

Professional Email Addresses: How “Free” Email Could Cost You



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

There are lots of ways you've worked to build positive brand and inspire trust with your clients. Pleasant phone greetings when client calls

in, a professional sign over the office entrance, even stationary on a nice paper stock are important to let your clients know that you're serious about your business.

But what about having your own domain name for email?

How does it look after a great conversation with a potential customer when you hand them your card and your email address you expect to have important business conversations with belongs to one of the big email providers offering free service?

Put another way, imagine a lawyer with an email address of consultantpat@hotmail.com. Do you think Pat's clients would be comfortable knowing that private correspondence

with their consultant was being transmitted through a free email service?

How would their perception change if Pat's email were pat@robinson-consulting.com?

Professional branding aside, there are some great reasons to have your email at your own domain name for business email:

Who's going to help? Delete an important email? Can't log in to your account? Have a question about the number of emails you can send from your account?

The free email service providers have self-service tools to help you figure out your problem, but what can you do if you still have a problem? Who will you talk to and how long will you have to wait for help?

Will your emails be delivered? "I didn't receive your email." Does this sound familiar? Free email accounts are very popular with spammers. Did you know that some mail services started blocking mass mail

delivery from free email accounts with these domain names?

The switching cost to a domain-based email address later is higher. There's a strong benefit to having people know where to find you. Changing your email address can be a lot like a retailer relocating. All the business built over the years could disappear, as customers can no longer find you at the address.

Unintended communication could be embarrassing, even damaging. Jon Smith is our hypothetical accountant with a free GMail account at jon.smith@gmail.com. Can you guess the number of times his clients have emailed their sensitive documents (even tax returns) to john.smith@gmail.com?

Sure, it's the client's fault for the mistake, but could this have been prevented if he were Jon@Reliable-Accountants.com?

Free email accounts are very popular these days. But if you're serious about your business and your brand, it might be time to consider how current and potential clients are judging you by a simple email address.



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How Can Google Plus Benefit Your Business?

Since the recession businesses are looking for more economical ways of advertisement that will generate revenue.

Google Plus will be the perfect business hub for advertisement and customer interactions.

Google Plus is a brand new social networking website that allows you to interact with your friends and followers.

It also supports mobile devices so you can keep your clients up to date on the go. Google Plus is made up of five key features:

Stream

The stream is an essential feature to Google Plus; this is where you can share what's new.

For example, for a retail store this is where you could post the latest sale or upcoming products that your store will be offering soon.

Circles

Circles are used to categorize all of your Google Plus friends and followers.

With this you can post updates in your stream and choose which circles can view the update.

So if you have customers that have a membership with you that allow them to receive special offers this would be perfect for that purpose.

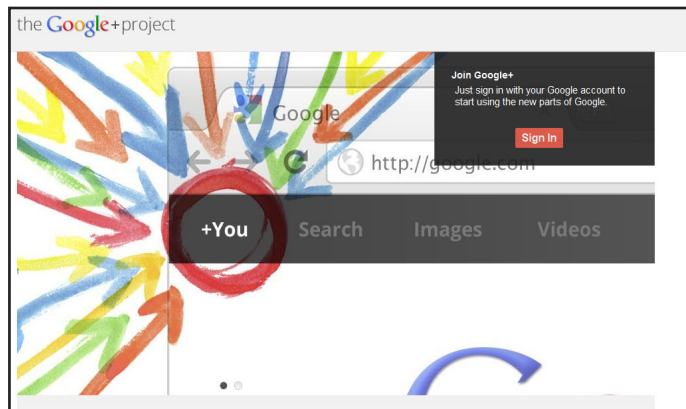
You could create different circles and update your stream with coupon codes and only share that

update with the circles of your choice.

Huddle

Huddle is a new way for you to easily stay in touch with your customers in real time.

With Huddle, you can chat with groups of people or individual users.



For example, if you wanted to provide customer support online you could create huddles for your customers that are in need and assist them in a chat window.

Hangouts

Hangouts are for video chatting with your circles. This can be used to introduce a product.

For example, you can update your stream telling your users to be online at a certain time and you can broadcast video using the Hangout feature.

Or, it can be used for group meetings. For a lot of small businesses it can be hard trying to find space to host a meeting if your building does not have the allotted space available.

With Hangouts everyone will be able to be seen on screen in a video

chat session with the main focus on the person who is speaking at the time.

Using +1

If you are familiar with Facebook, this is the same basic feature as the Facebook "like" button. But, there are some added features.

Basically if you like what you see while browsing the web, you can give it a +1.

This also can be a very good marketing tool if you simply tell your customers that if you +1 this update you can give them discounts which will draw more attention to your

company's profile.

Also you will be able to see what others have +1'd which is basically another way of telling someone "Hey check this out."

If you use all of the features that Google Plus offers you should see an increase in clients and followers in your business.

The more online exposure that your business has, it is more likely you will come up first in web searches.

Google Plus is still in its beta stage which unfortunately is invite only.

There has not been a date set for its release but when it arrives I encourage you to sign up as soon as it launches.

*Featured Article Written By:
Terrell Canute*



Top 5 Ways to “Break” Your Computer

Here are the top five most common ways to “break” your computer.

The reason break is in quotations is because no matter what happens to your computer we can almost always fix it...it just doesn't make sense sometimes from a financial stand point to do so.

My computer won't turn on

This very common situation and can be caused by many different things.

