



THE RHODENIZER REPORT

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7 WAYS I.T. CAN HELP OR HURT YOUR IMAGE

#1- Angry E-mails: Have you ever fired-off an e-mail reply to someone who just upset you? An e-mail written in haste can be more damaging than words spoken in anger. Written words can be forwarded to others long afterwards. How we respond reveals a great deal about our character, and business practices. Wait at least 24 hours to respond with a cool head. The best response to an angry e-mail is often just a phone call.

#2- E-mail Signature: In business, the signature line is not a place to share a joke, or some "thought for the day". Its purpose is to provide contact info needed for doing business with

you. It should include phone, fax, website, and mailing address info. A small photo of yourself is helpful when the recipient hasn't met you, but keep in mind that some e-mail systems block embedded images. If your contact info is also within an image, the recipient may not be able to read it. If in doubt, stick with text.

#3- Reply, or Reply All: Check who your e-mail is addressed to before you click "Send". Also, don't CC an e-mail to a group of people who don't know each other. It exposes everyone's e-mail address and looks unprofessional. Use BCC instead to hide the addresses.



#4- Customer Push-Back: If a person contacts you via e-mail, never refer them to a coworker by giving your coworker's e-mail address. Forward the message and copy the customer to let them know you've done so. The same applies to phone calls. Don't give callers another number to call if the (cont. P.2)

THE TAKE-AWAY POINTS:

- **Tech only helps if you know how to use it.**
- **Vista slipping while XP sales hold steady.**
- **Hackers used Network Solutions servers to skim credit card info.**
- **Failing to plan for a disaster isn't funny.**

STORES RUSHING TO DUMP VISTA

As the public debut of Windows 7 draws closer, it's interesting to watch what's happening at some local computer stores.

Sales figures seem to indicate falling demand for Windows Vista, while the much older Windows XP version continues to hold respectable numbers. In fact, this month's MicroCenter advertisement flyer shows only Windows Vista PC's in their "Clearance and Overstock"

section on page 5, and only Vista laptops in the "Clearance and Overstocks" section at the bottom of page 3.

In the same paper, I found the usual refurbished PC deals featuring Windows XP Pro - plus the addition of a few higher-end new models with XP Pro. MicroCenter now has the Dell Inspiron 537-USE014 with Intel Core 2 Duo processor for \$499.99, also the Inspiron 545-USE024

with Intel Core 2 Quad for \$599.99. Both models include 4GB of memory and generous SATA hard drives. But, most surprising... they both come with Windows XP Pro and are advertised as new.

I wonder if these Dell PC's, after sitting on the shelf too long with Windows Vista installed, were reloaded with Windows XP Pro to see if they sell faster? - C. R.

NETWORK SOLUTIONS GETS HACKED

Network Solutions is investigating a mysterious program found on their servers that may have facilitated information theft of over half a million credit card accounts between March 12th, and June 8th of this year.

Susan Wade, spokeswoman for Network Solutions, said the unauthorized program was discovered in early June during routine maintenance. A third-party forensics team was called in to investigate and they determined that "it could be related to credit card data."

E-commerce customers were finally told about the breach last Friday. In the e-mail to merchant customers, Network Solutions said: "Credit card transactions were intentionally diverted by an unknown source from our servers to servers outside. So, we notified law enforcement and began the process of notifying our customers. At this point, we don't have a reason to believe the data has been used, but we are working with credit card companies nonetheless."

"It's unknown how the mali-

icious code got onto the system or where it came from", Wade said. "We really feel terribly about this. We store credit card data in an encrypted manner, and we are PCI (Payment Card Industry)-compliant. Unfortunately, in this situation, the unauthorized code appears to have transmitted information about credit card transactions *as they were being completed*; it did not involve a vulnerability in the way we actually store data in our systems."



7 WAYS I.T. CAN HELP OR HURT YOUR IMAGE (CONT.)

(cont. from P.1) contact is within your company. Transfer the call or take a message. Pushing back on your customer gives the impression that you're either passing the buck, or you don't get along with your co-workers.

#5- Voicemail Greeting: Updating your voicemail to advise of a temporary absence shows you're on top of your schedule. But, don't forget to change it back after you return. A day late is OK, but if your greeting still says you're on Christmas vacation, it has the opposite effect. Also, have you ever called someone and heard a voicemail greeting in another person's voice? It's usually their assis-

tant, or the generic greeting that plays when a personalized greeting has not been recorded. This gives callers the impression that you're either too busy to record one yourself, or you can't figure out how to do it on your own.

#6- Clueless Call Transfer: How annoying is it when the person you are speaking to doesn't know how to transfer a call? Or when they press the wrong button and hang up? This gives customers the impression that your employees are poorly trained. Whenever you hire a new person, or get a new system, training should be a top priority.

