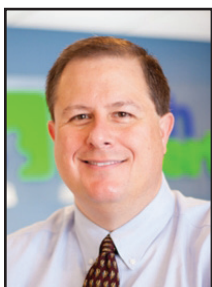# TechTidbit.com

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Five Common Causes For Business Computer Slowdowns And How To Fix Them

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

All computers inevitably slow down at some point. The more we use them to download programs, install extensions, and fill up the hard drive with files, movies, and photographs, the slower they get.

Fortunately, keeping your computer running at a rapid pace is relatively straightforward, providing you develop some basic electronic housekeeping habits.

Here are the top five reasons computers slow down and how you can fix them.

Your hard drive is failing

Hard drives fail eventually, so make sure you backup your files on a regular basis. Some users claim that solid state drives (SSDs) are more reliable than hard drives because they don't incorporate moving parts. However, that's nothing more than a myth and the data stored on them can still be corrupted.

The fix: Check your hard drive regularly. Try HDTune, a great program that diagnoses hard drive issues.

You operate too many programs at the same time

In this day and age, we expect computers to be able to do many things at once. But if you put too much pressure on them, computers will falter. Essentially, if the demands of all the programs you have open outstrip your computer's processing and memory capacity, the device will slow down.

The fix: Make sure you shut down any programs you're not using.

Your antivirus program is working overtime

You need to have an active antivirus program to protect your data. However, if your antivirus program is running scans at inopportune moments, you may find them sucking up all your processing power.

The fix: Adjust your antivirus settings so that the scheduled scans run late at night or at a time when you're not using your computer for other tasks.

You have too many programs launching at startup

If you have many programs set to launch on startup, they will compete for resources as they attempt to be the first up and running when your computer boots up.

This will most definitely have an impact on the speed of your computer.

The fix: Disable programs that you don't use from starting up automatically.

You have insufficient memory

If you've taken all the actions outlined above and your computer is still very slow, it may be that you simply don't have enough memory.

The fix: Make sure your computer has a minimum of 4GB of RAM. If you perform heavy tasks on your computer, you'll need at least 8GB, and 16GB wouldn't hurt.

Keep in mind you'll need a computer running 64 bit Windows to take advantage of the extra memory.

In this day and age, we expect computers to be able to do many things at once. But if you put too much pressure on them, computers will falter.

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

How To Select The Best Computer For Your Business

> *"When picking out the best computer, you need to understand your needs both currently and in the future, then purchase a PC that will accomplish that."*

Anthony Glover is a Senior Network Engineer and Service Manager at Tech Experts.

When shopping for an ideal business computer, it's not the cheapest purchase but the most beneficial tech that's going to last for the long haul.

For example, you find a local electronics ad that points out a PC that looks ideal due to the price - but beware, most budget PCs have components that are either already outdated or will be very soon.

When picking out the best computer, you need to understand your needs both currently and in the future, then purchase a PC that will accomplish that.

So what's the best manufacturer?

There are several manufacturers that sell great PCs for the small to mid-size business owner, such as HP, Lenovo, or Acer.

The great thing about all of the manufacturers is that each one has its own ideal PC and, depending on your needs, one will fit better than the next. Remember, reviews are your friend.

Decide whether or not you need portability.

If your work involves you leaving the office or taking your work home, get a laptop.

If you are stationary in an office, get a desktop and remember to get the best processor possible for your budget. Time is money and a better processor will increase your overall speed.

Got cores?

A good processor will have multiple cores. You will need at least a dual core to get the job done at a considerable rate. Most users will not need to go higher than a quad core processor to perform everyday tasks.

However, the more cores present will make your PC not only faster

but able to manage more task more effectively.

Graphic needs?

Your business will decide how much graphics power you need. For instance, if you're a graphic designer, you would want something that is going to really process graphics for those high-resolution vectors and possibly some video-editing purposes.

You would want to get a PC with no less than a mid-range graphics. However, if you run a flower shop,

video processing really wouldn't be key to the core of your business and you would want to spend your money elsewhere, such as memory or a better CPU.

