7 Technology Tips to Prevent Downtime that Every Business Owner Ought to Know

When running a business, technology disruptions are more than frustrating — they are expensive. No one likes to come in on a Monday to the Internet being out or an important proposal having been accidentally deleted. It means your day just got derailed as everyone looks to you to fix the problem. With deadlines passing, your staff is stuck waiting on email getting back up and recreating files from memory.

What a waste.

Don't let technology destroy your day. Take these seven steps to avoid downtime and protect productivity at your firm.

1. Have a backup Internet service provider.

Is Internet and email access critical to your business? Prevent costly downtime by setting up your network to use two different Internet service providers — a solution called a redundant Internet connection. If one Internet service provider goes down, your team's traffic seamlessly shifts to the other carrier.

Having two Internet connections also comes in handy when one of your Internet service providers gets congested. Plus you'll enjoy the extra bandwidth that comes with having two connections.

2. Keep spare parts on hand.

Many frequently used (and broken) parts like switches, routers, hard drives and power supplies are relatively inexpensive. Keep spares around in case of a hardware failure. It'll save you a day or two of wasted productivity and lost sales waiting to get a replacement.

Parts aren't made forever. Buy an extra when you purchase your equipment to make sure it will be available when you need it.

3. Back up your data — in more than one place!

If you temporarily lost access to your data, how much would that cost you in downtime and lost revenue? What would happen to your business if your data couldn't be recovered? For some businesses, permanent data loss would be a death sentence!

There are two kinds of people in this world: people who back up their data and people who wish they had.

A good backup system that stores your data in multiple locations can significantly reduce the time it takes to recover lost or corrupted data. Some options can even help you restore older versions of a file or your computer's entire desktop and software applications with a few clicks.

4. Use an email host.

Sure, hosting your own email makes sense if you're a large organization with thousands of users — like a University. Or the federal government.

But for small offices, hosting your own email requires a lot of resources: power, cooling systems, servers, physical security, Internet access, data backup, 24/7 staff support in case of a problem. If a single one of these fails, your email communication comes to a screeching halt, or in some cases disappears entirely!

For 10-50 person businesses, it's much more cost-effective (and sanity-saving!) to outsource your email to a provider such as Microsoft Office 365, which has the resources and an economy of scale to minimize your risks and maximize your ROI.

Plus, when you outsource your email, even an Internet or power outage won't stop the flow of messages to your phone or another remote email log-in.

5. Get a backup power supply.

Have you ever watched your screen go dark, only to realize it's been half an hour since you last saved that file you were working on? Lost a day of productivity (and all the contents of the office fridge) because of a power outage? If it hasn't happened yet, it will eventually.

The storm is coming.

Backup batteries and other backup power supplies are a simple way to keep systems running in the event of a power outage. Your options range from a low-cost battery backup that keeps your system on long enough to save documents and shut down "gracefully" to generators that keep you going indefinitely.

6. Implement remote access using a VPN.

Snow storms. Sick kids. Car troubles. Your best client needs a revision to a file that is on your server and you are at the airport. Your star employee wants to work from home once a week, and you can't afford to lose her.

Remote working solutions — like a Virtual Private Network or a VPN — keep you and your team productive, even while travelling or in your pajamas. A VPN provides you a secure off-site way to log in to your business's network, or even access your own computer's desktop and applications. A VPN can also cut down on wasted time (and costly mistakes) caused by duplicating files to shuttle back and forth between work and home.

7. Know who you'll call before you need them.

No matter how adept you or your overworked IT Director are at tackling your business technology hiccups, there will come a time when you'll need to call on outside professional IT support.

Do your research now so you're not sent scrambling for that yellow book you used to use in the dark ages because your Internet is down!

If you have a relationship with an IT support team in place before you need it, they'll know you and your needs. That translates to faster service and quicker solutions. Plus, your IT support team can help you implement these handy tips to avoid a crisis in the first place!

Open Tier Systems keeps small businesses current and connected. We plan technology from the walls out, designing efficient systems for your network — and your team.

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