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IT Support
Microsoft 365
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TECH TALK

"Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitable"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

We love technology and we love helping people.

Give me a call today for a quick (non-salesy) chat to find out whether my team and I can help you better secure your data and get more out of your existing Technology!

– Graham Pearson
Founder CEO

DON'T LET OUTDATED TECH SLOW YOU DOWN: BUILD A SMART IT REFRESH PLAN

Nothing throws off your day like a frozen screen or a sluggish computer. If you run a small business, you've probably dealt with outdated tech more than once. Sure, squeezing extra life out of old equipment feels economical, but it often costs more in the long run.

Small businesses lose approximately 98 hours per year, equivalent to 12 working days, due to technology concerns such as slow PCs and outdated laptops.

That's why having an IT refresh plan matters. It keeps your team running smoothly, avoids unexpected breakdowns, and helps you stay secure. Regardless of whether you outsource managed IT services or handle them in-house, a solid refresh strategy can save time, stress, and money down the line.

Why Having a Strategy in Place is Important

It's easy to ignore old hardware until something breaks. But when things start falling apart, you have no choice but to look for better parts, deal with downtime, or even explain to your team and clients why things are slow.

The risks of not planning include:

- **Unexpected downtime**: even one broken laptop can stop an entire day of work.
- **Productivity tanks**: Outdated tech runs slower, crashes more often, and just can't keep up.
- **Security risks go up**: Older systems miss out on key updates, leaving you exposed.
- Compliance issues: Especially if your business needs to meet certain tech standards or regulations.

A little planning now can save you from a lot of headaches later.

4 Simple Strategies for a Smarter Refresh Plan

- **Replace as You Go**. Instead of replacing everything all at once, swap out equipment gradually. When a machine starts acting up or hits the end of its lifecycle, replace it. Your IT support provider can help you set a realistic "expiration date" for each device. This approach spreads out the costs and keeps surprises to a minimum.
- **Schedule Regular Refresh Cycles**. If your team relies heavily on tech, or you'd rather not wait for things to go wrong, consider refreshing your hardware on a set schedule. It's a cleaner, more predictable way to keep your tech current.
- **Watch for Compatibility Issues**. Tech doesn't exist in a vacuum. Waiting until something breaks, or no longer works with your tools, puts your business in panic mode. Instead, have your IT partner do regular checkups to make sure your equipment still plays nice with your software.
- **Don't Be Afraid of Leasing**. If big upfront costs are holding you back, leasing might be worth a look. Many IT vendors offer lease options with flexible terms. It's a way to get the latest gear without blowing your budget all at once.

Always Have a Hardware Register

Here's a simple but powerful tip to keep track of your tech. All you need is a simple spreadsheet that includes:

- What equipment do you own
- When you bought it
- When the warranty expires
- Any issues it's had
- Who's using it

This hardware register takes the guesswork out of planning.

What to Do Next

1. Take inventory: Write down what you've got and how old it is.
2. Set your goals:Your refresh plan should support where your business is headed.
3. Talk to your IT services provider: They can help you figure out the best timing, budget, and options.
4. Create a simple schedule: A plan is better than winging it.
5. Review regularly: Check in once or twice a year to stay on track.

Stay Ahead by Refreshing Smart

A good IT refresh strategy protects productivity, improves security, and future-proofs your business.

Need help building yours? Contact us today.

ORIGAMISWIFT MOUSE

A foldable Bluetooth mouse inspired by origami, combining portability with full-sized comfort and precision.

Perfect for digital nomads and professionals, it transforms effortlessly to adapt to your needs.

This 40 gram-mouse's features include instant activation, ergonomic design, quiet precision, and a USB-C rechargeable battery lasting up to 3 months.

Ideal for work anywhere, anytime.

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BUILDING A SMART DATA RETENTION POLICY: WHAT YOUR SMALL BUSINESS NEEDS TO KEEP (AND DELETE)

The digital world has transformed how small businesses operate. We now have an overwhelming volume of information to manage employee records, contracts, logs, financial statements, not to mention customer emails and backups.

A study by PR Newswire shows that **72% of business leaders** say **they've given up making decisions because the data was too overwhelming**.

If not managed properly, all this information can quickly become disorganized. A solid data retention policy helps your business stay organized, compliant, and save money. Here's what to keep, what to delete, and why it matters.

The Goals Behind Smart Data Retention

A good policy balances data usefulness with data security. You want to keep the information that has value for your business.

Some reasons small businesses implement data retention policies include compliance with local and international laws, improved security, efficiency in managing storage, and to gain clarity in how and where data lives across the organization.

Instead of storing everything in your active system, data can be tucked away safely in lower-cost, long-term storage.

