What You Need To Know About Social Networking

Social and business networking sites are changing the way people talk online. Sites like Facebook, MySpace and Bebo help friends stay in touch while LinkedIn and Plaxo mainly connect business users.

They are very popular but present challenges to small business owners. You can visit our website, www. MySpaceDisorder.com for our warnings about MySpace.

These sites seem to have come out of nowhere. For example, Facebook was founded in May, 2007, and currently has 70 million users. The rapid growth of such sites is part of the problem - you risk being caught off guard. Here are some of the top risks social networking sites pose to your business, and ways to manage that risk.

Indiscretion

Inadvertent disclosure of confidential information is a large risk. You wouldn't publish your organization chart and phone directory on the internet; but a head-hunter or identity thief can use information on social networking sites to reconstruct this kind of information.

Reputation risk

There is also a risk to your company's reputation. Social networking is more public and less formal than company email. It is also easier to use than blog software. It's easy to imagine employees posting pictures or text that would embarrass their employer.

Cyber-slacking

Social networking sites can be addictive and timeconsuming. Cyber-slacking is a genuine concern, and difficult to control and monitor without security enhancements to your network.

Viruses and spyware

Social networking sites often display advertisements. At Tech Experts, we've observed that some of these advertisements have caused virus and spyware infections.

Broken privacy and identity theft

Some sites also allow third parties to run applications that have access to user profiles. This is a potential privacy risk. People publish a wealth of personal information in their profiles. This makes social networking sites a happy hunting ground for identity thieves and conmen.

We recommend that companies give serious thought to social networking and how they want to manage the risk.

Make sure your network is protected against web-borne viruses. At a minimum, every computer on your network should have current and automatically updated anti-virus software. For an enhanced layer of protection, install a firewall device that provides multi-layered protection against existing and emerging malware.

Have a clear and comprehensive Acceptable Use Policy in place. Ensure that employees are aware of what they can and cannot do on your company's network. Review and update it often.

Set Rules for Personal Use. Use your company policy manual to spell out exactly how much personal web surfing is allowed, when, with whom, and under what circumstances. Of course, we recommend none.

Enforce your policies with an appropriate technology. This mean installing web monitoring and blocking software on each computer, or installing a network-wide security appliance.

No matter which option you choose, make sure you actively monitor usage, publish a usage policy, and keep that policy updated as new sites and threats emerge.

Happy Holidays!

Looking Ahead: What's In Store For Your Company?

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

Well, we've made it to the end of a very busy, exciting and productive year. Some might also call it a scary year, but I'd disagree. Economic adversity can be a tremendous source of growth if you manage it properly, have the right products and services, in the right place, at the right time.

Our clients are typically small and medium sized companies, and while some of them are putting the brakes on and slowing down, most are still going strong.

We're feverishly working with many clients to plan out their IT projects for 2009. Several clients are looking to upgrade their infrastructure with new servers, workstations and higher speed networking equipment. Even more will be enhancing their Internet speed and security and upgrading their websites (look for an incredible web and e-mail service promotion from us next month!).

These clients understand the importance of keeping their network and critical business systems update to date and in great operating condition.

What Is Your 2009 Plan?

By now, you've undoubtedly got the framework of your 2009 plan put together. What's on the agenda?

From our corner of the world, as your computer guys, we're seeing many companies looking for ways to decrease expenses and increase sales. We think some of the key technologies you'll see helping with that include virtualization, unified communications, and cloud computing.

Virtualization

Virtualization technologies go back all the way to the 1960s and IBM's M44 mainframe systems. In essence, virtualization lets you create and run more than one server "system" on a single piece of server "hardware." The obvious benefit is that you're able to run distinct servers on one piece of hardware.

An example application for small business would be a company that uses a specialized piece of software that requires a dedicated server. If the company is smaller, chances are a lot of that server's horsepower is going to sit idle - because not a lot of people are using it. With virtualization, we would simply create another virtual server and install the special business software on that virtual server, saving the cost of an additional server.

