

JANUARY 2015



“As a business owner, I know you don’t have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That’s where we *shine!* Call us and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!”

- Willie Kerns, SmartPath Technologies

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(270)238-8997

Free Webinar Backup/Recovery

When: January 22, 2015
Time: 1:30-2:30

If your building caught on fire or flooded how quickly could you be back in business? Join us for this comprehensive disaster recovery webinar – we guarantee you’ll leave with steps you can take away and implement immediately to preserve your business in case of disaster. Many business disasters are because of computer failure – you’ll also see in action how we can guarantee that your business can continue to operate with less than two hours of down time even if your server dies.

Register at:
smartpathtech.com/disasterwebinar



“Insider Tips To Make Your
Business Run Faster, Easier,
And More Profitably”



The Smarter Path

3 Technology-Specific New Year’s

Ahhhh! A brand new year, full of promise, hope and a fresh start. If you’re like most people, you’re making the usual resolutions to exercise more, lose weight, pay off debt, etc., etc., etc. Essentially, it’s a time of year when we momentarily take stock in our lives and think about all the things we “should” be doing more of, but don’t. So while you’re in the goal-setting mode, we thought we would tack on 5 things that probably aren’t on your list, but should be. Especially since these all fall into the “important, but not urgent” category.

1. **Offsite backups.** Can we beat this horse to death anymore? I know MOST of the clients reading this newsletter are smart enough to have this already done, but many still don’t and are relying on undependable (and outdated, I might add) tape drives, Carbonite or other volatile backup solutions. If that’s you, don’t let this be another year where you gamble with everything you’ve worked so hard to achieve. Get a better backup!!!!
2. **Write A Disaster Recovery Plan.** Pop quiz: If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that you couldn’t access your office building due to a <ice storm like we had in 2009, what would you do? Or what would happen if a key executive—one who holds the “keys” to critical processes or applications—fell sick or (God forbid) died? Or what would happen if a disgruntled employee or hacker gained access to your web server, line of business application or file server and deleted everything—particularly if the data was hosted on the 3rd party cloud provider’s web site? These are all very real scenarios, and without a plan in place, you could be facing serious downtime and financial losses.
3. **Develop A Stronger Cyber Security System That Goes Beyond A Firewall And Anti-Virus.** With more and more information about us being stored electronically, and with State and Federal laws becoming more strict, you MUST take cyber security seriously. Simply having a good firewall and anti-virus isn’t enough these days to keep the highly motivated and technically sophisticated criminals out of your network. The HUMAN element is the biggest threat—employees who accidentally click on links in e-mails or download files that introduce viruses to your network. Employees are also using social media sites more frequently, and they can intentionally or accidentally post something that could harm your company’s reputation or leak confidential information. Therefore, your security plan must also include employee training and policies so they know what is and isn’t acceptable when handling data and using company resources (Internet, computers, etc.).

If you don’t know where to start in creating any of the above, we’re here to help! Call us at 270-238-8997 to discuss how we can do all of this for you and take the work and worry out of these New Year’s resolutions!

The Lighter Side... Cake, Presents & Embezzlement



There's nothing like a birthday party complete with an over-the-top cake, mounds of balloons and presents stacked to the ceiling. No, we're not talking about Miley Cyrus' 23rd birthday extravaganza, we're talking about the surprise birthday bash Ruth C. Amen threw for her boss, without approval. The lavish party raised eyebrows and led to a review of the office manager's accounting practices. Turns out Amen had been embezzling money from the business to pay her personal credit card debt. She also cut extra paychecks for herself, "forgetting" to deduct insurance costs from them. Maybe Amen felt bad about stealing and wanted to make up for it somehow, but all of the birthday cakes in the world wouldn't quite cover the \$181,674 she stole. When the last candle was blown out, Amen was found guilty of Grand Theft and Scheme to Defraud, both felonies. Next time, buy a card; it's much less suspicious.



"I've put on a lot of weight, but I'll lose it all in the Spring."

4 Telltale Signs of a Bad Business Opportunity

Opportunities are everywhere, but not all are good. Watch for these 4 signs that your golden business opportunity is really a black hole.

Business opportunities come in many forms—partnerships, expansion, the big sale or even bigger investor, just to name a few. The toughest thing about new opportunities is that it's sometimes difficult to sort the good ones from the bad lousy ones. Are you looking at a goldmine or a money pit, and how can you tell the difference between them?

