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Does Videoconferencing Make Sense For Your Company?



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

Science-fiction fans have long wished for life-sized communication devices that create a real-time image of the person you're talking with.

Recently, holographic video technology has begun to surface, although at present the price means it's restricted to only the wealthiest companies.

More realistic options when you want a face-to-face with clients across town are video conferencing and telepresence setups, like HP's Halo solutions.

Soaring fuel prices, and the growing awareness of our carbon footprint, are encouraging the fast adoption of video conferencing among big and small companies alike.

Some businesses have even taken the line that if a video conference is possible, they won't travel long distances for a meeting.

The advantages of video conferencing are obvious. As the old saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words."

By being able to see each other, participants benefit from improved understanding and communication. Productivity goes up, travel costs are removed, and the time spent driving or flying to meetings is slashed dramatically.

The next stage

The benefits offered by video conferencing are soon to be taken to a new level by technologies like motion tracking, facial recognition and simulation, intelligent audio technologies, handheld and full-scale holographic devices, 3D monitors, stereographic camera setups, and entire-room display technologies.

Recent months have already seen the introduction of digital projectors into mobile phones.

While many of these technologies sound quite far-fetched, a lot of them will be available for regular business use in the near future.

And like most technological breakthroughs, with time many of them will also find their way into our

homes. Friends and family living overseas could virtually walk in and talk with you – or share their living rooms in full detail.

Enhancing collaboration today

While holograms and other such technologies are still out of reach for most, video conferencing systems like Halo are helping organizations hold more engaging long-distance meetings that lift productivity while reducing costs.

The top-end products can include life-sized screens, crisp pictures, surround sound and even operating technicians.

A far more attractively priced option are PCs and notebooks equipped with web cameras. With free services like Skype and Webex, you can quickly and easily set up time-saving face-to-face meetings.

Collaboration and communication can be improved effortlessly, travel costs removed in an instant.

New technologies will soon revolutionize the way we communicate, but in the meantime, video conferencing can offer your business a great advantage.

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Malware: What Does It Look Like And How To Prevent It

*by Frank Wright,
Service Manager*

The most common issue among users for both home and businesses alike are malware infections.

While malware is a generic term for malicious software, the fact is all malware slows your computer down and brings potential security risks along with it.

Malware can be anything from viruses, trojans, and spyware to "PC Optimization" programs that really do your computer more harm than good.

While some are more serious issues than others they all have negative effects on a workstation or a server so they all need to be taken seriously.

What does malware look like? In most cases an unusual window will open up, something you do not recognize.

Many times malware looks like the speed up your pc programs or could even be designed to look as if it's antivirus software. It is very common to see software like this requesting credit card information to purchase the software and remove the so called infections.

Do not ever give credit card information out on your computer unless you're absolutely certain it is a program you've downloaded and setup.

One example is your antivirus software will sometimes let you extend a subscription that is expiring via credit card.

"How can I even get a virus, I have antivirus software installed?"

This is the single most common question we have from clients that come in for virus infections on their computers.

It is a common misconception that antivirus software means you cannot get a virus. The fact is antivirus software is strictly preventative.

The way antivirus software works is the antivirus vendor makes a

definition has been made, while the other is.

"If antivirus does not completely protect me then how do I keep from getting viruses?" This is the follow up question we always get. For starters, safe browsing habits help to greatly reduce the chances of getting a virus infection.

Do not click on ads. The most common place for someone to get a virus is the ads on websites like Facebook that are very appealing and tend to catch users eyes.

Another thing that can be done to reduce the chance of infection or at least the severity of it is to use a standard user account. Society as a whole has a bad habit of always using the administrator account on a computer for everything they do.

The problem with this is that if a user does download a virus, the virus is now working on an account that has full privileges to the entire computer versus an account that only has permissions on a very small part of it.

Aside from having good browsing habits the best thing you can have on a workstation or a server is a high quality antivirus. Paid antiviruses tend to offer other features to help further protect your computer. We sell a Managed Vipre Antivirus that has very high detection rates and is business grade software. It is very light weight and does not slow down computers.

If you are interested in looking into our antivirus solution to help protect your business or residential computers let us know.



virus definition based off of a virus. This definition is what allows the antivirus software to find and stop viruses from infecting a computer. That being said, someone has to get infected before the antivirus companies have an example virus to make a definition for.

Due to this everyone, whether they have antivirus software or not, are susceptible to viruses.

The difference between someone with antivirus software installed and someone that does not is that the person with it installed is not susceptible to infections after a

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Backup And Disaster Recovery For Small Businesses

by *Jeremy Miller,*
Technician

It is that time of year again; “Storm Season”, and computers and other electronics can be damaged.

We see at least a few computers each year come in from damage caused by a storm. This can vary from a failed power supply to computers that cannot be repaired due to the damage done by the storm.

This is one reason why it is important to have a disaster recovery plan. A good disaster recovery plan starts with backing up vital information regularly.

It is best to have at least two forms of backups as well. You need on-site and off-site backups.

On-site backups are stored on some media like a hard drive or a flash drive that is not permanently attached to the computer. This is a removable storage device that can be transferred to a different computer, or even a network resource like a server.