Unified Communications

During the next few years, you'll see the number of different communications vendors you work with reduced considerably. The technology already exists to check your e-mail from your cell phone, and to receive voice mails in your e-mail.

Cloud Computing

"The cloud" is a metaphor for the Internet. In general terms, cloud computing is the concept that your computing resources are no longer located in your office, or on your server, but rather, purchased as a service and delivered via the Internet. More and more, the services your company relies on every day will move to cloud computing applications, eliminating the need for hardware at your office.

The initial cost savings of cloud computing are obvious; the longer term cost savings will come from reduced operating expenses (employees can work from home, or anywhere, lowering the need for expensive office space) and access to higher quality services that are traditionally too expensive for small companies to implement. Salesforce.com is the perfect example of an enterprise-class application made available to small companies through the use of cloud computing.

Thank You!

As we wind down 2008, I'd like to thank the clients and friends that support Tech Experts. The trust and confidence you place in us as your IT company is invaluable, and everyone here is very thankful for your business. Happy new year!

A Great Book To Read

Panic: The Story of Modern Financial Insanity (edited by Michael Lewis) is a brilliant book and a good start to our new "Recommended Reading" list.

Panic covers five modern financial crashes: The Crash of 1987, The Russian Default / Collapse of Long Term Capital Management, The Asian Currency Crisis of 1999, The Internet Bubble and The Subprime Mortgage Disaster.

Each section has a perfect setup - a few articles preceding the actual crash followed by articles that are written as the crash is happening. Lewis finishes off each section with at least one post crash article.

There are some interesting characters throughout the book, but my favorite example is from The Internet Bubble section: Bernard Madoff - yes, the one that's been in the news lately.

You can order a copy of the book here: http://www.techtidbit.com/page/Books.aspx.

Free E-mail Accounts? You Get What You Pay For!

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

We've all been told there is no such thing as a free lunch; yet it's hard to resist the siren's call of "FREE." That's one of the reasons why so many people have free e-mail accounts through Hotmail, MSN, and Gmail.

And while you might not be paying out of pocket for these services, there IS a cost. Here's the price you pay when you use a free e-mail account:

An Extra Helping Of Spam: And loads of it. Are these free services selling your e-mail account? Do spammers have ways of gleaning your e-mail account? No one seems to know for sure (or at least they're not talking). But the bottom line is you'll end up with a lot more ads for Viagra than you bargained for.

Your E-mails Aren't Guaranteed To Be Delivered: The majority of spam messages come from free e-mail accounts. Even though you aren't sending them, spam filters look at the server sending the message and, if it's a known source for spam, will block the e-mail from going through. That means your emails might be getting blocked before they even reach the sender.

Customer Service? Non-existent! See you DO get what you pay for! If you have a problem, you're on your own to figure it out.

Difficulty In Moving, Forwarding, or Downloading: Free e-mail services require that you read your e-mail through their web interface. If you want to move, forward or download your e-mail, contacts or other information, the process is cumbersome and sometimes impossible.

No Archiving: E-mail archiving, or storing old emails in a searchable, retrievable format has become very important (even a legal requirement) in some industries like medical and financial. Email is considered a form of communication and if you use it to support customers, order products, or to negotiate any type of deals, you want to keep a record.

So while these free services are okay for chatting with friends, they are NOT recommended for business purposes or for anything important.

Here's a question to ask yourself: If your e-mail account was erased tomorrow and all your messages, contact information, and history were gone, would it be a slight inconvenience or a catastrophe? If it's the latter, then you need to get a "real" e-mail account.

And, while you're at it, you should also get an account that reflects your own URL, like cbogedain@expertsmi.com. The only reason for keeping a free e-mail account is to provide certain web sites with an e-mail address when you don't care about getting communications from them, or that may spam you later on - that way, you can simply get rid of it and get a new one when you start to get too much spam.

> These free e-mail services are okay for chatting with friends, they are NOT recommended for business purposes or for anything important.