#7- Still There After Hang-Up: Recently, two male employ-

ees of a utility company got into trouble after a conference call with their female supervisor. The two men, thinking they had ended the call, began making negative gender-based remarks about the supervisor - who heard every word. Make sure you know how to use the phone system. Cell phones sometimes have a second or two delay after pressing the "end call" button, or flipping the phone closed. Make sure the call has ended before making any remarks.

Demonstrating proficiency in the use of technology tools helps build a more professional image for you and your business.—C. R.

“Demonstrating proficiency in the use of technology tools helps build a more professional image...”

QUESTIONS FROM THE INBOX

Q- “What should I do to prepare my small business for the transition to Windows 7?”

A- “Transition” is the key word, and the correct approach for a small business would be “one-at-a-time”.

I would advise against upgrading your current PC’s if there is nothing wrong with them. Don’t disrupt a productive employee by making them learn a new operating system until it becomes necessary. When that time comes, usually because of the purchase of a new PC, only replace one at a time.

You’ll want to test your applications to make sure all is working properly on Windows 7 before you place it into a business critical role. Print, scan, e-mail, run reports, give the new PC a good workout before you trust it with business operations.

After the first Windows 7 PC is up and running in your environment and any kinks have been worked out, all the other replacements should be easy after that.

Q- “In your June edition, you recommend refurbished PC’s. Don’t these have higher risk of failure than new PC’s?”

A- If we are talking about the statistics of component failure, I think not. This is extremely rare unless something like heat or lightning

causes it. Plenty of new electronics fail within the first 30 days because of defect.

Those that make it past that point with no problems are usually very stable. Based upon my 20 years of experience, an overwhelming majority of all the PC problems I’ve dealt with were due to software—not hardware.

Of the hardware problems I have encountered, most were related to the power supply, hard drive, or network interface, all of which can be replaced easily and inexpensively on most desktops. Only in rare instances does the motherboard fail and that usually is a death nail.

Considering the fact that all software is wiped off and reloaded, and also considering these PC’s have been thoroughly tested by the time they get to this point, I have no problem buying or recommending them to others.

Q- “What happens to Windows Vista when Windows 7 comes out? Will the pricing for Vista drop?”

A- That’s putting it mildly. I think retailers will be dumping Vista like yesterday’s newspaper. W7 is more reliable, easier to use, and easier on system resources so it can perform better with the same hardware. No one wants to be stuck with Vista inventory when W7 arrives.

Q- “If I setup a wireless network at home, do I need to get a firewall, or run some kind of firewall software?”

A- No. You just need a wireless router that has some firewall features. Unless you are expecting a targeted attack and you have a fixed IP address (that usually costs extra for home users), a good old Linksys WRT54GL will do just fine... with a few modifications.

Flashing the router with an open-source, Linux-based software like “Tomato” or “DD-WRT” provides features like SPI (Stateful Packet Inspection), signal strength variability (so you don’t broadcast any further out than necessary), and MAC address filtering (invited guest list for PC’s). Using these in combination with NAT and WPA encryption will make your wireless network so difficult to hack that only Chloe O’Brien could get in.

How much? The software can be downloaded for free, and the router is on sale now for \$52.69 at my favorite online parts supplier. Just go to the “Cliff’s Picks” page of my website, click the “newegg” icon, and enter “WRT54GL” in the search bar.—C. R.



“...will make your wireless network so difficult to hack that only Chloe O’Brien could get in.”

E-mail your questions to:
questions@rhodenizer.com

FUNNY, BUT NOT REALLY

We laugh at this cartoon because it's true for many of us, isn't it?

Many small business owners give very little thought as to what they would do in case of a disaster. Some have told me, "If it happens, I'll just call you". While I'm flattered that some see me as a wizard of all things digital, I can't conjure up data that isn't there any more.

Fire, flood, tornado, lightning, theft, vandalism, or even accidental damage can happen at anytime. It's worth taking a few moments to consider what you would do if you had to start over again with no files, no data, nothing but new machines.

Isn't it time to have an IT professional evaluate your data backup methods to determine whether or not they are adequate? Wouldn't you rather know that NOW —while you can still do something about it?



ABOUT RHODENIZER IT

We are a different kind of IT service provider. We don't resell any hardware or software. We find the best deals on what you need and pass the savings along to you.

Our mission is to help small businesses reduce expenses, increase productivity, and safeguard private information.

It's about more than just fixing computers. We also

provide IT consulting and services that include finding the best solutions to your business problems.

We work with clients to prepare disaster recovery plans that ensure their critical data remains safe, yet easily accessible. Additional benefits include money-saving ideas for managing your computer resources and planning for future business expansion.

We have the training, experience, and know-how to provide the right solutions for your needs, and your budget.

Just call to schedule your **free initial consultation with no risk, and no obligation.**

Tell me about your computer needs or IT issues. I'll recommend a course of action that makes sense for your situation at no cost to you. What have you got to lose?

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