Most on-board video nowadays are sufficient enough for the small business owner and wouldn't have difficulties with everyday computing.

How much memory?

Again, this boils down to the core attributes of your business and what your business needs to operate effectively.

Ideally, at least 4 GB of memory is a great standard for any business computer to start and most desktop or laptop PCs also offer upgradeability. So you can always add more memory later, if necessary.

Storage?

The motto is - the more space you have, the less chance you have of reaching the storage limit.

In today's world, SSD storage is the fastest and most sought after for storage hardware.

When picking a hard drive for your system, anticipate how much space you really need so you end up with a PC that can manage the factors set for your business.

Seem like a lot to manage on your own? You can always give us a call to review your PC needs. Give us a call at (734) 457-5000, or email info@mytechexperts.com.
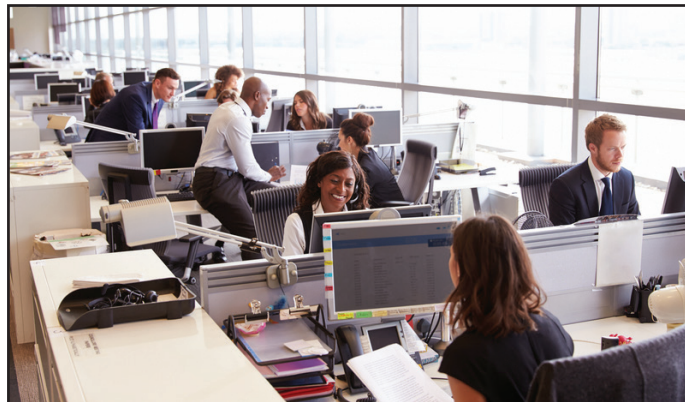
What Makes For A Good Password?

Luke Gruden is a Help Desk Specialist at Tech Experts.

It seems like every week we need to make a new password for a new account. When making a password, there is usually some colored bar letting you know if your password is strong or weak.

It is very important that we maintain strong passwords for our accounts, so no one uses a password generator to guess the password and gain access to our private information.

What actually makes a good password? Length is one of the best methods to making a stronger password as it's harder for a computer to hack a longer password. For the length, it's recommended to have at least 12 characters.

If your password consists of basic words, it's recommend the password be even longer as a lot of password crackers out there auto-search dictionary words.

You can even make a sentence or sentences. There is no rule against something like this: "Hello! I am Luke with Tech Experts and I work on computers!" That was about 60 characters and would take signifi-cantly longer to crack than a simple 12 character password.

The next best factor to making a good password is complexity. Complexity is when a password uses special characters, numbers, random capitals, and contains few or no dictionary words. The more complex a password is, the far harder it is for a computer to crack the password. "s5df1K51lj!@# ^k5$#1#!!2 @" would be a really good password, but good luck remembering it. Too complex and it's hard to remember, too short and it's easy to crack.

However, using length and complexity, we can make a strong password that we can remember.

Adding a number and special character to each word you use will drastically increase the strength of the password without making it too complex "Hello$1 my$2 name$3 is$4 Luke!$5" is most likely a stronger password than the one I used earlier that contained 60 characters simply because the special characters aren't in the dictionary.

Another important note about passwords is that you should **keep every password different for each profile.** It can be tempting to use the same password for every account online, but at least try to make variations of your passwords.

The main reason why is that if a website is leaked or hacked, your password can be out there in the public and can be attempted on your other accounts, so even if you have the best password in the world, using the same password for every account can make your accounts vulnerable.

The last good practice for passwords is to **change your password every 6 months** or so, so even if your password was leaked without your knowledge, changing the password would end the issue. Also, some computers will try to crack a password 24/7 and, with enough time, it will eventually guess the right password. Changing your password every so often will thwart those computers that endlessly guess at your password.

Another way to ensure you have different strong passwords is to **use a password manager.** A password manager is a type of program that stores your different passwords for different accounts, but that itself still needs a good password to protect your collection. With a password manager, you can use a generator to create very long complex passwords and not have to worry about remembering them as long as you have accesses to your manager.