Creating the Policy Step-by-Step

Here's how to go from idea to implementation:

- **Assemble a team:** Bring together IT, legal, HR, and department heads. Everyone has unique needs and insights.
- **Identify compliance rules:** Document all applicable regulations, from local laws to industry-specific guidelines.
- **Map your data:** Know what types of data you have, where it lives, who owns it, and how it flows across systems.
- **Set retention timelines:** Decide how long each data type stays in storage, gets archived, or is deleted.
- **Determine responsibilities:** Assign team members to monitor, audit, and enforce the policy.
- **Automate where possible:** Use software tools to handle archiving, deletion, and metadata tagging.
- **Review regularly:** Schedule annual (or bi-annual) reviews to keep your policy aligned with new laws or business changes.
- **Educate your staff:** Make sure employees know how the policy affects their work and how to handle data properly.

Clean Up Your Digital Closet

Just like you wouldn't keep every receipt, email, or post it note forever, your business shouldn't hoard data without a good reason. A smart, well-organized data retention policy isn't just an IT necessity, it's a strategic move for protecting your business, lowering costs, and staying on the right side of the law.

IT solutions aren't just about fixing broken computers; they're about helping you work smarter. And when it comes to data, a little organization goes a long way. So don't wait for your systems to slow down or a compliance audit to hit your inbox.

Contact us to start building your data retention policy today and take control of your business's digital footprint.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY BY AUTOMATING WORKFLOWS WITH POWER AUTOMATE

From chasing approvals to manually updating spreadsheets, it's easy for your team to get stuck doing time-consuming tasks that drag down productivity. That's where smart IT solutions come in, and one of the most effective tools available today is Microsoft Power Automate.

What is Microsoft Power Automate?

Power Automate is a tool offered by Microsoft for business automation purposes, designed to assist companies in developing workflows for routine tasks such as notifications, file copying, requesting approvals, and more.

The best part? You don't need to be a tech expert to use it. Power Automate uses a simple drag-and-drop interface that works across desktop, mobile, Microsoft Teams, and the browser.

Why It's a Game-Changer for SMBs

For small and medium businesses, every bit of time saved matters.

Power Automate allows you to build workflows (called "flows") that eliminate manual steps and speed things up, without hiring developers or buying extra tools.

Key Features That Make It Work

- **Templates**: There are prebuilt templates that can be used for frequent activities.
- **Connectors**: More than 300 built-in connectors available for popular applications.
- **Triggers and actions**: Each flow has a trigger that starts it.
- **Cross-platform use**: Available via Microsoft Teams, mobile, desktop, and browser.

Getting started with Power Automate is easier than you think. Log into Microsoft 365, open Power Automate, pick a template or build your own, customize, and save. It runs in the background automatically.

Power Automate helps small businesses ditch the busywork. Ready to streamline your workflows? Contact us today to get started.

HOW IT SERVICES STREAMLINE THE NEW HIRE PROCESS

Let's break down how technology can step in and make everything smoother, faster, and more efficient for onboarding.

- **Start Before Day 1**: With IT support, you can automate emails, pre-configure accounts, and ship laptops with the necessary software already installed.
- **Automate Tasks**: IT services can automate repetitive HR tasks.
- **Make Training Interactive**: Modern learning platforms, powered by IT, allow companies to deliver engaging training.
- **Create A Central Hub**: A unified onboarding portal pulls everything into one place.
- **Use Analytics to Improve**: IT systems offer dashboards and reports that track time-to-productivity, completion rates, satisfaction surveys, and drop-off points in onboarding.

YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY CHECKLIST

Your suppliers shouldn't be the weakest link in your cybersecurity.

Take control and stay vigilant, with these 7 steps.

1. Map all vendors and their suppliers.
2. Classify vendors by risk and access level.
3. Require and verify vendor security certifications and audits.
4. Make security mandatory in contracts with clear breach notification policies.
5. Implement Zero-Trust access controls.
6. Monitor vendor activity continuously.
7. Consider managed security services for ongoing protection.

By following these steps, you can turn your supply chain into a shield, not a doorway for attackers. Businesses that take a proactive, strategic approach to security will be the ones that avoid disaster.

CLOUD COST OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Control cloud spending and avoid billing nightmares through these strategies:

- **Right-Size Resources**: Analyze patterns and scale resources to match actual demands.
- **Turn Off Idle Resources**: Kill unused instances.
- **Leverage Reserved and Spot Instances**: Both can be cost-effective alternatives.
- **Automate Where Possible**: Use automation tools to handle scaling, shutdowns, and cost alerts.
- **Optimize Your Storage**: Use the right storage tier for your needs.
- **Monitor and Adjust**: Track usage and adjust accordingly.
- **Create a Culture of Awareness**: Make cloud spending a shared responsibility.
- **Use Tags for Visibility**: Tag all resources by team, project, or customer.
- **Build Governance**: Enforce policies to reduce sprawl and boost accountability.
- **Align Spend with Value**: Not all high costs are bad.
- **Train Your Team**: Educate all on cloud cost implications.
- **Don't Forget Data Transfer**: Be mindful of how and where you're moving data.

TECHNOLOGY TRIVIA

Each month you have a chance to win a $50 Amazon Gift Voucher by being the first person to email us with the answer to our Technology Trivia Question of the Month!

The Question This Month is:

What does PIN stand for?

The first person to email me at info@ma3sp.com with the correct answer gets a $50 Amazon Gift Card!

Last month's answer was *Gemini*.