Here are four surefire ways to sift out the good business opportunities and make sound decisions about them.

1. History Repeats Itself

You ignore history at your peril, as past behavior is the single best predictor of future behavior. When someone presents you with a new business opportunity, do your homework, and look into the reputation of the person you're considering working with. For example, if you're thinking about selling your business and the buyer is known gouging folks on price, you'd be foolish to think you'll be treated differently.

If you're considering a joint venture, take the time to look at online reviews and see how the business treats its customers. If you've done some research and are still considering the opportunity, you should ask for references. You know, of course, that any business will pick their best clients, who are most likely to say positive things, so it's best to specify the references you want. I suggest asking for a reference from their oldest client (for performance over time), their newest client (for recent first impressions), then let them choose the last reference. If you specify which references you want to see, you'll get the real scoop and learn how your opportunity is likely to pan out.

2. There's a Lot of Big Talk but Little Action

Lip service is the easiest thing in the world to give someone. Making promises cost nothing, but delivering on those promises—well, that's a whole different ball game.

You must protect yourself from people who promise the moon but never get off the ground. I suggest building small milestones of success into your deals, making each marker or evaluation point a fail-safe—an opt-out point. You're mitigating your risk by requiring progress, and you're also minimizing the possibility of being sweet-talked into continuing with a partnership that isn't working for you. Make the milestones concrete and easy to evaluate, and you remove the subjectivity. Be clear, and be firm.

3. Desperate People Do Desperate Things

You absolutely must make sure you're not negotiating or evaluating deals from a position of desperation. If you're seriously strapped for cash or frantic for more market share, you're vulnerable and there are plenty of unscrupulous people who are more than willing to take advantage of you.

You need to be aware of the times when you're in a weak position and be prepared to take measures to mitigate your losses. If possible, get your business into a solid, profitable position before you take on any new partnerships or cooperative ventures. At the very least, you need to be conscious of where you stand and be aware of your weakness.

4. You Don't Have the Same Goals as Your Potential Partner

You may find what you think is the perfect complement to your business—whether it's a shared customer base, common location or similar approach. But if your ultimate goal and your potential partner's goals are in opposition, your business opportunity will turn into a nightmare.

You must want the same things in order for the partnership to work. You must be willing to walk the same path toward the same goal if you want the opportunity to pan out. It's absolutely critical that any joint venture begins with a frank discussion and agreement about objectives. Failing to discuss your goals upfront means you're losing out on the benefits of combined, cooperative effort, but what's worse is that you could even end up working at cross purposes.

Opportunities are everywhere. The trouble, though, is that not all opportunities are good opportunities. As an entrepreneur, you're probably well acquainted with the pitfalls that seem to reside around every corner, and business opportunities are no different. We have to get better at making reasoned decisions—objectively evaluating the options available to us—if we're truly going to be successful.

By Mike Michalowicz



MIKE MICHALOWICZ (pronounced mi-KAL-o-wits) started his first business at the age of 24, moving his young family to the only safe place he could afford—a retirement building. With no experience, no contacts and no savings, he systematically bootstrapped a multimillion-dollar business. Then he did it again. And again. Now he is doing it for other entrepreneurs. Mike is the CEO of Provendus Group, a consulting firm that ignites explosive growth in companies that have plateaued; a former small-business columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*; MSNBC's business makeover expert; a keynote speaker on entrepreneurship; and the author of the cult classic book *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. His newest book, *The Pumpkin Plan*, has already been called "the next *E-Myth!*" For more information, visit www.mikemichalowicz.com/

Shiny New Gadget of the Month



iPhone Binoculars

If you've ever wanted to add more utility to your Apple iPhone, SkyMall's iPhone Binoculars might be what you're looking for. These binoculars, featuring 36mm lenses, attach onto the back of your phone via a sturdy and specially designed case. The case lines up the iPhone's camera with one of the binocular's lenses, giving your camera 8x magnification.

While it's not going to blow any optic aficionados away, it increases the usefulness of your iPhone's camera. Just open up the camera app to see the magnified image. Turn your phone into a viewfinder to take pictures or record video. Or just watch what your binoculars capture. You can even use the binoculars separately from the iPhone for doubled utility!