One common cause, however, that IS preventable is the computer overheating.

The first step to preventing this issue is to put the computer on an elevated surface instead of the floor if you have the space to do so.

The reason you want to do this is normal everyday foot traffic around or near the computer kicks up a lot of dust and debris that can coat the insides of a computer and cause the processor to not be cooled properly.

The other step you want to take to prevent this issue is to take a can of air and blow out the computer on occasion.

We do NOT recommend opening the case and doing the interior yourself as it is possible to cause damage to components.

My computer is running really slow

Yet again another common scenario we hear almost every day.

Unfortunately, there is no way to completely avoid this, but there are some ways to slow it down.

As your operating system installation ages, and depending on

how much it is used, the operating system, and software files in it can become damaged or corrupt, which slows your computer down.

The best way to combat this issue is to make sure that your uninstalling unused programs through the control panel, and simply keeping unused junk files clean off of your computer.

The more you keep your computer and OS the way it was when you purchased it the better it will run.

This can also happen if you shut your computer down improperly. Always go through the Start Menu/Shutdown process when powering off your computer.

Constant popups are interrupting me and making my PC slow

Almost always, this very common issue is caused by a virus or spyware on your computer.

Unfortunately, there aren't any fool-proof methods of preventing a virus or malware attack.

The best thing you can do to help prevent an infection is to have anti-virus software installed on your PC, but keep in mind, even this does not guarantee you will not get a virus/malware infection.

The other step to help prevent this is to only go to websites that are

considered to be “safe,” meaning they are legitimate websites that its owners would not be trying to gain access to your PC or have any reason to infect your computer.

The most common place for users to get viruses and malware is from browsing the web for free items such as software, movies, music,



etc. or even from emails.

Unfortunately, if you do end up being infected by a virus, they're very difficult to completely remove.

The process used to properly remove a virus is complex and if not done properly can damage your computers operating system and/or cause data loss.

That being said even if you bring the computer in it is possible for a virus to attach itself to a file and damage it permanently so even we may not be able to recover all of your files in the event of a very bad infection.

In most cases we are able to remove all viruses/malware from a system and the user not even notice that they ever had one. There are times, though, where the virus does irreversible damage.

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Contact Information

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My computer can't get online

This is another common issue, and is most often caused by the above issue - viruses or spyware on the computer.

Viruses, spyware and malware have all kinds of different effects on the computer. When that is not the cause there are several other issues that may come into play.

As long as other computers at your home/business are able to get online the issue is more than likely due to a setting on your computer itself.

The most common instance I can think of with laptops is the user accidentally switches the WiFi switch to the off position (and doesn't realize the laptop even had a WiFi switch).

In a desktop, however, as long as the connection issue has not been caused by failing hardware, it is usually caused by a setting changed within the computer.

Connection issues encompass a number of possible settings on

the computer, so it's hard to give you all the information to properly troubleshoot this issue in a small newsletter article.

When it comes to connection issues your best bet is to give us a call and let us diagnose the issue for you.

We troubleshoot many connectivity issues here in the shop as well as onsite. So, no matter where your problem lies, we can get you back online.

Windows told me I had some updates so I installed them. Now my computer won't boot

Windows updates are almost always important, but they can also be complex in how they interact with your operating system and installed software.

Unfortunately, since most of the updates address serious security risks they must be installed.

The best practice regarding updates is to review them immediately, and perhaps even download them to the machine, but wait a few days in case there are issues with the updates.

If Microsoft finds that there are issues with a patch, even though they do test them to begin with, they will pull the update off of Windows updates until the issue is resolved.

This will help prevent you from getting an update that can cause a problem.

Hardware driver updates are by far the most common type of update that “breaks” the computer.

We generally don't recommend downloading them unless you are having a problem with your current driver, or there's a serious security issue with the current driver.

With hardware sometimes it's better to go with the “Don't fix it if it isn't broke” sentiment. If you do mistakenly update and then are unable to get into Windows, bring your computer in and we can get the issue corrected!

These are a few of the common issues that we see every week. Hopefully this short list can help keep your system running smoothly, and help you solve basic issues.

*Featured Article Written By:
Frank Wright*

Phishing Schemes Are On The Rise

A phishing e-mail is an e-mail sent by a hacker designed to fool the recipient into downloading a virus, giving up their credit card number, personal information (like a social security number), or account or login information to a particular website.

Often these e-mails are well designed to look exactly like an official notification from the site they are trying to emulate.

For example, a recent phishing e-mail was circulated that appeared to come from Facebook stating that videos or photos of Osama Bin Laden's death were posted online. These e-mails looked exactly like a legitimate Facebook e-mail and even appeared to come from “Facebookmail.com.”

Once you clicked on the e-mail the phishing site would attempt to install a virus on your machine.

And now due to recent security breaches with Sony and e-mail marketer Epsilon, phishing attacks are going to increase – and they are going to get more sophisticated and harder to distinguish from legitimate e-mails.

That's because the hackers that were able to access the private databases of the above mentioned companies now have the name, e-mail and interests of the subscribers, and in some cases birthdays, addresses and more. That means a phishing e-mail can be personalized with relevant information that the user provided to Sony, making the e-mail appear to be more legitimate and the user more likely to click on the links provided and take the actions requested. Now more than ever it's critical that you are wary of e-mail notifications and the actions they request you take. Even having good anti-virus software installed won't protect you if you give your account information away freely.