3 IT INVESTMENTS YOU SHOULD NEVER SKIMP ON

Small and medium sized businesses are skimping on technology costs where they shouldn't, cutting corners wherever possible and, as a result, leaving themselves open to a huge variety of potential disasters.

Avoid the pitfalls of our technology-dependent world.

Don't assume you're the "little guy" and there's no reason for hackers to target you. SMBs are the single biggest target.

There's a disturbing trend underlying the business world's increased reliance on technology. No, we're not about to decry technology itself. Nor will we downplay the endless list of ways in which tech has enhanced business owners' ability to reach more prospects, build meaningful relationships with clients and make the previously labyrinthine tasks of yesterday seem positively mundane today. There's no denying that the Internet age has empowered companies of all sizes to do incredible things and that technology is forever transforming the way we do business. Today's savvy businesses are intertwined to an unprecedented extent with the technology they use.

But there's a problem that goes along with this increased dependence. Despite the inextricable relationship today's companies have with IT, the vast majority of them – SMBs in particular – are neglecting key aspects of their tech. They're skimping where they shouldn't, cutting corners wherever possible and, as a result, leaving themselves open to a huge variety of potential disasters.

To avoid the pitfalls of our technology-dependent world, it's important to ensure you have a firm IT foundation. Here are three IT investments where you should avoid underspending or risk shuttering your business forever.
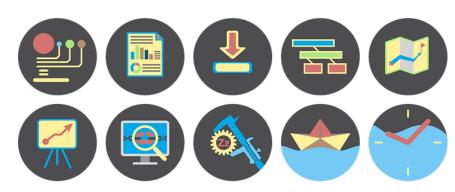
1. CYBER SECURITY

Across the tech industry, it has practically become trendy to point out how woefully underprepared SMBs are for modern crime. But it's true: according to the 2016 State of Cyber Security in Small and Medium-Sized Businesses report, a full 50% of all U.S. small busi-

nesses succumbed to cyber-attacks in 2015, a statistic that is rising and shows no sign of slowing down. Most small business owners assume that since they're the "little guy," there's no reason why a well-equipped and highly trained team of hackers would ever target their meager stores of data. But, in fact, it's these hapless businesses that end up being the low-hanging fruit for these operations. Millions upon millions of dollars are stolen from SMBs each year, and most of it is gleaned via vicious ransomware.

2. PROACTIVE TECH SUPPORT

It's probably easy to imagine how a vicious cyber-attack could leave your business reeling, but there are equally insidious risks that could cost your business bigtime. Consider server failure, for example. No matter the caliber

Invest in strategies and software that will trim away precious seconds.

of equipment you're dealing with, failure is an inevitable risk of technology. But instead of being proactive, most business owners just assume that downtime is a fact of the modern world. As a result, 73% of businesses have had some type of operations interruption in the past five years, causing a staggering $70 million loss, according to an infographic published in VentureBeat. The worst part? The vast majority of these outages are avoidable.

The fact is that a cheap "break-fix" technology technician is only there to put out fires, not to proactively prepare your business for success. By the time your break-fix IT guy shows up on the scene, the damage will already be done. This results in dramatically lowered efficiency and potentially thousands of dollars in lost sales – not to mention the cost of all those customers you lost while you were off dealing with a tech crisis. And that's only one example. Finicky software, stuttering computers and lost backups may seem like small issues until you're in the midst of disaster and the costs are adding up. It's better to avoid these catastrophes in the first place.

3. TECH STRATEGIES TO BEAT THE COMPETITION

Technology isn't just a crutch we use to make navigating the marketplace easier; it can equip us with a set of tools that allow us to actively surpass customer expectations and streamline our efficiency, lowering expenses and empowering our employees. You can bet on the fact that your competition is doing everything it possibly can to stay abreast of the latest technological trends. Don't let them pull ahead. Instead, invest in strategies and software that will trim away precious seconds from inefficient processes and enable you to focus on what really matters: making your business succeed.

Technology isn't just a crutch.

FREE CYBERSECURITY AUDIT AVAILABLE NOW

At no cost or obligation, our highly skilled team of IT pros will come to your office and conduct a comprehensive cyber security audit to uncover loopholes in your company's IT security. After the audit is done, we'll prepare a customized "Report Of Findings" that will reveal specific vulnerabilities and provide a Prioritized Action Plan for getting these security problems addressed fast. This report and action plan should be a real eye opener for you since almost all of the businesses we've done this for discover they are completely exposed to various threats in a number of areas.

To get started and claim your free assessment, call our office at 260-440-7377.

"Break-Fix" technology only puts out fires. You need someone to stop them before they happen.

3 BIG TRENDS BUSINESSES NEED TO ADOPT NOW

The fate of your business is intimately entwined with the way your organization utilizes technology. If you fail to stay abreast of the latest trends, you're letting the competition pull ahead. As we close out Q2, you need to keep an eye on the shifting digital landscape to give your business an edge.

One of the best ways to do that is to latch onto the continuous growth of your mobile market. According to Statista, more than 51% of web traffic now comes from mobile users. With this in mind, you need to start mixing up your marketing strategies to accommodate this newly mobile-centric world, no matter your industry.

But even as you do, you need to be aware of the growing prevalence of online threats to your business. According to an article published in the Guardian, 90% of US SMBs don't use any safeguards to protect against the data breach of key customer info, and most assume they simply won't be the target of a cyberattack.

It's important for you to realize that 70% of cyber-attacks are aimed at small businesses today, and you need to act accordingly.

One more way to take advantage of technological trends is to master augmented reality in the coming years. You can create virtual environments to promote and explain how to use your products and services so customers can engage with them wherever they are. StartUpNation.com, 2/27/18.

There are always, always backups in the cloud.

PREFERRED IT SECURITY SPOTLIGHT

Your Data Is Safer In The Cloud

The reverberating impact that natural disasters have on the community is not as clear as the immediate physical damage. This is never truer than it is with the small businesses in the areas.

Far too often, this kind of catastrophic loss of data due to physical damage of servers, firewalls, and computers will shut a business down for good. A 2010 report by technology research firm Gartner Group stated that 43% of businesses went belly-up almost immediately after a "major loss" of data, while 51% shut down within two years. That leaves a measly 6% survival rate for businesses that suffer company-wide data loss.

Those numbers aren't great, but you can prepare yourself for this kind of disaster. Just like you pay for flood insurance in hurricane-heavy areas, you've got to preemptively protect your business data, too. Any business that migrates their data to the cloud is significantly less likely to lose that data. This isn't just because a cloud service provider typically backs up your data several times a day, and in several different places, but also because the cloud data centers are actually more secure than their onsite counterparts.

There are always, always backups.

Even after all this, the cloud isn't a fit for every single business. Some business models need onsite structures for a variety of reasons. Some find it cheaper. But, it is better to do your research and understand the cloud as a potential option for your company. It could save your business.

Read more tips like this on our blog!

OUR COMMUNITY

Our mission is to build lasting relationships within our community. We do our best to give back to our community whenever possible.

This month, we will be supporting the Arcola Volunteer Fire Department at the Arcola National Truck and Tractor Pull.

We'll have a bunch of merchandise at our booth, all proceeds donated right back to the Arcola Volunteer Firefighters!

Stop by and see us June 28-30. It's always a great time!

preferred IT group

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