The binoculars also come with a travel case and cleaning cloth, and are currently compatible with the iPhone 5/5s and iPhone 4/4s. Pick one up at www.SkyMall.com

It's National Clean Up Your Com-

I didn't believe it either, but after some research it's official...an authority no less reputable than "The Vinegar Institute" declared January as a national holiday to clean up your computer.

In light of this holiday, I thought I'd take the time to answer a small but nagging question, "How do I get those smudges, dust, and fingerprints safely off of my flat screen monitor?"

Although each monitor manufacturer has its own special instructions for cleaning, there are some common guidelines you can use to get your screen looking like new in no time.

- **Turn off the monitor.** It's not required, but it makes smudges and smears easier to see.
- **Use a cotton cloth** or compressed air to get rid of light dust buildup. Never use a rag or paper towel to clean since they can scratch the screen.
- **Don't use products with ethyl alcohol or ammonia-based products.** Products like Windex can yellow flat-screen or laptop monitors.
- **Use water or a homemade mix to clean grungy surfaces.** If water is not enough, concoct a cleaning solution of 1 part water, 1 part isopropyl alcohol, and 1/2 part vinegar.
- **Lightly moisten your cloth with the cleaning solution.** Never apply the liquid directly to the screen.
- **Wipe the cloth in one direction** – from top to bottom. This method will ensure grime and dust move to the bottom of the screen surface where it can be wiped away.

One final guideline, never touch or press on your LCD screen with your fingers as this can cause the pixels to burn out. Happy cleaning!

Angel Tree!

This year we were able to help 59 children who ranged in age from 3 weeks to 18 years old. It is a very humbling experience to know that you are providing much needed items for these children in need – such as a warm coat, clothing, shoes, and even bed sheets. Each child got at least two outfits, and then some fun stuff they had put on their Christmas list. These lists include toys, make-up, art supplies, etc. These are normally the items that will be brought by Santa. Thank You to everyone that helped out with making this a success!

Free Report Download:

If you are relying on tape drives, external hard drives or USB devices to backup your data, then it's critical for you to get and read this informative white paper. You'll learn what most IT consultants don't know or won't tell you about making sure your company's critical data is safe from loss, corruption, cyber criminals, natural disasters and employee sabotage, in addition to:

The only way to know for SURE that your data can be recovered if lost, corrupted or deleted – yet fewer than 10% of businesses have this in place.

7 critical characteristics you should absolutely demand from any offsite backup service; do NOT trust your data to any company that does not meet these criteria.

The #1 cause of data loss that most businesses don't even think about until their data is erased.

Get Your FREE copy today: www.smartpathtech.com/backupreport





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Top 10 Gadgets of 2014

10. The Ring Video Doorbell– This is a small ringer with a camera that communicates with your phone, allowing you to see who is at the door before you let them in.
9. iPad Air 2– This is the thinnest iPad ever and it’s also the most powerful, containing an A8X chip, an 8 megapixel camera and at least 16GB in a 6.1mm-thin frame.
8. Jawbone UP3– This is on the road to making us all super fit athletes or brutally efficient cyborgs who operate by data only.
7. Mophie Space Pack– This pack adds up to 64GB of extra data and 8 hours talk time to the iPhone 5 and iPhone 5s.
6. Hero4 GoPro– With improved resolution, upgraded audio systems, and time lapse capabilities for ultra low-light scenes at night.
5. iPhone 6 Plus– With an alluring 5.5-inch display that makes it feel something like a portable iPad. Along with a powerful 8-megapixel camera and longer battery life.
4. Oculus Rift Development Kit 2– This offers a fully immersive, virtual reality headset, the most promising of its kind, and its second development kit greatly improves the technology to help eliminate simulator sickness and increase resolution.
3. DJI Phantom Vision+- It’s known for its exceptional flight capabilities and powerful camera– and it’s cheaper than other high-end drones. It allows joyriders to gain a birds-eye view of nearly all terrain.
2. SmartThings Starter Kit– From alerting you when your kids get home from school to brewing your coffee before you wake up, the connected home promises to be an invisible aide we’ve always wanted.
1. Apple Watch– Watch wearers will be able to access apps, weather, photos, texts, emails, payments and, through Apples’s HomeKit software, control thermostats, door locks, televisions and lights.

List provided by TIME