

Article – A Proactive Approach to IT

February 24, 2006
Concerto Networks of San Diego
Written by: Dylan Natter

A Proactive Approach to IT

The actual cost of down time due to poor Information Technology (IT) management – taking a proactive, preventative versus reactive approach to managing your small business IT needs

When you consider that, as small business owners, we often only deal with Information Technology (IT) when there is a crisis, or we have to place yet another call for a fix or repair, or sign another check to pay for IT services, jolting at the escalating costs of our IT services a number of glaring poor IT management habits can be outlined.

- Not spending enough time selecting the right IT sources to work and partner with
- Not spending our IT dollars on the right, appropriate, scalable technologies and systems solutions our growing businesses need
- Often leaving our back-up processes and security up to strangers or one-stop providers, following a very reactive, defensive IT strategy that is typically more costly
- Calling for help from IT providers (sometimes chosen at random, or just someone we know, family/friend), who makes money by solving problems and booking time, and do not have root-cause analysis, problem-solving, active partnering or the best interest of your business in mind and at heart necessarily
- And lastly, overall just following an informal and relaxed strategy when it comes to technology and IT management in our small businesses

Basically what this means or what this leads to is that we are not as aware of the hidden costs, effects and implications this lack of planning, strategy and poor IT management is having on our business growth, our financial bottom line, competitive positioning in the market, and our overall success.

Let us take a closer look at some of these.

Not trusting the right IT vendors and knowledgeable, skilled resources, not having the benefits of pro-active comprehensive services at your disposal 24/7, with your business IT best interests and peace of mind at heart, carries inherent risk. It might end up costing you more. You will not necessarily get the right advice or recommendations. Checking backgrounds, references and track record of the sources we do choose or opt to work with is mostly overlooked, posing security risk and quality issues for our business. Do we have trust in the level of the work that is done? Are our IT needs taken care of, even and especially, when we need to be able to rely on qualitative and consistent IT services and resources?

Not spending your money in the right place or at all, might end up costing you more in the long run. Maintaining, troubleshooting, and constantly repairing aging or older technology and equipment, with no clear strategy, diagnosis or plan, seems to make no sense. Firefighting repair issues and constantly fixing problems that never seem to go away eats away at your profit, especially when upgrades could be done affordably and end up costing you less, when done right!

Lost productivity is another area you need to be concerned about – when your systems are down, your staff cannot work and your business grinds to a halt. This does not only translate into cost, trouble and effort dealing with the problem(s) and cost at hand, but also loss in active labor. There may even be lost business, due to being offline or not able to process payment transactions, issues receipts, take or handle orders at stake - costing you more money in the end.

Article – A Proactive Approach to IT

We propose that to address security issues, reduce costs and contribute to overall business success, businesses would also benefit from the following:

- Addressing and choosing the right vendors, especially your IT vendor
- Having a proven, open and effective communication process, coordination and control
- IT partnerships, relationships and collaborative win-win business solutions and practices, that are characterized by shared responsibility, pro-active, hands-on stewardship and accountability.
- Plan to assess and act on progress and growth – being ready for when the day comes
- Over-emphasis on time, cost, and performance of the job done
- Methods, process, and monitoring – kept constant and consistent, not random and in crisis mode
- Realize the real cost of poor quality - random troubleshooting; that is, more problems popping up because of what you were trying to solve, with more than a random responsive strategy. We believe there is a better way.
- Selecting the best IT partner with the competencies and levels of service that you demand and deserve. There are two extremes at play here, when making this important choice. On the one hand, there is the IT company or provider, in whom you have no real trust or confidence in their skill level, the consistency of the work is sporadic at best and you are left at the mercy of a third party's priorities, schedule, time, input and limited knowledge. On the other hand, there are the core competencies of a comprehensive IT services provider, where operating procedures, knowledgeable technicians, objectivity, pro-active troubleshooting and problem-solving, standards and guidelines are followed, with access and availability 24/7, to best protect your interests and investments. Which one would you rather team up with?
- Invest in IT services providers that deliver, constantly and consistently, reliably, remaining versatile, proactive, co-creative and available, at all times.

Integrated services and specialty applications and solutions under one roof, as opposed to numerous providers and uncoordinated services, might hold the answer for many entrepreneurs and small businesses, both locally and worldwide. Teaming up with a reputable IT company is the solution, especially one that partners with you and has your business interests in mind.

For more information on Concerto Networks and our solutions for your business, visit www.concertonetworks.com today.