues are straightened out and we know our devices are good, you may still have a computer acting up on the network.

In that case, it is possible that the network interface card (NIC) is failing. Sometimes this can be a hardware problem where the NIC fails, but sometimes it is possible that the software on your computer is causing problems with it.

For instance, a NIC takes drivers for the operating system to allow it to communicate on the network. If you have the wrong driver installed, or the driver is corrupt, it can cause a lot of network problems.

Another possibility is a virus or other malicious software installed on the computer.

Depending on what the virus is designed to do it could be causing the problem with your computer's ability to connect to the Internet.

Depending on the severity of the infection and what it was designed to do, it is possible that a virus could cause the entire network to run slowly.

What it all comes down to is that it is really best to have a professional diagnose network issues and work with you directly when trying to get equipment for your network.

With the number of variables involved, if you don't deal with networking on a regular basis it's fairly easy to be confused.

Feel free to contact us anytime for advice on network upgrades and help diagnosing problems with your network, firewall, switches or routers.

What To Expect As Office 2013 Releases To The Public

by Jeremy Miller,
Technician

The arrival of the new Office Suite is upon us. There are myriad of new features and experiences in Office 2013.

A new Office suite means there are upgrades, new features and tools to learn the locations of. Thankfully Microsoft has done their homework before putting out this Edition of Office.

Microsoft Office will be released later this month. Microsoft has paid attention to what customers want while developing this suite without sacrificing what they need.

Microsoft has mildly changed the user interface to a "Windows 8 Style theme with the option to make slight customizations to make your Office experience more personal.
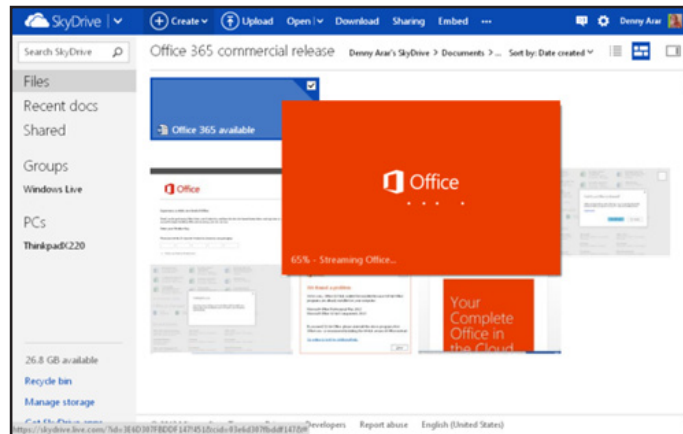
Office will be available in either a local installation or through Microsoft's Office 365 service for a monthly fee.

Microsoft has integrated the ability to sign in directly to Office using your Microsoft Account credentials.

This is one of the ways that Microsoft has integrated Office with the cloud. Logging into Office allows you to save any file from Office directly to your Microsoft SkyDrive with the cloud-storage included with all Microsoft Accounts.

You can also add additional locations for online storage or share your documents directly to social sites like: Twitter, Facebook, or Linkedin.

Another new aspect of Office is the ability to integrate apps into all products in the Office suite.

You may have been familiar with this feature if you have used Outlook 2010. You may now add apps to one of the programs in the Office 2013 suites.

Also when you launch any one of the programs in the Office suite you will now open a landing page that will ask you what type of document that you wish to create from a blank document to anyone of the many templates included.

Microsoft has released the Application Programming Interface (API) for Office 2013, this will allow software developers to write applications that will integrate directly into Office.

This will give you the ability to customize Office to any company's specific needs. The developer then has the ability to publish and sell their apps on the Office and Share-Point store.

This gives Office 2013 a flexible lifecycle since the software will be constantly growing and integrating new useful features.

In Office 2013 there is a tool available to measure your usage across the entire Office suite. This will be useful if you need to identify the most used solution or to create macros to increase the workflow that a user can handle.

One of the largest improvements in Office is within Word. Microsoft has finally included in its own software the ability to read, modify and create Protected Document Files (PDF). Until now you were required to download a PDF reader such as Adobe Reader to view PDF files.

Office has been modified to create a more stable user experience. Since you now sign into Office it will remember your preferences, settings, and files.

This will make your Office experience similar on every computer or device that you use. As long as you have saved your documents to the cloud you will be able to access them from any computer with an Internet connection.

If you are interested in upgrading to Office 2013 then please contact us. We can give you a better idea if upgrading is the best option for you or your organization. We can also help you plan and implement the migration if you choose to upgrade to Microsoft Office 2013.

Plan Your Workday's Start For Maximum Efficiency

Your first few minutes at work can set the tone for the entire day, so don't waste them. Here are some tips for launching a productive day from the very start:

• **Arrive on time.** Nothing throws you off your game like having to catch up with everyone else. Get the rest you need, and give yourself plenty of time to show up when you need to be there.

• **Settle in smoothly.** Don't take too much time for this. Spend just a few minutes reviewing your to-do list (updated the night before!) and checking in with your boss and employees. Plan your day, but be ready for interruptions as they arise.

• **Check messages—briefly.** Don't bother answering every email and phone message you've received since yesterday. Review them quickly, deal with any that require immediate attention, and then move on.

• **Think.** Your brain is fresh in the morning, so use it to make plans. Review your long-term goals as well as your most urgent tasks for the day, and spend a little time analyzing your priorities so you can put your energy where it will do the most good.

• **Choose your most important task first.** This may be the task you least want to do, but putting it off will only distract you and drain your energy. Look over your to-do list and pick the job that will have the biggest impact, and take it on while you've got maximum energy and the fewest interruptions.

• **Plan a break.** Don't push yourself to stay at peak energy all day. Schedule a quick break at some point in the morning so you can double-check your priorities, revise your plans, and get a little rest to prepare for the rest of the day. Enjoy a "brain snack" such as trail mix, peanut butter and toast, or hummus and vegetables.

Easy Tips To Secure Windows 8 Devices

With cybercrime on the rise, even the brand-new Windows 8 can leave a person vulnerable – which means it is important to know how to protect your devices from the moment you get them.

The good news is that this is not difficult if you follow a few simple tips.

You should commit to security from the very beginning; password-protect your new device immediately, connect to a Wi-Fi network you know is secure and register your device.

A number of companies such as NortonLive PC Quick Start will enable you to get your brand-new device up and running, easily and safely.

It is also important to be careful when choosing apps. All apps are allowed a certain level of access to private information, but some may use this in a malicious manner.

Make sure you read the user agreement to prevent giving the manufacturer rights you aren't comfortable with, such as letting it into your social network and accessing a friend list. All your apps, email, bank accounts and social networks should be protected with complex passwords that you do not share with anyone.

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