Seeing the Sites – Telemarketing Scam Defense

by T.J. Lee

The connected age we now live in has brought us both great wonders and significant evils. What's interesting is that the same technologies are often used for both.

One tool that can, and is, often misused is the telephone. Once the most annoying thing you were subjected to was a call, always at dinner time, which turned out to a telemarketer sales call. But the number of scams, spams, and serious whams that can come from seemingly innocent telephone calls has skyrocketed. Ever get an odd call in voicemail or on your answering machine with instructions to call back right away? Do you call, not call, is it real, a trick, a trap? Before you dial check with this interesting site to see what's what with the return number.

http://800notes.com/

You can type in a number and find out if it's a known scam, or if others have been getting the same calls as you. You can also tap into the latest news on Do-Not-Call lists, telemarketing scams both domestic and coming from overseas, as well as articles about your telephone rights, what to do if you are getting harassing phone calls, how to file complaints with the appropriate government agencies and more.

What's nice is that all of the pages provide for reader comments so you can benefit from the experience of others with the topics being discussed.

Contact Information

24 Hour Computer

Emergency Hotline

(734) 240-0200

General Support

(734) 457-5000

(866) 993-9737

support@MyTechExperts.com

Sales Inquiries

(734) 457-5000

(888) 457-5001

sales@MyTechExperts.com

Take advantage of our

client portal! Log on at:

https://connect.

expertsmi.com/support

T E C H
EXPERTS

980 S. Telegraph Road

Monroe, MI 48161

Tel (734) 457-5000

Fax (734) 457-4332

info@MyTechExperts.com

4 Hidden Dangers Electricity Poses To Your Computer Network… And One Simple, Inexpensive Solution That Will Prevent Them All From Doing Damage

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

Is your computer plugged in? Do you use a power strip with a surge protector? If so, you are a heartbeat away from disaster and don't even realize it. The same electricity you depend on to run your computer and network is also trying to destroy your data.

Believe it or not, electricity is one of the biggest threats to your computer network and the data it contains. Here are four computer power problems you must know about and how to prevent them.

Transients

Commonly known as surges and spikes, these are caused by lightning storms, wind, squirrels shorting out power lines, auto accidents, etc. Several times each week these spikes can travel up the power cord into your computer damaging everything from power supplies to motherboards.

Conventional wisdom says use a power strip with a surge protector and you are safe. As usual, conventional wisdom is dead wrong. After several months, these surge protectors become useless having been zapped by the surges they were designed to protect against.

Blackouts

Whether momentary or prolonged, the sudden loss of power can corrupt your PC to the point of not being able to start up again when the lights come back on.

Sags

This is when the power drops below normal. Have you ever seen the fluorescent lights flicker for a moment? Then you have witnessed sag. Sags are more common than surges and are caused when equipment like air conditioners, blow dryers, water heaters, laser printers, copy machines and other electrical equipment are turned on or come out of sleep mode. A typical small office will experience 30 or more sags each day. Sags cause many of the weird and unexplained problems computer users complain about every day.

Noise

Ever been watching TV and seen fuzzy pictures and/or white lines or dots when you turn on a blender or vacuum cleaner? This is the result of electrical noise. While a fuzzy TV picture is an annoyance, this electrical noise causes many computer problems including loss of data.

So how do you protect yourself from electrical problems? The most simple and inexpensive solution to all four of these hazards is a battery backup. The battery backup (also known as a UPS or Uninterruptible Power Supply) senses when there are problems with the power and automatically switches to the battery protecting you from computer damage and data loss.

Choosing the correct battery backup for your computer or server can be tricky. Having one with a battery too small is the same as having none at all.

For most desktop computers, a battery backup with a 500VA or larger rating should be sufficient to keep you going through momentary power problems, and give you time to shut down your computer if you experience a longer power outage..

Protecting your server requires detailed knowledge of the server functions and power consumption in order to pick the right battery backup solution. If you want help in determining the right protection for your specific network, give us a call: 734-457-5000.

"No Christmas bonus this year, but you will find some valuable coupons printed on the back of your paycheck!"