If you need any help with passwords or with setting up a password manager, you can count on your Tech Experts to help you on your way. Contact us with any questions at (734) 457-5000.

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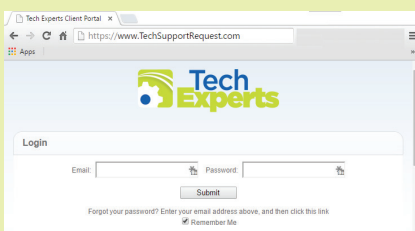
Create new service requests, check ticket status, and review invoices in our client portal:
http://TechSupportRequest.com

Backups: Don't Wait Until It Breaks

Accidents happen. Eventually, something will go wrong and when it does, you are going to want to be protected. Having a backup means more than just having an extra file on hand. It means being able to rest easy knowing that, if the worst should happen, it would not be the end of your business. It means that in the event of a total collapse of your systems, you have a fallback plan. It means knowing that you have already taken care of the largest problem in the event of a crash: recovering files and getting back up to date.

The most common way data is lost is due to a workstation failing due to user error or the occasional spilled drink. If the workstation is not backed up, the files may all be lost. A growing way to lose data is due to viruses and infections that spread throughout the computer and delete, steal, or corrupt the data.

The question people begin to become puzzled with is, "What can/should I backup?" The easy answer is everything. With technology being what it is today, space is cheap. You can sometimes back up an entire business for a few hundred dollars. On the other hand, you can wait for everything to go wrong, replace a dozen devices then try to start recovering all the data lost in the tragedy.

If space does become tight, start to look at things your business cannot function without, such as client information (phone numbers, email addresses, notes about the client), sales and product receipts, Internet bookmarks, anything that cannot be replaced, and anything that takes time to replace.

Backing up the data can be as simple as storing a copy of your important files on an external hard drive that you bring up to date every week. If the worst should happen after a backup is kept, you need only to plug in the backup drive to the repaired or replacement computer, copy the contents over, and continue on with your work. Instead of losing years of data, you only lose a few days.

What should you use to back up your data? In the example above, using a small flash drive or external hard drive, they can usually be damaged or lost quite easily. If the memory device is lost, it poses a problem in that it is unsecured data and can be accessed by anyone that plugs it into their computer. While these devices can be a cheap solution to backing up data, they are far from perfect.

One of the most popular solutions for any business – smaller businesses especially – is online backup. The perk of online backup is there is no hardware or software on site that can be damaged, lost, or stolen. A monthly fee based on how much storage you require is all it takes. Choose the data you want to backup and it will be securely sent to a data center where it is stored. Generally, this can be done automatically which can remove accidental user error from the equation.

In a perfect world, we would all have a backup for our data and a backup for our backup, but even having one backup can sometimes be enough to keep a problematic crash or error from becoming a monumental crisis. If you do not already have a backup in place, you have to ask yourself one thing: if all your systems crashed tomorrow, would you recover?

Three Great Ways To Capture Feedback On Your Website

Businesses gather and utilize customer feedback in their business strategy to ensure the products and services they produce meet customer needs. Here are three ways to gather client feedback from your website visitors.

Email is an immensely valuable method of securing honest feedback from customers. However, many organizations neglect to consider the customer experience when designing email channels. There are three things you should take into consideration when communicating with customers via email:

1. Ensure you respond to customers in a speedy fashion: A recent study found that 81% of customers would be more likely to leave feedback, if they thought they would get a rapid response.

2. Develop an organized system by which customer feedback is handled. Keep track of what feedback you have received from whom and use this information to guide future customer interactions.

3. Follow up on all correspondence in an honest and open manner.

Surveys are very challenging to develop; however, they can provide extremely useful insights. Test long and short surveys to find out which are the most effective in providing with the feedback you need. Tools like Qualaroo are great for short surveys, while Survey Monkey is ideal for longer questionnaires.

Customer interviews provide direct feedback from your customers and allow you to develop a more personal relationship with them. When planning the interview process, it can be useful to focus on user attitudes toward the problems they typically encounter and employ a critical incident method to encourage customers to recall specific problems.