We can also offer a device that will take a complete system image of your computer at regular intervals. If your computer or server fails, this device can actually boot up as a temporary copy of your computer or server, within minutes. This will keep your downtime to a minimum in the event of a disaster.

Off-site backups are the most important. There are instances of when the on-site backups become



unusable. This can happen in the event of natural disasters like fires, floods, and electrical damage from lightning, or even something simple such as a system failure or even a virus.

It is a good idea to have your data backed up securely over the Internet to a different location that has many redundancies in place.

You need to decide what the best options will be for you and make sure that they are cost-effective. Backup and disaster recovery is something we take very seriously here. We have had clients accidentally delete their entire QuickBooks databases, they called us, and we were able to restore the databases in minutes.

This client was proactive and worked with us to setup the best backup solution for them and it paid off. Being proactive and setting up a disaster recovery plan is the only way to help prevent data loss.

The most important part of backing up your data is testing your backups.

You have to test your backups to make sure everything will be able to be restored in the event of an emergency.

You do not want to spend a lot of money on backup software only to have your data become corrupt and unusable. Our backups are regularly tested to verify integrity.

We have helped many people implement backup and disaster recovery solutions. The backups that we setup off-site are tested regularly. We have had 100% success rate in restoring backups that we have setup and monitored.

If you are interested in having your current backup solution audited, or would like consulting on a new backup solution we will be happy to help. Please contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Create new service requests, check ticket status and review invoices in our client portal:
<http://www.TechSupportRequest.com>



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Take Charge Of Your Time To Manage Your Job Better

Time is money, or so the saying goes. People who manage their time effectively get more done and go further in their careers.

Make the most of every minute with these useful ideas:

Act on email promptly. Don't leave emails in your inbox, whether you've read them or not. Spend a few minutes on a regular schedule responding, saving, or deleting messages so important emails don't get lost in the electronic clutter.

Do your most important tasks first. Identify your priorities (and those of your boss) so you know what's critical and what's trivial. Then take care of your top priorities first thing in the morning instead of putting them off or waiting until you're "ready." The rest of your day will flow more easily once you've got the important stuff under control.

Identify quick tasks. Make a list of everyday jobs you can do in five minutes or less. Tackle these when you've got a little spare time—between meetings, or waiting for a long document to print. That way they won't distract you when you need to concentrate, or waste your time when you should be working on more important things.

Take good notes. Don't try to remember everything. When you've got an idea, or realize you need to do something later, write it down. Review your notes regularly so nothing slips away.

Just say no. Avoid tasks and projects that don't directly contribute to your primary objectives. Use your list of priorities to identify

work that you need to do. Turn down (politely) requests to take on irrelevant work, or negotiate for a deadline that allows you to focus on your key tasks.

While managing your time better, it's also a good idea to improve your relationship with your boss.

Impressing your boss isn't about insincere flattery or hogging the spotlight. The best way to get attention and credit is to do your job as well as you can - and follow these tips:

Take notes. Carry a notebook to any meeting with your boss, and use it to record his or her instructions. This shows that you place a premium on detail and accuracy.

Save money. Look for ways to cut expenses in your organization. Most managers are under constant pressure to keep costs down, and yours will be grateful if you can help.

Arrive early, stay late. Don't be a clock-watcher.

Your willingness to put in extra time will show your dedication to the boss's objectives and your organization's success.

Dress well. Even in a casual-dress atmosphere, pay attention to

your appearance. A professional wardrobe will stand out.

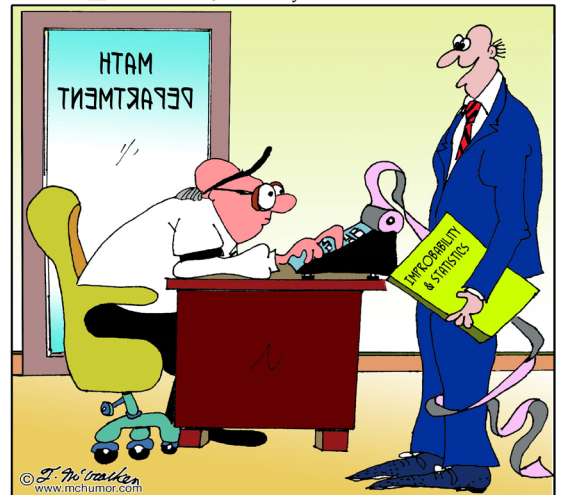
Keep the boss informed. Don't be a gossip, but do give your manager a heads-up on anything happening in the workplace that could affect his or her goals.

Do a little extra. Seek out the small tasks that other people forget, or the big ones that everyone avoids. Going the extra mile will make a lasting impression.

Be organized. Keep your work area clean, and have the information your boss needs ready at any time. You don't want to waste your manager's time while you search for documents under piles of disorganized memos.

Double-check your work. Don't be in such a hurry that you don't have time to proofread your email or confirm the facts in a report. Small errors can undermine your credibility and reputation.

MCHUMOR.com by T. McCracken



"Remember, statistics are in the eye of the manipulator."